

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 devotionism 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:

Attendance:	5%
Participation in Class:	10%
Panel Participation:	20%

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

The Bhagavadgītā. Chapters 11 and 12. (Available in <http://www.bhagavad-gita.org>)

Bryant, Edwin F. 2007. *Krishna. A Source Book*. Oxford University Press. [Available as E-Resource on Robarts]. 77-94.

Bryant, Edwin F. 2007. *Krishna. A Source Book*. Oxford University Press. [Available as E-Resource on Robarts]. 111-136.

January 20th: Tamil Bhakti

Assigned Readings:

Champakalakshmi, R. 1996. From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The Bhakti of the Tamil Ālvārs and Nāyaṅārs. In *Trade, Dissent and Ideology. Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar*, ed. R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal, 135-163. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Stein, Burton. 1968. Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Hindu Sects. In *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, ed. James Silverberg, 78-94. The Hague: Mouton.

Ramanujan, A. K. 1993. *Hymns for the Drowning. Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammālvār*. Penguin Books, India. Introduction and Selections.

Andrew Schelling, ed. 2011. Early Tamil Poems to Siva. In *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature*. 3-8.

January 27th: Karnataka and the Vīraśaivas

Assigned Readings:

Leslie, Julia. 1998. Understanding Basava: History, Hagiography, and a Modern Kannada Drama. In *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61.2.228-261.

Ramanujan, A.K. 1973. *Speaking of Siva*. Baltimore: Penguin Books. 11-65, 67-85.

February 3rd: Bhakti and Caste: Dalit Saints

Assigned Readings:

Ebeling, Sascha. 2010. Another Tomorrow for Nantaṅār: The Continuation and Re-Invention of a Medieval, South-Indian, Untouchable Saint. In Peter Schalk (ed.), *Geschichten und Geschichte. Historiographie und Hagiographie in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis. 433-516.

Eleanor Zelliott and Mokashi-Punekar, Rohini (eds.) 2005. *Untouchable Saints. An Indian Phenomenon*. New Delhi: Manohar. 9-51, 197-220, 249-256.

February 10th: Maharashtra and the Vārkarī Poets.

Assigned Readings:

Chitre, Dilip.(trans.) 1991. *Says Tukā*. Penguin India.

Israel, Milton and N.K. Wagle. (eds.). 1987. *Religion and Society in Maharashtra*. University of Toronto Press. 32-45.

Kolatkār, Arun.(trans.) 1982. Translations from Tukaram and Other Saint-Poets. In *Journal of South Asian Literature*. 27.1.109-14.

Novetzke, Christian Lee. 2003. Divining an Author: The Idea of Authorship in an Indian Religious Tradition. *History of Religions*. 42.3.231-242.

February 24th : Kabir and the Sants

Assigned Readings:

Dharwadker, Vinay. 2003. *Kabir: The Weaver's Songs*. Delhi: Penguin India. 1-95.

Hawley, John Stratton. 2005. *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir in their*

time and ours. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 267-385.

Schomer, Karine. 1987. The Sant Tradition in Perspective. In *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod, Delhi: Motilall Banarsidass. 1-17.

Vaudeville, Charlotte. (trans.) 1993. *A Weaver named Kabīr*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 11-107.

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

Vaiṣṇavism

Assigned Readings:

Bryant, Edwin F. 2007. *Krishna. A Source Book*. Oxford University Press. [Available as E-Resource on Robarts]. 409-440.

Dimock, Edward C. 1963. Doctrine and Practice Among the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. In *History of Religions*.3.1.106-127. (Available on JSTOR)

Haberman, David L. 1985. Imitating the Masters: Problems in Incongruity. In *JAAR*.53.1.41-49. (Available on JSTOR)

March 10th: Bhakti and Gender- Mirabai

Assigned Readings:

Fatehally, Shama. 1994. *In the Dark of the Heart: Songs of Meera*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Mukta, Parita. 1994. *Upholding the Common Life: The Community of Mirabai*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.19-45.

Sangari, Kumkum. 1990. Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti. *EPW*, July 7.1464-75, July 14.137-52.

Hawley, John Stratton. 2005. *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir in their time and ours*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 117-138.

Ramanujan, A.K. 2001. On Women saints. In *The Collected Essays of A. K. Ramanujan*, ed. Vinay Dharwadker, 269-278. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

March 17th: Rāma

Assigned Readings:

Lutgendorf, Philip. 1991. *The Life of a Text: Performing the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsidās*. University of California Press. 3-13, 248-253. (Available as E-Book on Robarts Website)

Lutgendorf, Philip. 2007. *Hanumān's Tale. The Messages of a Divine Monkey*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 6.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1993. Rāmāyaṇa and Political Imagination in India. *Journal of Asian Studies*. 52.2. 261-297. (Available on JSTOR)

Andrew Schelling, ed. 2011. *The Oxford Anthology of Bhakti Literature*. 149-153.

March 24th: Bhakti and the Guru

Assigned Readings:

Sarkar, Sumit. 1992. 'Kaliyuga', 'Chakri' and 'Bhakti': Ramakrishna and His Times. In *EPW*. 27-29. 1543-1566. (Available on JSTOR)

Auer Falk, Nancy. 2006. Living Hinduisms. Thomson/Wadsworth. 245-270.

March 30th: Bhakti and Ethics

Assigned Readings:

Doniger, Wendy. 1996. The Scrapebook of Undeserved Salvation. The Kedara Khanda of the Skandha Purana. In *Purana Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts*. SUNY Press. 59-84.

Hudson, Dennis. 1989. Violent and fanatical devotion among the Nāyaṇmārs: a study in the Periya purāṇam of Cēkkiḷār. In *Criminal gods and demon devotees: Essays on the guardians of popular Hinduism*, ed. A. Hildebeitel, 374-404. Albany: SUNY Press.

Shulman, David. 1993. *The Hungry God. Hindu Tales of Filicide and Devotion*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1-47.