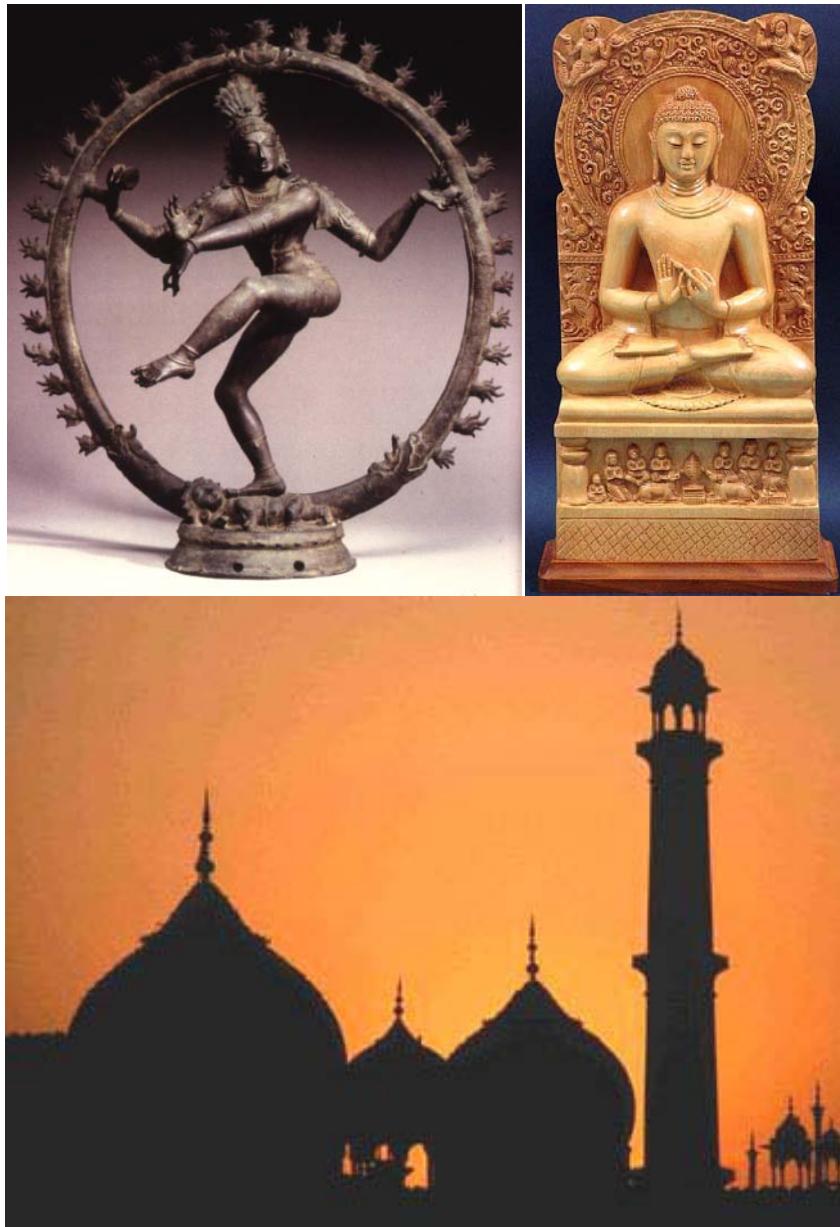


Religious Studies 255

The Religious Traditions of India



Rhodes College
10:00 AM, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
Professor Mark W. Muesse

Religious Studies 255

The Religious Traditions of India

No region in the world has been more religiously creative and philosophically rich than the Indian subcontinent. India and the countries surrounding it have long provided the matrix for some of history's most colorful, interesting, and profound spiritual traditions. Among the religions indigenous to India are the various forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. In addition, the Abrahamic traditions—particularly, Islam—have significant representation among the Indians. Using the methods of the historical and phenomenological study of religion, we will study the development and principal features of India's native religions as well as the impact of Islam on Indian culture.

The goals of this course are more than simply learning facts about the religions of India, although knowing basic data is fundamental. Beyond the acquisition of information, the study of religion promises to sharpen our skills in the empathetic understanding of difference. And perhaps by learning more about other cultures and traditions, we may learn more about ourselves. Says the poet Rudyard Kipling, "What should they of England know who only England know?"

Resources

Required Texts:

Mark W. Muesse. *The Hindu Traditions: A Concise Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, eds., *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957.

