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RLST 353.01: TSAR - History of Yoga East & West

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Fall 2018

Topics in South Asian Religion: History of Yoga East & West (RLST 353)

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:50

3 credit

ROOM LA 307

Dr. Sravana Borkataky-Varma (Visiting Professor, Global Humanities & Religions;
and South & South-East Asian Studies
Phone: 281 216 8348

Virtual Office Hours: Monday 2-4, Friday 2-4, only by appointment

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This course fulfills elective requirements for both options in the GHR major, and for the South & South-East Asian Studies minor.

Goals:

Yoga has a long history of transmission that is interwoven with rapid remembering and forgetting. This transmission of knowledge is further compounded by religious systems, geographical preferences, and generational flavors. Today the Yoga industry in the US is worth billions and increasing at a rapid pace. So, what is Yoga? How did it become so popular? Is there an unbroken lineage of Yoga? Why is it so popular?

This class in no sense seeks to provide a single definition to describe Yoga or define its authoritative canon. Instead, it provides the student with a broad understanding of the term beginning from the historical East, to the transmission in the West, and finally looking at Modern Postural Yoga in both West and the east. We will trace the history of yoga from ancient texts like the *Yoga Sutra* to modern practices developed by innovators like Bikram and Iyengar. We will also examine the forms yoga has taken in contemporary western society and the varied responses its popularity has inspired. Along with readings, lectures, films, and discussions, the coursework will include the actual practice of different styles of yoga led by a certified instructor.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify and define the historical contexts and the human actors that have shaped the development of the yoga tradition from ancient India to the contemporary United States

2. Describe key elements of the biography, philosophy, and historical significance of significant figures like Patanjali, Yogananda, and Krishnamacharya and key works like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Yoga Sutra*, and so forth.
3. Differentiate and understand the relationship of the diverse ideas and practice that have gone under the name “yoga” over the centuries.
4. Analyze and describe current and recent debates about what relationship, if any, modern yoga has with Hinduism.

Required Texts:

1. Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
2. Mark Singleton. *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Yoga Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
3. Ed. David Gordon White, *Yoga in Practice*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Recommended Texts:

1. Gavin Flood and Charles Martin. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Norton Critical Editions. New York: Norton, 2014.
2. James Mallinson and Mark Singleton. *Roots of Yoga*. Penguin classics, 2017.

Course Contract

By signing up for this course and accepting this syllabus, the student understands that this is an historically oriented, academic study of Yoga whose reading and lecture content may sometimes conflict with the present understandings of some contemporary adherents of the traditions’. This is an implicit but also crucial point, as the course’s success will depend largely, if not entirely, upon how effectively we can all create together a “safe space” of intellectual freedom, historical inquiry, and interpersonal honesty. I will do everything in my power to create such a space. By accepting this syllabus, the student agrees to do the same, or at least acknowledges that he or she understands the basic principle of the course. Put metaphorically but not inaccurately, this is a classroom at a secular research university, not a church, temple, mosque, gurdwara, synagogue, or Yoga studio. The rest follows from there.

Expectations:

A. YOURS: As students in a 300-level course, you should expect to do quite a bit of reading—usually around 50 pages a week, sometimes less, sometimes more. I expect you to be present at every class, prepared to discuss the readings.

B. MINE: Here is what you may expect of me: I will return emails promptly (within 12 hours Monday-Thursday and within 24 hours if they are sent any other time). Since I am in Houston (CST), I urge you to write to me to schedule virtual office hours. If it is

urgent, please feel free to text. Just remember to add the Class No. or give me some reference point. I have a large student body in University of North Carolina-Wilmington and at Rice University.

Grades:

A. Participation (weighted as 25% of your grade):

1. 5 written “Reflections” (2-3 Pages): Completion of and reflection upon the reading assignment for the week. day, as well as consistent attendance and oral participation in regular discussions.

2. Attendance: Needless to say, you are expected to attend every class meeting unless you have a health or a family emergency. Missed classes will negatively affect your participation grade, even if you turn in all your discussion questions. On the other hand, if you do not do exceptionally well on your discussion questions but you are very engaged in class, it will positively affect your score.

B. Group assignment (25% of your grade): The groups will have two or three members. Since we are a small group, please email me your group composition by October 15, 2018. You will select a topic and present on Nov. 1 (Thursday). The presentation must be emailed no later than Oct. 30 (Tuesday) by 5 PM. Be creative.

C. 2,500-3,500-word Research Paper (50% of your grade): Your paper will be due on or before **December 11 at 11:59 PM** (MST) via email.

1. Style: You will use Chicago-style footnote citations and include a bibliography with at least three sources from outside class.

2. Topics: Here are three sample suggested topics. But if you have another idea, let me know.

- a. Yogic Ideas of the Body
- b. Critiques of Modern Western Yoga
- c. Yoga in Popular Culture

Yoga section of the Oxford Bibliography Online for Hinduism can be a great source guide.

Assignment	Grade Percentage
Class attendance & 5 “Reflections” (2-3 Pages)	25%
Group Assignment	25%
Research Paper	50 %

Reading Schedule:

Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Pager)	Class Plan
28 Aug – 25 Sept.		Classes designed and taught by Prof. Bradley Clough
Sept. 27		Introductions, New Syllabus discussions, Expectations, and content assessment
Oct. 2	Read before class: David Gordon White, “Yoga, Brief History of an Idea.” PDF on Moodle/Email.	Lecture and discussion on the reading.

