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GH 391L.01: ST: Goddesses

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Fall 2018

Goddesses

GH391L

Dr. Vanita, Professor, Global Humanities & Religions

Tuesday, Thursday, 12.30-1.50 p.m. NAC102

Office: LA146-A.

Office Hours: Tuesday 2.00-3.00, Thursday 8.30-9.30, and by appointment

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This is a capstone course for the GH option in the GHR major, counts towards the SSEAS minor, and is an elective for the Art History major, English major, RLST option in the GH major, and the WGSS major and minor. Since it's an experimental course you will not see it in Degree Works, but I will petition and obtain a substitution for you if you want it to count towards any of the degrees here listed.

Texts

Required readings (all on Moodle)

1. Background information on Hinduism: "Hinduism and Indian Civilization," "Major Hindu Goddesses and Gods"; "Rig Veda, Creation Hymn."
2. Extract from Diana Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*
3. "King Santanu and Goddess Ganga."
4. "Rig Veda Hymn to Speech" and "Hymn to Saraswati."
5. "Lakshmi Arati" (Hymn to Lakshmi).
6. "Devi Mahatmya extracts."
7. "Saundarya Lahari extracts" and "Lalitha Sahasranamam extracts."
8. "Bhagiratha's Two Mothers" and "Birth of Ganesha."
9. "Note on Women Devotional Poets," and "Mirabai."
10. "Three Women Mystics."
11. "Tantra."
12. "The Greek Gods and Goddesses."
13. Sappho's "Hymns to Aphrodite."
14. "Homeric hymn to Demeter" and "The Eleusinian Mysteries."
15. "Background note on the Odyssey" and Extracts from the Odyssey: Athena and Odysseus
16. Roman Gods and Goddesses www.realmofhistory.com/2018/03/20/15-roman-gods-goddesses-facts/
17. From the Bible: "Hymn to Sophia"; Luke Chapters 1-2 "St Paul's visit to Ephesus" (Book of Acts).
18. Extract, "The Marian Model," from Vanita, *Sappho and the Virgin Mary*, and "Medieval Hymns to Mary."
19. Extracts from Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*.
20. Suniti Namjoshi, *The Conversations of Cow*

Supplementary readings (on reserve in the Mansfield Library; some are e-books)

Joseph Campbell, *Goddesses: Mysteries of the Feminine Divine*

Diana Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*

Diana Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*

Nancy Auer Falk, *Living Hinduisms*.

David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*

David Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: the Ten Mahavidyas*

David Kinsley, *The Goddesses' Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West*

Manushi journal, special issue on Women Bhaktas (medieval mystic poets)

Barbara Stanley Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres*

Catherine Nixey, *The Darkening Age: the Christian Destruction of the Classical World*

Geoffrey Ashe, *The Virgin: Mary's Cult and the Re-Emergence of the Goddess*

Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*

Ruth Vanita, *Sappho and the Virgin Mary: Same-Sex Love and the English Literary Imagination*

Marion Wheeler, *Images of the Virgin in Art*

Julian of Norwich, *Showings* translated Edmund Colledge

Elisabeth of Schonau, *The Complete Works*, translated Anne L. Clark

Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* sections: "The Saints in their Images"; "Devotions to the Virgin"; Chapter 16 "Mary."

Jack Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*.

Suggested Further Reading

Diana Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*

David Kinsley, *The Goddesses' Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West*

Goals

To introduce you to changing concepts of the divine feminine in three major philosophical traditions, and to acquaint you with the literature and art produced in three religious traditions around figures that are worshiped either as Goddesses or as Goddess-like.

Learning Outcomes

- (a) Acquire basic information about the history of Goddess worship in the ancient world in general, and in classical antiquity (Greece and Rome) in particular
- (b) Acquire information about the development and worship of Goddesses and Goddess-like figures (mystics; female Gurus) in Hindu tradition from antiquity to modernity
- (c) Acquire basic information about the development of Goddess-like figures (the Virgin and the female saints) in the Christian tradition from the medieval period onwards, and the participation of mystics, especially female mystics, in this development
- (d) Develop a basic understanding of how Goddesses and Goddess-like figures are represented in literature and art in these three traditions.