The Upanishads. Trans., Juan Mascaró. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965.

Hermann Hesse. *Siddhartha*. Trans., Hilda Rosner. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1951.

Michael Carrithers, *Buddha: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, 1996.

John J. Holder, *Early Buddhist Discourses*. Hackett Publishing Co., 2006.

Bhagavad Gita: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song. Trans. Graham Schweig. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.

The Qur'an and Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad: Selections Annotated and Explained. Trans., Yusuf Ali, and ed., Sohaib N. Sultan. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Path, 2007.

Eleanor Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Other required readings are available on the Academic Departments and Programs fileserver.

Required Films:

India and the Infinite, Part 3 of *The Mystic's Journey*, 29 minutes

The Altar of Fire, 45 minutes

Naked in Ashes, 103 minutes

In the Footprints of the Buddha, 55 minutes

330 Million Gods, 55 minutes

The Mahabharata, 318 minutes

The Message, 220 minutes

Gandhi, 191 minutes

All films are available on Moodle.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are as follows:

10% Participation. Participation comprises:

Preparation. It is important to come to class adequately prepared. The Course Outline indicates the readings and films that should be completed prior to class meetings. *Please bring the day's reading with you to class.*

Out-of-Class Activities. Students are also expected to attend field trips to the [India Cultural Center and Temple](#) and the [Muslim Society of Memphis](#) and to attend a performance of Shakuntala Reductia at the McCoy Theatre. If you are unable to do so, please see me about alternative possibilities.

Contributions to Class Discussions. It is essential that you contribute to the colloquia. If you have difficulty speaking in class, please see me. I can offer you several strategies for contributing to class discussions. See "Grades for Class Participation" appended below for more information on how contributions will be graded.

Facilitating Class Discussions. Students, in teams of two, will be responsible for initiating two class discussions during the course of the semester.

40% Essays. There will be four brief writing assignments on various topics. Each paper counts 10% of the final grade.

30% Tests. Two tests covering the lectures, discussions, readings, and films for the first and second thirds of the course. Each test counts 15% of the final grade for the course.

20% Final examination. The exam will be comprehensive but will emphasize the final third of the course.

All work submitted for this course should be the product of your own efforts. Students are expected to abide by the [Honor Code](#). Guidelines for "Writing a Paper in Religious Studies" can be found on the [Religious Studies web page](#). See **How I Grade Essays** (attached below) for more information and helpful hints to improve writing. For additional assistance, visit the Writing Center in Barret 212 or review the Center web page.

Incompletes

An incomplete grade may be given to a student who is unable to complete the required coursework because of illness or other extenuating circumstances. Students wishing to receive an incomplete must consult with me prior to the due date of the final paper. Upon my approval, the student must submit the appropriate application to the Registrar before final grades are due. All unfinished work must then be completed and submitted to me by the end of the second week of the following semester.

Attendance Policy

It is essential to attend class. What you learn from participating in the seminar goes beyond what can be measured on papers and other forms of evaluation. I do not reckon absences as excused or unexcused. If you choose to miss class to participate in an extracurricular or other activity, your choice indicates the priority you give to this course and the grade you receive will reflect that decision. Each student is permitted three absences during the semester without an adverse effect on the grade. After the third absence, however, each subsequent absence will lower the final numeric average by one point. Twelve absences will thus drop an 87 to 78.

Grace

You may have observed that it is not a perfect world, and from time-to-time, we all need a little slack. I recognize this. There may come a time when you need to turn in a late paper or want some other *slight* bend of the rules. You can count on *one* act of grace during the semester to help get you back on track. But since I'm not god, my supply of grace is limited. Don't count on getting *too much* slack.

Communication

I encourage you to check your e-mail frequently for announcements and other matters concerning this course. I will use the e-mail to communicate with you collectively and individually. It is often easier to contact me through e-mail than by telephone.

Office Information

I am happy to meet with you for any reason. My office is located in 411 Clough. You may drop by during office hours: MWF, 2:00-2:30 PM; TTh, 9:00-12:00 AM. If these times are not convenient for you, please call or e-mail me to make an appointment for another time. My campus extension is 3909.

