REL 3337 Religions in Modern India  
Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Religion  
vasu@ufl.edu (Please use email for all communications)  
Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 pm and by appointment  

Credits: 3 credit hours  
Course Term: Fall 2018  

Class Meeting Time:  
M Period 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM) AND 0134  
W Period 8 - 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM)  

In this course, you will learn about the religious and cultural diversity in the sub-continent, and understand the history of religion starting with the colonial period. We will study the major religious thinkers, many of whom had an impact on the political history of India. We will study the rites-of-passage, connections between food and religion, places of worship, festivals, gurus, as well as the close connections between religion and politics in many of these traditions. The religious traditions we will examine and intellectually engage with are primarily Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, as well as Christianity and Islam 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 supplement the readings with short journal and magazine articles, videos, and slides.  

The larger questions 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? How does religious identity influence political and social behavior? How do Hindus in South Asia differentiate among themselves?  

Course Goals  
When you complete this course, you will be able to:  
1. Explain worldviews, rituals, and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.  
2. Understand how the category of “Hinduism” evolved during the colonial period.  
3. Identify the social, political, and cultural factors that come into play in the understanding of religious pluralism as well as the moments of hostility and communal tensions.  
4. Recognize the significance of performance in the practice and transmission of these religions.  

Course Readings and Required Texts  

Other supplemental materials 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. Attendance
   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 bibliography to get you started. The term paper should be about eight double spaced pages (about 300 words per page) + endnotes/citations, bibliography and all the academic niceties. It is due on October 29th 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 October 31, 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 (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/minusgrades.html).

**University Rules on Attendance policies** on 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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<td>B</td>
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<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)*

**Course Outline**

**Wednesday, August 22**

1. Introduction; Religious Diversity; India and South Asia
2. Construction of Hinduism
3. Recap: History of the Hindu Traditions
   Diversity and main concepts, Watch Video: [https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f3b25f15d5ea437fb19e0b8ef5d5cb681d](https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f3b25f15d5ea437fb19e0b8ef5d5cb681d)


**Monday, August 27**
1. History of Hindu Traditions, contd.

**Wednesday, August 29**

1. Hindu Deities and Epics
2. Video: Ramayana [https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/bec39dd3123341d0ac88b0b42255f92f1d](https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/bec39dd3123341d0ac88b0b42255f92f1d)
3. The Mahabharata [https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b5540f42fcb3420b86850f4a18fce0971d](https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b5540f42fcb3420b86850f4a18fce0971d)


**Monday, September 3, holiday**

**Wednesday, September 5**

1. Colonial history. Focus on the Gita
2. Rammohun Roy


**Quiz 1**

**Monday, September 10**

1. Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj

**Wednesday, September 12**

1. The Swaminarayan Tradition
   Special guest lecture by Bhakti Mamторa, doctoral student, Religion, UF

Readings:

Richard Davis, The *Bhagavad Gita* A Biography, pp. 146-165 CANVAS site.
Selections from *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 2. Pp. 128-137 (Bankim Chandra); and pp. 148-159 (Aurobindo). CANVAS site
Quiz 2

Monday, September 17
Vivekananda; Savarkar
Readings:
1. Selections from *Sources of Indian Tradition, vol. 2*. pp. 72-76 (Vivekananda); 289-295 (Savarkar). CANVAS site
   

Wednesday, September 19
1. Gandhi and the struggle for Independence
2. Rabindranath Tagore
Readings:
Selections from Gandhi’s *My Experiments with Truth*. CANVAS site
Selections from Tagore’s *Gitanjali*

Quiz 3

Monday, September 24
ISKCON
Special guest lecture by Rodney Sebastian, doctoral student, Religion, UF

Wednesday, September 26
Gurus
Mahesh Yogi, counter culture, and Ma Amritanandamayi
Readings in CANVAS site
Cynthia Ann Humes. “Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: Beyond the TM Technique” in *Gurus in America.*

Quiz 4

Monday, October 1 and Wednesday, October 3
Performing arts and Indian Cinema
Reading:
4. View: https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/70fbaa88c774cc3b8dc3545eed14d3c1d

**Monday, October 8 and Wednesday, October 10**
Sacraments; caste system
Hindu festivals
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/d3d5514246904b8798c01ad8b5c044631d
Readings for Oct. 8 and 10: Vasudha Narayanan, chapters on Rites of Passage and Hindu Festivals, CANVAS site
https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f23a3a597e81417abe64162d3151c3741d

**Quiz 5**

**Monday, October 15**
Food

**Wednesday, October 17**
Jainism
Special guest lecture by Venu Mehta, doctoral student, Religion, UF

**Quiz 6**

**Monday, October 22**
Jainism

**Wednesday, October 24**
Sikhism
Reading:

**Quiz 7**

**Monday, October 29**
Judaism

**Wednesday, October 31**
Christianity

**Monday, November 5**  
Christianity  
Article by Selva Raj, CANVAS site

**Wednesday, November 7**  
Christianity and Conversion, a case study  
Reading: Anantanand Rambachan, “From the Hindu Perspective” in *Religious Conversion: Religion Scholars Thinking Together*, ed. Shanta Premawardhana (on Canvas site)  
The Carnatic Music Controversy of 2018. URLs are in the Canvas site.  
**Quiz 8**

**Monday, November 12**  
Holiday  
Veterans day

**Wednesday, November 14**  
Islam: Introduction  
**Quiz 9**

**Monday, November 19**  
No class. Movie suggestions on CANVAS Site  
Readings for today in the CANVAS site.

**Wednesday, November 21**  
Holiday

**Monday, November 26 and Wednesday, November 28**  
Islam  
Islamic Revival in India: Syed Ahmed Khan.  
The Partition of India and Pakistan: Jinnah, Rahmat Ali  
Excerpts from *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 2. CANVAS site  
**Quiz 10**

**Monday, December 3**  
Student presentations

**Wednesday, December 5**  
No class  
Readings Days December 6 and 7