REL3300, Religions of India
Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Religion
vasu@ufl.edu (Please use email for all communications)
office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm and by appointment

Credits: 3 credit hours  
Class Meeting Time: Monday 8; Wednesday 8-9  
Course Term: Fall 2017

This course focusses on the religious traditions and cultural diversity seen in the Indian subcontinent. The lectures and discussions will span the following areas:

(a) a historical introduction to the Hindu tradition;
(b) thematic studies including domestic and temple rituals, discussions on the status of women, and Hinduism in the diaspora; and
(c) a study of the "minority" traditions in India.

We will strike a balance between a historical approach and a thematic one whereby sacraments, rituals, and other issues and activities that are religiously important for a Hindu family can be explained. This will include discussion of issues that may not be found in traditional texts, and I will be supplementing the readings with short journal and magazine articles, videos, and slides. For instance, we will raise many questions concerning the practice of Hinduism, and pay particular attention to the experience of women. Why do the Hindus (especially women) wear a mark on their foreheads? What kind of diet do they follow? How do Hindus worship at the home shrine and at the temple? How do they celebrate their festivals? What do they say during their weddings? Why has yoga generally been unimportant for the average Hindu for the last one thousand years or so? What do the Hindus mean by auspicious times and sacred places? How does the caste system function when marriages are arranged?

The larger questions we will be indirectly addressed in the course will include the following: Are the Indian concepts of "Hinduism" and western concepts of "religion" congruent? How has colonial scholarship and assumptions shaped our understanding of south Asian Hindus and the "minority traditions" as distinct religious and social groups, blurring regional differences? How are gender issues made manifest in rituals? To what extent does language identity overshadow religious identity? How does religious identity influence political and social behavior? How do Hindus in south Asia differentiate among themselves and what criteria do they use?

In the third part of the course we will discuss "minority" religions of India. This will include discussions on Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam.

Course Goals
When you complete this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain world views, rituals, and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.
2. Problematize the category of religion and identify some working definitions, along with their limitations.
3. Identify the social, political, and cultural factors that come into play in the formation and understanding of a given religion.
4. Recognize the significance of performance in the practice and transmission of these religions.

**Course Readings and Required Texts**


***Other supplemental materials, such as videos will be provided on this course website or through the class list serve.***

**Instructional Methods:** Class room teaching and videos made by the instructor. I will be communicating with you through the class list serve regularly to send assigned readings. Term papers and the final exam are to be submitted through turnitin in Canvas.

**Course Requirements and Policies**

1. Regular attendance and completion of required reading on time. Students are responsible for all the material covered in the class. Lectures will complement the reading and will not repeat them.

   Attendance will be taken regularly. You are allowed two absences; after that each unexcused absence will cost a half grade reduction in your final grade. Coming late to class regularly may also affect your attendance record and cause your grade to be lowered.

2. **Quizzes**

   Regular quizzes will be administered in class. Quizzes are non-cumulative and are worth 50% of your overall grade. You will have ten minutes to do the quiz IN CLASS.

   Quizzes will be a combination of (a) choosing from multiple answers and (b) short answers to describe a concept or a ritual.

   No makeups are allowed, except for DOCUMENTED medical or family emergencies.

3. **Class Term Paper**

   Possible topics for the term papers will be discussed in class. You are free to choose any topic that interests you and submit it through turnitin/Canvas. I will be happy to discuss your interests and suggest an initial biblio. to get you started. The term paper should be about 8 double spaced pages (about 300 words per page) + endnotes/citations, bibliography and all the academic niceties. It is due on October 30th 6:00 pm. Papers submitted late (within 48 hours of the due date) will be accepted, but the grade for the paper will be lowered by one letter.

   No paper will be accepted after November 1, 6:00 pm.

4. **Final Exam**
You will have a final exam (take home) that will be submitted through turnitin. This will involve two essay type questions. More details will be given during the semester.

**Course Technology**
Frequent access to a computer with a good broadband connection is required to view videos.

**University Policies**

*University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities*
Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the [Dean of Students Office](http://www.deanofstudents.ufl.edu/) (Links to an external site.). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

*University Policy on Academic Misconduct*
Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the [UF Student Honor Code](http://www.isis.ufl.edu/) (Links to an external site.).

*University Rules on Attendance policies* absences from classes are posted on [http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html)
Students are expected to come to class on time and not use electronic devices for any other purpose except for taking notes. Attendance will be taken regularly with sign in sheets. Missing class more than twice will result in the lowering of final grade by one notch.

**Grading Breakdown**

Quizzes: 50%
Term Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

**Grading Scale**

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<th>GRADE</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td>D/PASS</td>
<td>65-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/FAIL</td>
<td>64 and below</td>
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*For more information about UF's minus grade system visit: [http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html](http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html)*
Cited below as “Oxtoby.”