Course Outline

INTRODUCTION	
Day 1	Introduction to the course
Day 2	The sources of Indian diversity Read: <i>Muesse, The Hindu Traditions, xiii-xvi; xix-xx; 1-12.</i> View: <i>India and the Infinite</i>

THE EARLY CULTURES OF INDIA

<p>Day 3</p>	<p>The Indus Civilization</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i>, 15-29.</p> <p><u>The Ancient Indus Civilization</u></p> <p><u>Indus Civilization Geography</u></p> <p><u>Ancient Indus Sites</u></p> <p><u>Mohenjo-Daro</u></p>
<p>Day 4</p>	<p>The Indo-Āryans</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i>, 30-39.</p> <p><u>The Aryan "Invasion"</u></p> <p>"The Vedas," from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, 3-20.</p>
<p>Day 5</p>	<p>The world of the Vedas</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i>, 40-55.</p> <p>"The Vedas," from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, 20-36.</p>
<p>Day 6</p>	<p>Vedic ritual</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i>, 55-58.</p> <p>View:</p> <p><i>Altar of Fire</i></p>

THE AXIAL TRANSFORMATION

<p>Day 7</p>	<p>Samsara and karma</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i>, 61-71.</p> <p>"Laws of Manu," Section 1, from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, 173-175.</p>
--------------	--

Day 8	Caste and dharma Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 72-82 “Laws of Manu,” Section 2, from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, 175-177; Section 4, 184-189.
Day 9	Sexuality and gender Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 83-96. “Laws of Manu,” Section 3, from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, 177-184; Section 5, 189-192. <i>Kama Sutra</i> , Parts I, III, IV (Chapter 1), V (Chapter 1) at: http://www.sacred-texts.com/sex/kama/index.htm

CLASSICAL HINDUISM

Day 10	The way of action Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 99-114.
Day 11	The way of knowledge Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 115 Mascaró, <i>The Upanishads</i> , 49-84.
Day 12	Vedānta Read: Mascaró, <i>The Upanishads</i> , 85-143. View: <i>Naked in Ashes</i>
Day 13	Imagining liberation Read: Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> .

Day 14	First Test
BUDDHISM AND JAINISM	
Day 15	The life of Shakyamuni Buddha Read: Carrithers, <i>Buddha</i> , 1-37. Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 1-8 [through section 5].
Day 16	Direct experience and the middle path Read: Carrithers, <i>Buddha</i> , 37-52. Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 19-25.
Day 17	The awakening Read: Carrithers, <i>Buddha</i> , 53-69. Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 8 [section 6]-18.
Day 18	Why we suffer Read: Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 26-41.
Day 19	The end of suffering Read: Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 59-72; 95-122; 128-149.
Day 20	The noble path Read: Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 164-201.
Day 21	Cultivating the mind: meditation practice Read: Muesse, “ Cultivating a Quiet Mind ” Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> , pp. 42-58.

Day 22	The rise and fall of Indian Buddhism View: <i>In the Footprints of the Buddha</i>
Day 23	The Jains Read: Muesse, "Jainism" from <i>Religions of the Axial Age</i> (to be distributed)
Day 24	The Jains Read: "The Basic Doctrines of Jainism" from Wm. Theodore de Bary, et al, eds. <i>Sources of Indian Tradition</i> , New York: Columbia University Press, 1958.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF HINDUISM	
Day 25	Hindu theism Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 129-143.
Day 26	The way of devotion Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 144-155. View: <i>330 Million Gods</i>
Day 27	The epic tradition View: <i>The Mahabharata</i>
Day 28	Field trip India Cultural Center and Temple
Day 29	Second Test
Day 30	On the field of dharma Read: Schweig, <i>The Bhagavad Gita</i> , 3-136.

Day 31	On the field of dharma Read: <i>Schweig, The Bhagavad Gita, 137-242.</i>
Day 32	Hindu goddesses Read: <i>Muesse, The Hindu Traditions, 156-164.</i>
Day 33	Tantra Read: <i>Muesse, The Hindu Traditions, 164-168.</i> <i>Lama Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra: The Transformation of Desire, Boston: Wisdom, 1987, 1-27.</i>

ISLAM AND ITS INFLUENCE

Day 34	The life of the Prophet Read: <i>Muesse, "The Life and Teachings of Muhammad," Part 1.</i> View: <i>The Message</i>
Day 35	Muhammad and the Qur'an Read: <i>Muesse, "The Life and Teachings of Muhammad," Part 2.</i>
Day 36	Islamic theology Read: <i>The Qur'an and Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, pp. xv-88.</i>
Day 37	Islamic practice Read: <i>The Qur'an and Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, pp. 89-201.</i>

