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## RLST 234X.01A: Hinduism

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**RLST 234-01A/SSEA 234 01B**  
**Hinduism**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:10 AM-12:30 PM**  
**Liberal Arts 335**

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**Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-6:00**

The purpose of this course is to provide an historical overview of the many different indigenous religious movements in India that we now call “Hinduism.” Through the reading of mythological, philosophical, ethical, meditative, and devotional primary texts, as well as historical and anthropological studies, we will show how Hindu traditions were constructed through a set of ongoing tensions: Between ascetic/contemplative and sacrificer/priest, villager and city-dweller, low caste and high caste, poet and philosopher, colonized and colonizer, and “secular” citizen and “religious” citizen. In tracing these tensions and the developments they brought about throughout Indian history, we will: 1) examine the roots of Indian tradition; 2) master the basic vocabulary of Indian thought; 3) use that terminology to study developments in Hindu doctrine and popular practice; and 4) examine the religio-political significance of contemporary beliefs and rituals.

**Required Readings (all are available for purchase at the campus bookstore):**

Eck, Diana. *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*

Embree, Ainslie, editor. *The Hindu Tradition: Readings in Oriental Thought*

Klostermaier, Klaus. *A Survey of Hinduism (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*

Levi, Louise Landes, translator. *Sweet on My Lips: The Love Poems of Mirabai*

Miller, Barbara Stoler, translator. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*

Miller, Barbara Stoler, translator. *Yoga, Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*

Narayan, R.K. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*

## Grading

1. Class Preparation and Participation: completion of and reflection upon the reading assignment for the day, as well as consistent attendance and oral participation in regular discussions. **No more than two absences will be accepted** without written authorization from the Health Service or an advisor, counselor, or administrator. Any unexcused absences beyond two will begin to negatively affect one's grade. Conversely, consistent preparation, attendance, and participation will positively affect one's grade (20% of the final grade).
2. One 10-12 page research paper. I will be handing out a list of suggested topics, but ultimately the choice of topic is yours (20% of the final grade).
3. Mid-Term and Final Exams (each is worth 30% of the final grade, making the two equal 60% total).

## Class Meetings and Assignments

### **I. Roots of Hindu Tradition: Indus Valley Civilization & Vedic Religious Traditions ("Brahmanism")**

- Tues. 8/28 Introduction to the Course  
Documentary: "Hinduism: 330 Million Gods"
- Thurs. 8/30 The Indus Valley Civilization  
Klostermaier: pp. 17-29
- Tues. 9/4 The Worldview and Ritual of the *Vedas*  
Klostermaier: pp. 45-50; 56-58; 86-90; 101-108; and 122-133.  
Embree: pp. 3-47
- Thurs. 9/6 Vedic Innovation: The *Upanishads*  
Klostermaier: pp. 156-180  
Embree: pp. 48-65

### **II. Challenges to Brahmanism: The Shramanic Traditions**

- Tues. 9/11 The Rise of Buddhism and Jainism  
Handout: Thomas Hopkins: "Challenges and Changes" (from *Hindu Religious Traditions*)  
Handout: Selections from Buddhist and Jain Scriptures (from *Sources of Indian Tradition, Volume I*)

## II. Smriti Literature: Formative Hindu Responses to Shramanic Traditions

- Thurs. 9/13 Class/Caste Duty and Life's Stages: The Treatises on Dharma, Part I  
Klostermaier: pp. 30-36; 50-52; Chapter 20; 298-302; 308-310  
Embree: 69-96
- Tues. 9/18 The Role of Caste in Hindu Society  
Handouts: Donald Johnson, "What is Caste?" and "Let Every Caste Be Touchable"; Arvind Sharma, "Seven Prevalent Misconceptions About India's Caste System"; and "Jati and Village," from Alan Beals, *Gopalpur: A South Indian Village*
- Thurs. 9/20 The Aims of Life and Householder's Dharma: The Treatises on Dharma, Part II  
Handout: pp. 203-212; 254-264; 234-244; and 213-231 from *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. I*  
Handout: pp. 226-229 from *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. I*  
Handout: Susan S. Wadley, "One Straw from a Broom Cannot Sweep: The Ideology & Practice of the Joint Family in Rural North India"  
Handout: John Lancaster, "Women on the Rise in India Feel the Riptide of Tradition"  
Klostermaier: 320-324
- Tues. 9/25 The Three "Yogas" and the Rise of Devotionalism: The *Bhagavad-Gita*  
Klostermaier: Chapter 5  
*Bhagavad-Gita*: Chapters 1-11
- Thurs. 9/27 The *Bhagavad-Gita* (continued)  
*Bhagavad-Gita*: Chapters 12-18.

