SSEA 234X.01B: Hinduism

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The purpose of this course is to provide an historical overview of the many different indigenous religious movements in India that we now call “Hinduism.” Through the reading of mythological, philosophical, ethical, meditative, and devotional primary texts, as well as historical and anthropological studies, we will show how Hindu traditions were constructed through a set of ongoing tensions: Between ascetic/contemplative and sacrificer/priest, villager and city-dweller, low caste and high caste, poet and philosopher, colonized and colonizer, and “secular” citizen and “religious” citizen. In tracing these tensions and the developments they brought about throughout Indian history, we will: 1) examine the roots of Indian tradition; 2) master the basic vocabulary of Indian thought; 3) use that terminology to study developments in Hindu doctrine and popular practice; and 4) examine the religio-political significance of contemporary beliefs and rituals.

**Required Readings** (all are available for purchase at the campus bookstore):

- Eck, Diana. *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*
- Embree, Ainslie, editor. *The Hindu Tradition: Readings in Oriental Thought*
- Klostermaier, Klaus. *A Survey of Hinduism (3rd Edition)*
- Miller, Barbara Stoler, translator. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna’s Counsel in Time of War*
- Miller, Barbara Stoler, translator. *Yoga, Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*
**Grading**

1. Class Preparation and Participation: completion of and reflection upon the reading assignment for the day, as well as consistent attendance and oral participation in regular discussions. **No more than two absences will be accepted** without written authorization from the Health Service or an advisor, counselor, or administrator. Any unexcused absences beyond two will begin to negatively affect one’s grade. Conversely, consistent preparation, attendance, and participation will positively affect one’s grade (20% of the final grade).

2. One 10-12 page research paper. I will be handing out a list of suggested topics, but ultimately the choice of topic is yours (20% of the final grade).

3. Mid-Term and Final Exams (each is worth 30% of the final grade, making the two equal 60% total).

**Class Meetings and Assignments**

**I. Roots of Hindu Tradition: Indus Valley Civilization & Vedic Religious Traditions (“Brahmanism”)**

- **Tues. 8/28** Introduction to the Course  

- **Thurs. 8/30** The Indus Valley Civilization  
  Klostermaier: pp. 17-29

- **Tues. 9/4** The Worldview and Ritual of the *Vedas*  
  Klostermaier: pp. 45-50; 56-58; 86-90; 101-108; and 122-133.  
  Embree: pp. 3-47

- **Thurs. 9/6** Vedic Innovation: The *Upanishads*  
  Klostermaier: pp. 156-180  
  Embree: pp. 48-65

**II. Challenges to Brahmanism: The Shramanic Traditions**

- **Tues. 9/11** The Rise of Buddhism and Jainism  
  Handout: Thomas Hopkins: “Challenges and Changes” (from Hindu Religious Traditions)  
  Handout: Selections from Buddhist and Jain Scriptures (from Sources of Indian Tradition, Volume I)
II. Smriti Literature: Formative Hindu Responses to Shramanic Traditions
Thurs. 9/13 Class/Caste Duty and Life’s Stages: The Treatises on Dharma, Part I
Klostermaier: pp. 30-36; 50-52; Chapter 20; 298-302; 308-310
Embree: 69-96

Tues. 9/18 The Role of Caste in Hindu Society

Thurs. 9/20 The Aims of Life and Householder’s Dharma: The Treatises on Dharma, Part II
Handout: pp. 203-212; 254-264; 234-244; and 213-231 from <i>Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. I</i>
Handout: pp. 226-229 from <i>Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. I</i>
Handout: Susan S. Wadley, “One Straw from a Broom Cannot Sweep: The Ideology & Practice of the Joint Family in Rural North India”
Handout: John Lancaster, “Women on the Rise in India Feel the Riptide of Tradition”
Klostermaier: 320-324

Tues. 9/25 The Three “Yogas” and the Rise of Devotionalism: The <i>Bhagavad-Gita</i>
Klostermaier: Chapter 5
<i>Bhagavad-Gita</i>: Chapters 1-11

Thurs. 9/27 The <i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> (continued)
<i>Bhagavad-Gita</i>: Chapters 12-18.

IV. “Classical” Hinduism: Epic (<i>Itihasa</i>), Myth (<i>Parana</i>), Philosophy (<i>Darshana</i>), Meditation (<i>Yoga</i>) & Esoteric Practice (<i>Tantra</i>)

Tues. 10/2 The Epics
Klostermaier: pp. 59-60; 66-70
Embree: 136-138
<i>Ramayana</i>: Both Introductions, Prologue, and Chapters 1-5

Thurs. 10/4 Epic (continued)
<i>Ramayana</i>: Chapters 6-14 and Epilogue

Tues. 10/9 **Mid-Term Exam**
Thurs 10/11 Major Trends in Indian Philosophy: Overview and the Nyaya & Vaisheskika Schools
Klostermaier: Chapters 23 and 24
Embree: 180-186

Tues. 10/16 Major Trends in Hindu Philosophy: The Mimamsa and Vedanta Schools
Klostermaier: Chapter 26
Embree: 186-189; and 197-207

Thurs. 10/18 Hindu Philosophy Applied to Hindu Meditation: The Samkhya and Yoga Schools
Klostermaier, Chapter 24
Embree: 189-194
Yoga Sutra: Introduction and Part I

**Research Paper Proposal and Bibliography Due**

Tues. 10/23 Hindu Meditation (continued)
Yoga Sutra: Parts II & III

Thurs. 10/25 Hindu Tantra
Handout: Georg Feuerstein, “The Esotericism of Medieval Tantra-Yoga”
Handout: selections from Tantric literature: pp. 131-138 from Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism
pp. 204-207 from Indian Religions: A Historical Reader of Spiritual Expression & Experience

V. Popular Hinduism: Devotional Theism (Bhakti)

Tues. 10/30 The Rise of Devotional Theism (Bhakti): The Myths of the Puranas and the “The One Lord and the Many Gods”
Embree 153-156; and 227-231
Klostermaier: 70-73; and Chapter 14

Thurs. 11/1 Popular Hinduism: Devotional Theism (Bhakti): Ways of Worship (puja)
Klostermaier: pp. 108-117

Tues. 11/6 No Classes: Election Day

Thurs. 11/8 Ways of Devotional Worship (puja) (continued)
Eck: pp. 44-75
Tues. 11/13  Major Gods I: Vishnu and His Incarnations (avatāras)
Klostermaier: Chapter 15
Handout: selection of Puranic myths on Vishnu
Embree: 246-260

Thurs. 11/15  Devotion to Vishnu as Krishna: The Life and Songs of Mirabai, Female Poet-Saint
Klostermaier: 317-319
Handout on the life of Mirabai
Levi: pp. 7-11; 18-41

Tues. 11/20  No class: Instructor away at a conference.

Thurs. 11/22  No class: Thanksgiving Holiday.

Tues. 11/27  Major Gods II: Shiva
Klostermaier: Chapter 16
Handout: selections of Puranic myths on Shiva
Embree: 232-245

Thurs. 11/29  Major Gods III: The Goddess (Devi or Shakti)
Klostermaier: Chapter 17; pp. 314-317; and 319-320
Handout: selections of Puranic myths on and devotional poems to the Goddess

**Monday 12/3: Research Papers Due**

Tues. 12/4  Documentary Presentations on bhakti

VI. Major Movements and Figures in Modern Hinduism

Tues. 5/3  Hindu Revival & Reform in the 19th and 20th Centuries
Klostermaier: Chapters 30-32
Embree: 299-322; and 325-348

**Final Exam: TBA**