YOGA IN EASTERN RELIGIOUS TEXTS & YOGIS

Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Pager)	Class Plan
Oct. 4	Watch <i>Altar of Fire</i> Read before class: Ian Whicher, “The Integrity of the Yoga <i>Darśana</i> .” PDF on Moodle/Email.	Discussions integrating the documentary with Ian Whicher, “The Integrity of the Yoga <i>Darśana</i> .”
Oct. 9	Read before class: James L. Fitzgerald, “A Prescription for Yoga and Power in the <i>Mahābhārata</i> ,” in Ed. David Gordon White <i>Yoga in Practice</i> (pp. 43-57).	Discussions on the <i>Mahābhārata</i> , Yoga and a lead into the <i>Bhagavadgītā</i> .
Oct. 11	Submit “Reflections” by 8 AM MST on Yoga <i>Darśana</i>. Read before class: Angelika Malinar, “Yoga Practices in the <i>Bhagavadgītā</i> ,” in Ed. David Gordon White <i>Yoga in Practice</i> . (pp. 58-72)	No lecture. Sravana at South Asia Conference, Madison.
Oct. 16	Read before class: Georg Feuerstein, “The Whispered Wisdom of the Early Upanishads.” PDF on Moodle/Email. Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. <i>Yoga: Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali</i> . (pp.1-43)	Discussions on Georg Feuerstein, “The Whispered Wisdom of the Early Upanishads” Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. <i>Yoga: Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali</i> . (pp.1-43)

Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Pager)	Class Plan
Oct 18	<p>Submit “Reflections” by 8 AM MST on Yoga in the <i>Mahābhārata</i> and the <i>Bhagavadgītā</i>.</p> <p>Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. <i>Yoga: Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali</i>. (pp. 44-83)</p>	Discussions on the “Reflections Page” and continue class conversation on Barbara Stoler Miller
Oct. 23	Read before class: Glen Alexander Hayes, “Eroticism and Cosmic Transformation as Yoga: The <i>Ātmatattva</i> of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal,” in Ed. David Gordon White <i>Yoga in Practice</i> . (pp. 223-241)	Discussions on eroticism and Tantra
Oct. 25	Read before class: James Mallinson, “The Original Gorakṣaśataka,” in Ed. David Gordon White <i>Yoga in Practice</i> . (pp. 257-272)	Discussions on <i>Haṭha</i> Yoga and <i>Nāth</i> Yogis.
Oct. 30	Read before class: Carl W. Ernst, “A Fourteenth-Century Persian Account of Breath Control and Meditation,” in Ed. David Gordon White <i>Yoga in Practice</i> . (pp. 133-139)	Discussion on Islam in India along with Yoga and Islam. Submit Group Assignment content by 5 PM MST.
Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Pager)	Class Plan
Nov. 1	<p>Submit “Reflections” by 8 AM MST on the influence of Tantra and the <i>Nāth</i> Yogis on Yoga.</p> <p>Read before class: “Yoga as Physical Culture I: Strength and Vigor,” in Mark Singleton <i>Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Yoga Practice</i>. (pp. 113-142)</p>	Group Assignment Presentation
Nov. 6	Read before class: “Yoga as Physical Culture II: Harmonial Gymnastics and	Discussions on Modern Postural Yoga.

Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Pager)	Class Plan
	Esoteric Dance,” in Mark Singleton <i>Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Yoga Practice</i> . (pp. 143-162)	
Nov. 8	<p>Submit “Reflections” by 8 AM MST on Modern Postural Yoga.</p> <p>Read before class: “The Medium and the Message: Visual Reproduction and the <i>Āsana</i> Revival,” and “T. Krishnamacharya and the Mysore Asana Revival” in Mark Singleton <i>Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Yoga Practice</i>. (pp. 163-210)</p>	Discussions on the “Reflections Page” and conclude Modern Postural Yoga.

FEW SIGNIFICANT GURUS OF YOGA TRANSMISSION

Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Pager)	Class Plan
Nov. 13	Read before class: Dermot Killingley, “Manufacturing Yogis: Swami Vivekanand as a Yoga Teacher.” PDF on Moodle/Email .	
Nov. 15	Read before class: Ann Gleig and Charles I. Flores, “Remembering Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: The Forgotten Lineage of Integral Yoga.” PDF on Moodle/Email .	
Nov. 20	Read before class: Suzanne Newcombe, “The Institutionalization of the Yoga Tradition: ‘Gurus’ B. K. S. Iyengar and Yogini Sunita in Britain.” PDF on Moodle/Email .	
Nov. 27	Read before class: Andrea Jain, “Muktananda: Entrepreneurial Godman, Tantric Hero.” PDF on Moodle/Email .	

Date	Weekly Assignment (Reflection Paper)	Class Plan
Nov. 29	Read before class: Maya Warriar, "Online <i>Bhakti</i> in a Modern Guru Organization." PDF on Moodle/Email.	
Dec. 4	<p>Submit "Reflections" by 8 AM MST on Gurus of Yoga transmission.</p> <p>Read before class: Stuart Ray Sarbacker, "Swami Ramdev: Modern Yoga Revolutionary." PDF on Moodle/Email.</p>	
Dec. 6	Write before class an outline for the Research Paper	Discuss Topic and progress on the Research Paper
Dec. 11		RESEARCH PAPER; December 11 at 11:59 PM MST.

Grading Grid

A (94 and above)

A- (90 to 93)

B+ (86-89)

B (85)

B- (80-84)

C- (80-84)

C+ (76-79)

C (75)

C- (70-74)

D+ (66-69)

D (65)

D- (60-64)

Below 60 (F)

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).

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.