Day 38	Field trip Muslim Society of Memphis 1065 Stratford Road
Day 39	Islam in India Read: “The Coming of Islam,” 122-136.
Day 40	The Sikhs Read: “Kabir” and “Nanak,” <i>Songs of the Saints of India</i> , 34-88.
Day 41	The Sikhs Read: Nesbitt, 1-65.
Day 42	Modern India Read: Muesse, <i>The Hindu Traditions</i> , 164-168. View: <i>Gandhi</i>
Day 43	Review
Day 44	Final examination

How I Grade Essays

Writing and critical thinking are, I believe, the most important parts of a liberal arts education. I therefore take essay writing very seriously and make it a significant part of your final grade. In grading students' essays, I take care to mark them as accurately and as painstakingly as possible. My own experience tells me that one's writing cannot improve unless mistakes are clearly pointed out. Learning to write well is hard work and takes much practice. In this sense, we are all beginners.

To help you in your writing practice for this course, I have outlined below the general principles I use in assessing grades for essays. I readily admit that grading essays--especially papers in the humanities--involves subjective judgments, particularly

in the area of content. Ultimately, the grade you receive is the consequence of a judgment part objective and reasonable, part intuitive and aesthetic. In general, I try not to evaluate the particular position or point of view you express; rather, I look at how well you have argued that position, how fully and sympathetically you have considered alternative views, how logical and coherent your point of view is. In the final analysis, I am not really interested in whether or not you believe in God, for example, but I am very interested in *why* you believe or do not believe.

A--The A paper is, above all, interesting and effectively written. It demonstrates knowledge of the subject and evidences much thought about it. It is clearly structured and has a carefully argued thesis. The A paper is outstanding in all respects: it is devoid of any mechanical, grammatical, or typographical mistakes. Formal errors will reduce a paper's grade, regardless of content.

B--The B paper is missing some element that distinguishes the A essay. Perhaps the paper demonstrates sufficient knowledge and thought, but the presentation is pedestrian. Perhaps the content is thoughtful and interesting, but the essay suffers from mechanical or typographical mistakes.

C--The C paper fulfills the terms of the assignment without distinction.

D--The D paper is uninteresting, lacking in comprehension, and flawed by mechanical errors.

F--The F paper is without merit. It is flagrantly lacking in insight and comprehension, and appears insufficiently acquainted with academic standards for written work.

Some Hints for Better Writing

I expect proper form for papers in the humanities.

It is okay to use the first person.

Do not use the passive voice unless it is absolutely necessary.

Use inclusive language: that is, do not use "man" or "mankind" as the generic term for all of humanity (humankind, humans).

Create an interesting title.

Use “that” and “which” appropriately. (“Which” generally follows a comma.) Use “who” when you are talking about a human being.

If a quotation is more than three lines long, it should be indented and single-spaced, omitting the quotation marks.

Use two spaces between sentences.

Avoid vague abstractions like “the Church.” Specify exactly what you mean.

Number the pages.

Do not use the word “feel” as a substitute for “think.”

Avoid inappropriate use of slang (e.g., “It really sucked to be a slave in Egypt.”)

Avoid clichés like the plague.

Quote the dictionary only if absolutely demanded by the context. Ordinarily, Webster is not an authority in this course. Never begin an essay with “According to Webster’s Dictionary....”

Always edit. I rarely receive a paper that cannot be improved by eliminating verbiage. Get a pencil (or edit online) and see how many words you can cross out. At the same time, watch for typos, misspellings, and grammatical mistakes. Remember, a spell-checker will help, but does not always help with the specialized vocabulary that is part of this course.

Always keep a copy of your paper.

Please staple the paper in the upper left corner. Do not waste your money on plastic or paper report holders. They are useless, and I will merely throw them away.

When you receive your graded paper, read it carefully. I spend much time and energy grading these essays and usually provide detailed commentary. You will not profit by our efforts--yours and mine--unless you review the graded essay. Always feel free to talk to me about the paper, both before and after it is graded. If you do not understand why the paper receives the grade it does, then we should talk. The essay is only part of what I hope is a semester-long dialogue.

If you are serious about improving your writing skills, you may wish to consult:

Ronald Walters and T.H. Kern, "[How to Eschew Weasel Words](#)"

William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd edition, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979.

Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*, Boston: Shambhala, 1986.

