RLG363H1: Bhakti Hinduism

Instructor: Dr. Srilata Raman
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-12 & by appointment
Location and Time of Course: S Smith 2108, Mondays 2-4

Course Description

This course seeks to examine colonial and post-colonial theoretical perspectives on “bhakti” in “Hinduism”, on the one hand while supplementing this with readings from “bhakti” texts (Tamil, Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi to name a few) in translation. In adhering to this structure in the course we shall be attempting to see the interplay as well as the gap between theory and original text, problematize the issue of translation and translatability, of “North Indian” and “South Indian” religion, as well as critically examine the lenses of devotionalism through which “Hinduism” has come to be inevitably apprehended.

Course Requirements:

Reading: A careful and critical reading of the assignments before class is crucial. You will not be able to participate in class discussions without a thorough understanding of the assigned readings. I recommend that you underline important arguments, mark passages that confuse you, and think about where (and why) you agree or disagree with the author. Please always bring your Assigned Readings to class so you can refer to the texts in our discussions.

Panel discussion
In addition to general in-class participation oral skills will be tested in individual panels consisting of student groups, which will be formed at the beginning of the course for each session, making sure that every student in class will take part in one panel discussion. The panellists will discuss the readings, point out what they found particularly interesting, strong or weak in a particular author or position and will have the opportunity to formulate questions which may be answered by the other panellists or course participants at large. The panellists will also each serve as main interlocutors for the instructor during in-class discussions. The panellists’ contributions too will be graded on the basis of their frequency and quality.

Attendance, Participation in Class and Panel Participation:
Participation is essential in this course. You will be expected to raise questions, to share your knowledge
with the other members of the class, and to actively participate in the class/panel discussion (see Attendance marks below).

Students who miss class without my permission should expect to have their grade lowered. Absences may be excused for medical, religious, or other compelling reasons. If you must miss class e-mail me in advance, and, in case of illness, bring a doctor’s note to our next meeting. Also repeated lateness will affect your grade.

1. Your actual presence will get you half the percentage of the grading – i.e., 5%.
2. The regularity and quality of your questions in class otherwise will determine the remaining 10% of the participation grading.
3. From Session 3 onwards you are expected to participate in a panel, where you will briefly summarize one/or a section of one of the Assigned Readings. The topic on which you present will have to be agreed upon in class with me, prior to the actual session.

**Essay Proposal:**

The Essay Proposal should anticipate, in a shortened form, the topic you intend to focus on for your term paper. Therefore it should engage with at least 2 if not more of the assigned readings and with other supplementary sources (a minimum of 3) you intend to use for the Final Essay. In addition it should have the following features: The question/questions which interest you in the readings and which, therefore, becomes the focus of your topic. What are the sources you are going to be looking at to answer the question/questions and why (here you would need to include a bibliography) What you hope to find out which will also address larger issues raised within the course and the discussions. It should include a potential bibliography for the Final Essay.

The Essay Proposal is to be 3-5 pages one-and-a-half line spacing, excluding Bibliography.

The Essay Proposal is due on **March 10th**.

**Final Essay:**

The Final Essay should be seen as a research paper. This option gives you the opportunity to investigate in more depth a topic that interests you, and it allows you to demonstrate your research skills. If you have trouble coming up with a topic or developing your argument, please come and see me!

Additional guidelines for the final paper will be handed out later in the semester. The Final Essay is to be 10-15 pages one-and-a-half line spacing, excluding Bibliography.

It is due on **March 30th**.

Penalty for late papers: 1% for each day the paper is late. Please note: If you hand in your paper after class on the day it is due, it will count as being one day late. Papers more than one week late will not be accepted.

**Evaluation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance:</th>
<th>5%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Class:</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Participation:</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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Essay Proposal: 25%
Final Essay: 40%

A note on plagiarism: Plagiarism (i.e., the act of passing off as one’s own the ideas or writings of another) will not be tolerated. Please bear in mind that the following is plagiarism and will be treated as such: material taken without citation from the web; material taken from any book or other publication without citation; any ideas that I can trace to another source that you are not citing. These are all forms of cheating and will subject you to serious consequences. Trust your own ability to think and write, and take this course as an opportunity to refine your research and writing skills. If you need help, come see me or visit www.utoronto.ca/writing. If you have any questions or doubts concerning citations and references, please talk to me before handing in your paper.

Course Readings

January 6th
Discussion of Syllabus and Assigned Readings.

January 13th: The Cosmopolitan Texts
Assigned Readings

January 20th: Tamil Bhakti
Assigned Readings:

**January 27th: Karnataka and the Vīraśaivas**

**Assigned Readings:**

**February 3rd: Bhakti and Caste: Dalit Saints**

**Assigned Readings:**

**February 10th: Maharashtra and the Vārkarī Poets.**

**Assigned Readings:**

**February 24th: Kabir and the Sants**

**Assigned Readings:**
Hawley, John Stratton. 2005. Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir in their
time and ours. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 267-385.

March 3rd: Bhakti, Rasa and Men becoming Women In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism

Assigned Readings:

March 10th: Bhakti and Gender- Mirabai

Assigned Readings:

March 17th: Rāma

Assigned Readings:

**March 24th: Bhakti and the Guru**

**Assigned Readings:**

**March 30th: Bhakti and Ethics**

**Assigned Readings:**