

University of Toronto, St. George

**Course Syllabus:
Hindu Religious Tradition (RLG205Y1)**

Course Hours: Tuesdays 10-12 am

Course Venue: SidSmith 2110

Instructor: Dr. Srilata Raman

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4 & by appointment

1 Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the Hindu Religious traditions of the South Asia. It is designed as a course which explores both textual traditions as well as religious practice, and the latter in terms of what might loosely be designated both as “elite” as well as “non-elite” traditions. Thus, the course sessions are designed such as to alternate between the two perspectives: the textual and the performative and with this in mind the course will incorporate broad surveys of Hindu canonical literature, philosophy, epics and mythology, temples and pilgrimage, gurus and devotees, animals and āgamas, children, medicine and yoga, cosmology and ethics as well as issues relating to gender and the Hindu diaspora. Through a broad survey of all these topics the course hopes to both introduce and familiarise students with the key concepts, terminology and some of the pan-traditional practices of what has come to be called “Hinduism” and to enable one to see it as a historically evolving, continuously transforming amalgamation of ideologies and practices.

2 Course Requirements:

2.1 Readings and Written assignments

The first session of each semester will be an introductory session, while the last session of each semester will feature the written test. No readings or written assignments are due for these two sessions. The first reading is expected to be done starting the course’s second session, the first written assignment will be due at noon on the September 28th. Each week (see Course Calendar below) covers one topic which includes specific text book readings and sometimes a topically related statement. Assigned Readings, which will function as background information to the lecture as well as material examined in the final exam, will have to be completed before the start of the session. **Be prepared to be asked about the Assigned Readings in class and, therefore make sure that you bring them to class with you.** The written assignments will have to

be composed after and in reference to the session under the header of which they appear on the Course Calendar.

For every regular session the work load consists of text book readings. You are required to write a total of four statements, all in reference to a particular session, and one essay. The Essay Topic is given below. Statement and essay differ in length: a statement should be about 250 words long, the essay about 1,000. The essay, due to its length, should be more elaborately structured including an introductory paragraph and a paragraph formulating your conclusions. For all written assignments the words of the bibliography and of the foot- or endnotes will not be part of the total word count.

2 Evaluation (for each semester)

Assignments and tests

1. four short statements (approx. 250 words): 5 % each; total 20 %
2. one essay (approx. 1,000 words): 20%
3. one final test (two hours): 10%

Statements and essay will be evaluated according to the degree to which you

- creatively use your knowledge to represent, explain and reformulate Hindu doctrines, practices and historical developments,
- refer to (e.g. paraphrase, quote) analyze (e.g. structure, explain), contextualize (e.g. historically, socially, doctrinally) and question (e.g. point out what you do not understand and why, critique the views and intentions represented) the primary and secondary sources you are dealing with,
- abstract from your primary data and come to more general conclusions about Hindu doctrine, social structures and historical change,
- draw from, process and refer to information received in class or from assigned readings,
- carry out the assignment comprehensively and accurately (e.g. if 3 items are required produce three, not two or four, delineate the items clearly and allow no overlap),
- structure your text (introductory remarks, main arguments, concluding remarks) and its parts (paragraphs),
- identify your work (add your name, enrolment details and email address, the course title and code, instructor's name, name of the assignment, session to which the assignment refers, date),
- get the facts right, including spelling of words in South Asian languages such as Sanskrit (the use of diacritics is encouraged but not required, e.g. you may write "a" instead of "ā" or "m" instead of "ṃ"),
- quote from written material (books, articles, online sources) correctly and comprehensively (using footnotes or endnotes),
- manage to do all this within the recommended number of words,

It is crucial for written assignments that everything you produce has been either formulated by yourself or marked and referenced as a quotation if you use materials you have taken from a source (printed or electronic, textual or

visual). The main objective hereby is to develop an understanding of the line which runs between you and others, your own authorship and that of others and the respect for other people's work and intellectual property. It is important that you stand for what you yourself can produce and do not pretend to be someone else by appropriating his or her work. At the same time it is important to learn to intensely engage with, use and, to differing degrees, distance yourself from other people's work. This is only possible if you clearly separate your own contributions from those of others from which you draw and which you respect and which makes others respect your own work. Put other's words in quotation marks and note where you found them and others can find them too. And try to find a balance in your work of what you have formulated and of what you decide to quote. No assignment should be without a quote, but not more than 10% of your assignment should consist of quotes. Never leave a quote unconnected to your own work. Use quotes effectively: to prove, to stress, to condense your own statements. Finally, texts and bits of text (paragraphs, sentences, verses etc.) taken from sources, inserted in your work and not marked as quotes are called "plagiarisms", can be detected by software and have to be reported to university authorities by course instructors.

Test

The test will comprise multiple choice questions (e.g. "What is a *samskāra*? A. An act of worship B. Service to the Guru, C. Circumambulation of a temple D. A rite of passage and attributions (e.g. "Coordinate persons and traditions: A. Patañjali, B. Vālmīki C. Vyāsa 1. Mahābhārata 2. Yoga 3. Ādikāvya.) All questions will refer to the topics touched upon in class, the Assigned Readings and particularly to the lecture notes posted on the course website. No auxiliary textual materials will be allowed.