Requirements

- (a) attend classes regularly. More than four absences not explained to my satisfaction will result in halving your grade for attendance and class participation, and more than seven absences will result in a zero for attendance; leaving early or coming late without explanation will be treated as an absence. Explanations (preferably in advance of the absence) must be backed up with documentation, communicated to me in person and accepted by me.
- (b) keep up with the assigned reading, which is mostly on Moodle, bring the text to class, and participate in discussion;
- (c) Make a presentation in class on a book or essay you select from a list provided by me. Discuss the presentation with me while working on it.
- (d) take the mid-term exam.
- (e) write two short papers
- (f) Check UM email regularly, especially the day before class. I send out notifications and changes by email. The best way to communicate with me is by email.

Grades

- a. Class attendance and participation will be worth 25%, class presentation 10%, quizzes and short tests 20%, the mid-term exam 15%, two short papers 15% each.
- b. Quizzes and short tests will be given at the start of class. Therefore, you need to be on time to take them. **In addition to the specified texts, quizzes will also contain questions on information supplied in class lectures.** Quizzes may contain both multiple-choice type questions and short answer questions and are designed to test (a) whether you have read the prescribed texts (b) whether you remember basic facts about the texts as well as information communicated in class lectures and movies. Quizzes can be made up within the week (not more than thrice in the semester), but not later.
- c. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any kind, in any assignment, will result in your failing the class and may also result in other penalties such as expulsion from the University (for further details, refer to the section on Academic Misconduct in the Student Conduct Code).
- d. If you take this course to fulfill General Education requirements or for your major or minor, you cannot take it Credit/No Credit, and you must earn a C minus to pass.
- e. If you have any condition, such as a physical or learning disability, that will make it difficult for you to complete the work as I have outlined it, please notify me in the first week of class.

Reading Schedule

This schedule is tentative. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with any changes. Readings indicated for a certain class are to be read in advance of that class, for example, read Rig Veda Hymn to Speech and Hymn to Saraswati before you come to class on 11 September.

| Date | Assignment (to be completed before class) | Class Plan | In-class assignment |
|--------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 28 August | | Explanation of syllabus, Introduction & Background Goddesses in ancient civilizations: Egypt; Mesopotamia; Europe (Nordic, Germanic); pre-Islamic Arabia; ancient India (Indus Valley Civilization). | |
| 30 August | Read Background information on Hinduism: “Hinduism and Indian Civilization,” “Major Hindu Goddesses and Gods”; “Rig Veda, Creation Hymn.” | Discuss readings. Lecture on Goddesses in the three main strands of Hinduism (Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta). | |
| 4 September | | Illustrated lecture: Goddesses today: overview of Goddess-worship in modern Hinduism. Life cycle rituals, festivals and the Goddess in every woman – Kanya puja, Golu, Rakhi. | Quiz on background information |
| 6 September | Read extract from Diana Eck, <i>India: A Sacred Geography</i> and “King Santanu and Goddess Ganga.” | Discuss readings. Lecture: Worship of Earth, rivers, trees, living beings as Goddesses. | |
| 11 September | Read “Rig Veda Hymn to Speech” and “Hymn to Saraswati.” | Discuss readings. Illustrated lecture: The Great Goddesses 1: Saraswati, Goddess of Wisdom, Education and the Arts | . |
| 13 September | Read “Lakshmi Arati” (Hymn to Lakshmi). | Illustrated lecture: The Great Goddesses 2: Lakshmi, Goddess of Prosperity. | |
| 18 September | Read “Devi Mahatmya extracts.” | Discuss reading. Illustrated lecture: the Great Goddesses 3: Durga-Parvati-Kali, the Triune Goddess and her forms (e.g. Kamakhya; Meenakshi) | . |
| 20 September | Read “Saundarya Lahari extracts” and “Lalitha Sahasranamam extracts.” | Lecture and discussion: the philosophical idea of the Ultimate Principle as female/both male and female/beyond gender. | Quiz on the Great Goddesses. |
| 25 September | Read “Bhagiratha’s Two Mothers” and “Birth of Ganesha.” | Discuss readings. Illustrated lecture: gender and sexuality in Hindu philosophy. Hindu temple architecture and the <i>garbha griha</i> (womb-house), | |