## IV. "Classical" Hinduism: Epic (*Itihasa*), Myth (*Purana*), Philosophy (*Darshana*), Meditation (*Yoga*) & Esoteric Practice (*Tantra*)

- Tues. 10/2 The Epics  
Klostermaier: pp. 59-60; 66-70  
Embree: 136-138  
*Ramayana*: Both Introductions, Prologue, and Chapters 1-5
- Thurs. 10/4 Epic (continued)  
*Ramayana*: Chapters 6-14 and Epilogue
- Tues. 10/9 \*\*Mid-Term Exam\*\***

- Thurs 10/11 Major Trends in Indian Philosophy: Overview and the Nyaya & Vaisheshika Schools  
Klostermaier: Chapters 23 and 24  
Embree: 180-186
- Tues. 10/16 Major Trends in Hindu Philosophy: The Mimamsa and Vedanta Schools  
Klostermaier: Chapter 26  
Embree: 186-189; and 197-207
- Thurs. 10/18 Hindu Philosophy Applied to Hindu Meditation: The Samkhya and Yoga Schools  
Klostermaier, Chapter 24  
Embree: 189-194  
*Yoga Sutra*: Introduction and Part I  
**\*\*Research Paper Proposal and Bibliography Due\*\***
- Tues. 10/23 Hindu Meditation (continued)  
*Yoga Sutra*: Parts II & III
- Thurs. 10/25 Hindu Tantra  
Handout: Georg Feuerstein, "The Esotericism of Medieval Tantra-Yoga"  
Handout: selections from Tantric literature: pp. 131-138 from *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism*  
pp. 204-207 from *Indian Religions: A Historical Reader of Spiritual Expression & Experience*

### V. Popular Hinduism: Devotional Theism (*Bhakti*)

- Tues. 10/30 The Rise of Devotional Theism (*Bhakti*): The Myths of the Puranas and the "The One Lord and the Many Gods"  
Embree 153-156; and 227-231  
Klostermaier: 70-73; and Chapter 14
- Thurs. 11/1 Popular Hinduism: Devotional Theism (*Bhakti*): Ways of Worship (*puja*)  
Klostermaier: pp. 108-117  
Eck: Preface to the Second Edition, and pp. 3-44.
- Tues. 11/6 No Classes: Election Day
- Thurs. 11/8 Ways of Devotional Worship (*puja*) (continued)  
Eck: pp. 44-75

- Tues. 11/13 Major Gods I: Vishnu and His Incarnations (*avatars*)  
Klostermaier: Chapter 15  
Handout: selection of Puranic myths on Vishnu  
Embree: 246-260
- Thurs. 11/15 Devotion to Vishnu as Krishna: The Life and Songs of Mirabai, Female Poet-Saint  
Klostermaier: 317-319  
Handout on the life of Mirabai  
Levi: pp. 7-11; 18-41
- Tues. 11/20 No class: Instructor away at a conference.
- Thurs. 11/22 No class: Thanksgiving Holiday.
- Tues. 11/27 Major Gods II: Shiva  
Klostermaier: Chapter 16  
Handout: selections of Puranic myths on Shiva  
Embree: 232-245
- Thurs. 11/29 Major Gods III: The Goddess (*Devi* or *Shakti*)  
Klostermaier: Chapter 17; pp. 314-317; and 319-320  
Handout: selections of Puranic myths on and devotional poems to the Goddess

**\*\*Monday 12/3: Research Papers Due\*\***

- Tues. 12/4 Documentary Presentations on *bhakti*

## **VI. Major Movements and Figures in Modern Hinduism**

- Tues. 5/3 Hindu Revival & Reform in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries  
Klostermaier: Chapters 30-32  
Embree: 299-322; and 325-348

**\*\*Final Exam: TBA\*\***