Turn-in

Statements must be turned in by 10am on the day of the next class meeting. You must send them as emails to both the course instructor and the teaching assistants (TAs). (TA: Eric Steinschneider. E-Mail: eric.steinschneider@utoronto.ca)

Please do not submit your assignments through the Digital Dropbox on the course website. The due date for the essay is just after the last session before the final test, i.e.. The mail header should run: "Hindu Religious Tradition, Assignment x" [fill in a key topical word for x]. The text can be either pasted into the email or sent as an attachment. If you feel unsure about the nature of the assignment or about how to approach it, book a meeting with the course instructor or send her a draft which can be used to advise you via email. However, keep in mind the deadline, so react quickly. The statements as well as essay must be turned in both in electronic form as well as in paper.

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.

Books Assigned for the Course:

Fuller, C. J. 1992. *The Camphor Flame. Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge (Available as E-Resource on Robarts)

September 14th

Discussion of Syllabus and Assigned Readings. Short Introduction to the study of the “Hindu Religious Tradition”

September 21st: Saṃskāras

Viewing of the documentary film *Forest of Bliss* by Robert Gardiner (90 mins)

Assigned Readings:

Michaels, Axel. 2004. *Hinduism Past and Present*. Princeton University Press. 71-157.
Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge. 332-356.

Assignment 1: Describe an event which you would call a “saṃskāra” which you have witnessed in your own family, among people you know or in your own life. Reflect on the following questions: can the term “saṃskāra” be used also to describe certain rituals in non-Hindu contexts and traditions or not? What did the event signify in the life of the person who underwent it and does it have both social and religious significance? Can “saṃskāras” be invented?
Assignment Due: September 28th 10am.

Essay: Write a critique of the film structuring your statement around the following three questions: 1. What does the film try to do? What was its effect on

you and what does its director want to tell us? 3. What and how does the movie tell us about Hinduism and attitudes towards death in India? 2. How can the two sources read as preparation for today's viewing help us understand better what happens in the movie?

Assignment Due: November 27th

September 28th: Pūjā

Assigned Readings:

Eck, Diana L. *Darśan. Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Pennsylvania: Anima Books. 3-55.

Fuller, C. J. 1992. *The Camphor Flame. Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3: Worship.

October 5th: Vedas and Upaniṣads

Assigned Readings:

Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge 37-51.

Olivelle, Patrick. *Upaniṣads*. Oxford University Press. xxiii-lvi

October 12th: Bhagavadgītā

Assigned Readings:

Edgerton, Franklin. 1964. *The Bhagavadgītā*. New York: Harper. Introduction.

Jordens, J.T.F. 1986. Gandhi and the Bhagavadgītā. In Robert Minor (ed), *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgītā*. Albany: SUNY Press. 88-109.

Assignment 2: Do you think Gandhi does justice to the meaning of the Bhagavadgītā, if so how and if not why not? What does the Bhagavadgītā say about the relationship between Hinduism and violence and how are these issues reflected in Gandhi's reading of the text?

Assignment Due: October 19th 10am

October 19th: Temple and Pilgrimage

Assigned Readings:

Fuller, C. J. 1992. *The Camphor Flame. Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 9: Pilgrimage.

Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge.446-501.

October 26th: Epics

Assigned Readings:

Lutgendorf, Philip. 1990. Ramayan: The Video. *TDR*.34.2.127-176.

Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge.52-96.

Assignment 3: What are the values which Rāma embodies and which of them, do you think are anachronistic and which not? In other words, which of his values are of continuing relevance today? In this context what might the continuing popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* tell us about these values – are they still upheld or is it that people just understand the *Rāmāyaṇa* differently these days?

Assignment Due: November 2nd, 10am.

November 2nd: The Four Goals of Man

Assigned Readings:

Biardeau, Madeleine. 1989. *Hinduism. The Anthropology of a Civilization*. Oxford India Paperbacks. 41-68.

Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge. 213-248.

November 16th: Purāṇas

Assigned Readings:

Mittal, Sushil and Gene Thursby (ed.), 2005. *The Hindu World*. New York and London: Routledge. 97-115.

Matchett, Freda. 2003. The Purāṇas. In Gavin Flood (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*. Blackwell Publishing.128-143.

November 23rd: Animals

Assigned Readings:

Fuller, C. J. 1992. *The Camphor Flame. Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 4: Sacrifice.

Lutgendorf, Philip. 1994. My Hanuman is Bigger than Yours. *History of Religions*. 33.3.211-245.

Assignment 4: How do you reconcile the often cruel treatment of animals in Indian social life (diseased cows and stray dogs allowed to die on the streets) with the reverence for Hanuman? What does this tell us about Hanuman?
Assignment Due: November 30th, 10am

November 30th: Test