**Week 1**
August 21 Monday. *No office hours today*
Introduction to the course. Intro to the Hindu Tradition: Forehead Marks
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f3b25f15d5ea437fb19e0b8ef5d5cb681d

August 23 Wednesday *No classroom Instruction; no office hours*
Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedas
Watch the following videos.
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/93169297dd3646ccbf1dc6ce82c3d641d
The Vedas
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/82183b9beff240209b83aedic13713d341d
Upanishads
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b918debfa92c46e6bfc39e52466cc7051d
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 28-40

**Week 2**
August 28 Monday Ramayana
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/bec39dd3123341d0ac88b0b42255f92f1d
August 30 Wednesday Mahabharata
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b5540f42fcb3420b86850f4a18f0071d
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 41-44
Quiz 1 (on Indus Valley Civ. The Vedas and The Upanishads)

**Week 3**
September 4 Holiday
September 6 Wednesday The Bhagavad Gita
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/ceb720a6e6724817b8d98d0a3f8505b11d
Hindu Deities
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b1aa1be27a044015aa6df7d5ce6656f1d
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 44-53; 74-75
Chapter on Hindu Deities
Quiz 2 (on the Ramayana, Mahabharata)

**Week 4**
September 11, Monday Hindu Philosophies
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/e1b022c8e9dd463387c382ff35754b401d
Yoga
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/46704bad934544009f88dd348bdc3ee51d
September 13 Wednesday
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 53-57
Chapter on Philosophies
Quiz 3 on The Bhagavad Gita and Hindu Deities

Week 5
September 18, Monday       Devotion (Bhakti )
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/46704bad934544009f88dd348bdc3ee51d
September 20 Wednesday   Sacred Landscapes
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f23a3a597e81417abe64162d3151c3741d
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 59-to first paragraph of 66
Chapter on Bhakti in Canvas
Chapter in Canvas for Sacred Landscapes
Quiz 4 on Philosophies

Week 6
September 25 Monday    Hinduism in Southeast Asia
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/afddad2fdd2341d48d0601e80fca3cb1d
September 27 Wednesday  Transition to modernity
Watch Bhakti Mamtora
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/fbad05faed024c908bca8548c999ad101d
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. for SE Asia 57-59
Reading for transition to modernity: Oxtoby, pp. 66-69
Quiz 5 on Devotion/ Bhakti

Week 7
October 2 Monday   Rites of passage/ weddings
October 4 Wednesday Hindu festivals
Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 81-85 Oxtoby pp. 79-81;
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/d3d5514246904b8798c01ad8b5c044631d
Quiz 6 on Southeast Asia

Week 8
October 9 Monday    Hindu festivals contd.
October 11 Wednesday Temple Worship
Reading for the week chapter in canvas on Temples
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f23a3a597e81417abe64162d3151c3741d
Quiz 7 on Rites of Passage

Week 9
October 16   Performing arts (no classroom instruction)
Watch the video by Jodi Shaw; Read chapter in Canvas
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/70fbf1a88c774cc3b8dc3545eed14db1d
October 18    Diaspora (Guest Speakers)
**Reading for the week:**  *Oxtoby pp. 88-90; 91-94*

**No quiz**

**Week 10**
October 23 Monday and October 25 Wednesday,  *Buddhism*
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEe8hI6G0GY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEe8hI6G0GY)
produced by the National Buddhist Authority, Srilanka

**Reading for the week 189-202; 246- to beginning of 248**

**No quiz**

**Week 11**
October 30 Monday:  *Sikhism*

**Reading for the week:**  *Oxtoby pp. 106-115; 120-129*
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qrn6YucQ-wY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qrn6YucQ-wY)  (Video made by and for the police in Chicago to enhance understanding of the community).
November 1 Wednesday  *Jainism* 148-178

**Quiz 8  Buddhism**

**Week 12**
November 6 Monday  *Islam in India 1: History*
November 8 Wednesday  *Islam in India 2 Sufi traditions, Dargahs, architecture*

**Reading:** Karen G. Ruffle, “Islam in South Asia” Pechilis in Karen, and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, pp. 193-219. This will be made available to you. For an introduction, see Professor Simmons’ lecture at
[https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/65f698e13a3843f59c55f3d84a6514b1d](https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/65f698e13a3843f59c55f3d84a6514b1d)
OR
Professor Ostebo’s lecture at
[https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/18c82ad062bf4763b6a0e49b93f7ae771d](https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/18c82ad062bf4763b6a0e49b93f7ae771d)

**This video should be seen prior to the November 6 class**

**Quiz 9  Sikhism and Jainism**

**Week 13**
November 13 Monday  *Islam 3: Islam in Modern India; Partition, pains and political tensions.*
November 15 Wednesday  *Christianity in India 1*
Readings tba on the partition.
For Christianity, read in chapter on Christianity by Thomas Thangaraj, in Karen Pechilis and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, 161-188. This will be made available to you.

**Quiz 10 on Islam**

**Week 14**
November 20  *no classroom instruction*

November 22  Holiday

**Week 15**

November 27, Monday  Christianity 2  Readings by Selva Raj and Corinne Dempsey tba.

November 29  Wednesday  Either Judaism in India or Classroom presentations.

If we do Judaism, the reading will be Nathan Katz, Judaism in India, in Karen Pechilis and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, 143 -156. This will be made available to you.

December 4 Monday  Student presentations, wrap up discussion on religion

December 6  no class