Grades for Class Participation

"A" Range:

- Consistently demonstrates mastery of content and context of readings through careful preparation and analysis.
- Connects daily readings to recurring themes of the course by contrasting and comparing them with past readings; makes and adequately defends judgments about texts and ideas; consistently raises questions and highlights issues of importance connected to the readings.
- Initiates discussion; listens respectfully to the ideas and opinions of others and responds in a way that benefits the discussion rather than dominates it.
- Always arrives on time for class.

"B" Range

- Frequently demonstrates attention to content and context of readings by raising good questions about texts and ideas.
- Shows improvement over the semester in understanding texts and their significance and connecting daily assignments to past readings; makes and adequately defends judgments about texts and ideas; often raises questions and highlights issues of importance connected to the readings.
- Listens respectfully to the ideas and opinions of others and responds in a way that benefits the discussion rather than dominates it.

"C" Range

- Does not always complete assigned readings prior to class; is unable or unwilling to engage in discussions and/or respond to questions or raise questions related to the readings.
- Makes connections between texts rarely and with difficulty; makes judgments about texts and ideas based solely on opinion or feeling; demonstrates little grasp

of the overall significance of the readings and makes little effort to investigate further their significance.

- Waits for others to initiate discussion and usually speaks only when called upon.

"D" Range

- Is minimally prepared for class, having only scanned the reading assignments if at all; consistently fails to bring assigned materials to class and shows no sign of engagement with the texts prior to class.
- Makes indefensible connections between reading and/or judgments about the readings that are free from thoughtful analysis; is uninterested in the significance of the readings apart from passing the course.
- Is passive in class; shows little respect or interest in the points raised by peers and the professor.
- Forgets to turn off cell phone before class.
- Whispers or writes notes to other students during class

Learn and Live: Some Thoughts about Teaching

Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.

Chinese Proverb

Teaching is an act of faith. I have long given up the expectation that I will see and enjoy immediate results in my teaching. The things I really want students to know—how to live well, how to be and do good, how to think about the wonders of the world and the mysteries of being alive—are not things that can be measured by tests, grades, or evaluations. I can only hope that my influence will someday have a salutary effect in their lives and that consequently I will contribute modestly to making the world a better place.

Accepting that the real value of my teaching is manifested in the future has transformed my way of thinking about what I teach and how I teach it. Five years—maybe five weeks!—after my course, most students will have little recollection of the material we studied. But they will remember me. For better or worse, the way I comport myself, treat others, and approach the business of learning is what makes an indelible impression. The Hasidic tradition of Judaism relates the story of Leib Saras who returned from a visit to his rabbi and was asked by family and friends what words of Torah he learned. Leib Saras replied, “I did not go to my teacher to hear his words of Torah; I went to see how he ties his shoelaces.” I am very much aware that many of my students are there to see my shoelaces, and those who aren’t, observe them anyway.

What I want my students to see in me is a real individual who aspires never to stop learning, a person who struggles to understand the world and to live a life of genuineness and sincerity, one who often falls short of that aspiration and gets discouraged, and yet tries again. It is more important to me that they regard me as a master of learning than as a master of a subject. As teacher, my goal is to be the best student in the classroom. I want students to learn from me how to learn, how to teach themselves, and to see the value of never giving up the spirit of inquiry and curiosity.

Foremost among my pedagogical aspirations is humility, but I confess this is more an ideal than a reality. I have come to prize humility as the greatest of virtues, but I lament how far away from me it often is. Humility is imperative to the work of learning, and hence of teaching. The students I have found to be the hardest to teach are those who lack humility; it is difficult to inspire someone who thinks he or she already knows. Seeking to be humble as a teacher means recognizing my own limitations both as student (there are still so many things I do not know and never will) and about how best to encourage and inspire others to learn. Being humble means striving to keep learning how to teach.

I have also come to embrace the virtue of risk and its companion courage, although, again, I make no special claims to having attained either. I have learned that becoming a better teacher means risking innovation, trying out new approaches and new ideas. Taking pedagogical risks has to be done with courage, because it is quite possible to fail.

But I'm consoled by the words of one worthy philosopher: "You can ultimately succeed only at unimportant things. The loftiest things in life often end in failure." Because learning and teaching are among the most important things in life, it is inevitable that we will sometimes fail at them. The best teachers, I believe, make that moment the occasion for another lesson.