

REL 3337 Religions in Modern India  
 Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Religion  
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 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

**Assigned text:** *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, edited by Karen Pechilis and Selva J. Raj. New York: Routledge, 2013.

*\*\* 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 biblio. 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

**University Rules on Attendance policies** on absences from classes are posted on <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**

GRADE	POINTS
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D/PASS	65-69
F/FAIL	64 and below

*For more information about UF's minus grade system visit: <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>

Reading: Julius Lipner, The Rise of "Hinduism"; Or, How to Invent a World Religion with Only Moderate Success Author(s): Julius J. Lipner *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Apr., 2006), pp. 91-104. CANVAS

***Monday, August 27***

1. History of Hindu Traditions, contd.
2. General Reading for the Hinduism Module in Pechilis and Raj, ed., *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*.

**Wednesday, August 29**

1. Hindu Deities and Epics
2. Video:  
Ramayana <https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/bec39dd3123341d0ac88b0b42255f92f1d>
3. The Mahabharata  
<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b5540f42fcb3420b86850f4a18fce0971d>

Reading: Lutgendorf, “All in the (Raghu) Family: A Video Epic in Cultural Context.” In: Lawrence Babb and Susan Wadley (eds.), *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 217-253.

**Monday, September 3, holiday**

**Wednesday, September 5**

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

Reading: Richard Davis, *Biography of the Gita*, pp 98-109

Brian A. Hatcher, “Brahmo Samaj and Keshub Chandra Sen”, in: *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Edited by: Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, Vasudha Narayanan.

**Quiz 1**

**Monday, September 10**

1. Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj

**Wednesday, September 12**

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

Readings:

Brahmbhatt, Arun. “BAPS Swaminarayan Community: Hinduism” in *Global Religious Movements Across Borders: Sacred Service*, edited by Stephen M. Cherry and Helen Rose Ebaugh, Routledge, New York, 2014, pp. 99-122.

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
2. “The man who thought Gandhi a sissy” *The Economist*, Dec 17th 2014  
<https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2014/12/17/the-man-who-thought-gandhi-a-sissy>

### **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*

<http://www.spiritualbee.com/media/gitanjali-by-tagore.pdf>

## Quiz 3

### **Monday, September 24**

ISKCON

Special guest lecture by Rodney Sebastian, doctoral student, Religion, UF

Reading: Ferdinando Sardella, *Modern Hindu Personalism: The History, Life, and Thought of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati*. Selected pages. In CANVAS

### **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:

1. Avanthi Meduri, “Bharata Natyam: What are you?” *Asian Theatre Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1988), pp. 1-22 CANVAS site
2. Kathryn Hansen, 1996 “Performing Identities: Tyagaraja Music Festivals in North America,” *South Asia Research*. (London), 16: 2 (Autumn 1996), 155-174.

3. Philip Lutgendorf, "Cinema." In Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, ed. *Studying Hinduism: Key Concepts and Methods*. Routledge, 2008, pp. 41-58. CANVAS site
4. View:  
<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/70fbfaa88c774cc3b8dc3545eed14dbc1d>

***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

Vasudha Narayanan, "Ritual Food", in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Edited by: Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, Vasudha Narayanan. CANVAS site

***Wednesday, October 17***

Jainism

Special guest lecture by Venu Mehta, doctoral student, Religion, UF

Reading: M. Whitney Kelting, "Jainism: Practicing tradition today." In Pechilis and Raj, ed., *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*

**Quiz 6**

***Monday, October 22***

Jainism

***Wednesday, October 24***

Sikhism

Reading:

"Sikhism: Practicing Tradition Today." In Pechilis and Raj, ed., *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*

**Quiz 7**

***Monday, October 29***

Judaism

Nathan Katz, "South Asian Judaisms: Practicing Tradition Today. In Pechilis and Raj, ed., *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*.

***Wednesday, October 31***

Christianity

Reading: Thomas Thangaraj, "South Asian Christianity: Practicing tradition today." In Pechilis and Raj, ed., *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*.

***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

"Islam in South Asia: Practicing Tradition today." In Pechilis and Raj, ed., *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*.

**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