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| | | lingam and yoni; miraculous sex-change and the deities Mohini and Ayyappa. | |
| 27 September | Read “Note on Women Devotional Poets,” and “Mirabai.” | Discuss readings. Illustrated lecture: Devotional mysticism, female mystics who become Goddesses and male poets who identify as female in the context of bridal mysticism. | |
| 2 October | Read “Three Women Mystics.” | Discuss reading. Presentation on Diana Eck (Hindu Goddesses in America) | |
| 4 October | Read “Tantra.” | Illustrated lecture on Yogini temples and devadasis. Presentation on David Kinsley, <i>The Ten Mahavidyas</i> . | |
| 9 October | Revise for mid-term | Review | |
| 11 October | | | Mid-term Exam |
| 16 October | Read “The Greek Gods and Goddesses” and extracts from Christine de Pizan, <i>Book of the City of Ladies</i> (on the Greeks) | Illustrated lecture on the Greek Goddesses, and how they change over time (Greece; Rome; Renaissance; medieval; Victorian period, 20 th -21 st centuries). | |
| 18 October | Read Sappho’s “Hymns to Aphrodite.” | Illustrated lecture on Sappho. | |
| 23 October | | Continue Sappho. Discussion of her poems and of the Goddess (Aphrodite) as intimate friend. | Quiz on the Greek pantheon. |
| 25 October | Read “Homeric Hymn to Demeter” and “The Eleusinian Mysteries.” | Discuss readings. Illustrated lecture on the triune Goddess: Artemis-Persephone-Hecate. Discuss the similarities to and differences from the Durga-Kali-Parvati trinity. | First paper due. |
| 30 October | Read “Background note on the Odyssey” and extracts from it about Odysseus and Goddess Athena. | Discussion of the Goddess (Athena) as patron and political ally. | |
| 1 November | Read www.realmofhistory.com/2018/03/20/15-roman-gods-goddesses-facts/ | Presentation on Ceres as fertility Goddess in Rome (Barbara Spaeth). | Test on Greek readings so far. |

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| 6 November | No class. Election Day | | |
| 8 November | Read from the Bible: “Hymn to Sophia”; “St Paul’s visit to Ephesus” (Book of Acts). | Discuss readings. | |
| 13 November | | Presentation on Catherine Nixey, <i>The Darkening Age</i> . Presentation on Geoffrey Ashe, <i>The Virgin</i> . Discuss presentations | Quiz on Bible readings. |
| 15 November | Read Luke Chapter 1-2; Vanita, “The Marian Model,” and “Medieval Hymns to Mary.” | Discuss readings. Illustrated lecture on the Virgin Mary in European art and literature. | |
| 20 November | Read extracts (saints’ lives) from Christine de Pizan. | Discuss readings. Presentation on Christian woman mystics (Julian of Norwich; Elisabeth of Schonau) | |
| 22 November | Thanksgiving break. No class. | | |
| 27 November | Read background note on John Knox (Moodle) | The Reformation attack on worship of the Virgin and the saints. The counter-Reformation. Presentation on Eamon Duffy and/or Jack Scarisbrick. Presentation on John Knox, “The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women.” | Quiz on Marian readings. |
| 29 November | | Illustrated lecture: twentieth-century Goddesses in life and in cinema: Vaishno Devi and Santoshi Ma. Women who become Goddesses (gurus in India and the US; women politicians). | Second paper due. |
| 4 December | Read <i>The Conversations of Cow</i> , 13-76. | Discuss. | |
| 6 December | Read <i>The Conversations of Cow</i> , 79-end. | Discuss. | Quiz |
| 10 December 10.10- 12.10 | Indian film with a Goddess theme | There is no final exam | |