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Lives of Hindu and Buddhist Saints

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RELG 350: Lives of Hindu and Buddhist Saints

Spring 2020 TTh 3:05 - 4:20 AOC2 310

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Office hours in AOC2 332:
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:25 - 10:40
*Final Exam: Tuesday, May 5 at 4:00
in our regular classroom*



Course description: A study of lives of individuals related to Hinduism and Buddhism, who are alleged to be “saints” in stories, biographies and autobiographies. These life accounts are compared to archetypes found in canonical sources including the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, and Buddhist *Jataka*. The class considers the genre of religious biography/hagiography in such terms as intended audience and practical usage of the texts. Students will examine stories about ancient and modern Hindus and Buddhists from India, China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia and America.

Course objectives: Students will learn to analyze the biographies of Ramakrishna, Buddha, Xuanzang, the 14th Dalai Lama, and Kūkai, in terms of the hermeneutic circle described by Heidegger and Gadamer, Foucault's author function, and Barthes' death of the author. In this context, they will come to recognize common repeating aspects of religious hagiographies and the audiences' role in interpreting them. Students will gain the ability to describe specific historical and cultural backgrounds that contributed to the formation of these and other hagiographical representations, including those in film and other media, and to explain how these life stories reinforce or conflict with religious doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism, including karma, nirvana, *parinirvana*, *moksha*, and reincarnation.

Student Learning Outcomes:

On completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify major historical figures in the history of Hinduism and Buddhism
2. Speak with familiarity on issues concerning hagiography
3. Apply hermeneutic approaches to interpreting writings about religious figures
4. Express their thoughts concerning religious biography as a means of conveying Hindu and Buddhist ideas

Course Attendance Policy: Following the guidelines posted in the *CCU Student Handbook*, students who are **absent for 25%** of the regularly scheduled class meetings **for any reason** will receive a final **grade of “F”** for the term.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism Statement: Violations of the Student Code of Conduct will not be tolerated. Any such violations will be dealt with in strict accordance to Coastal Carolina University guidelines. The student will be responsible for familiarizing himself/herself with this policy, which is located in the *CCU Student Handbook* under the Code of Student Conduct Section.

Disability Services: Coastal Carolina University is committed to equitable access and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Individuals seeking reasonable accommodations should contact Accessibility & Disability Services (843-349-2503 or <http://www.coastal.edu/disabilityservices/>).

Required Texts:

1. *Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland. Vedanta Press, 1929. ISBN: 818530144. Free internet download at: <https://ia801602.us.archive.org/0/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.54972/2015.54972.Life-Of-Ramakrishna.pdf>
2. *Life of the Buddha* (Clay Sanskrit Library) by Ashvaghosha, Patrick Olivelle (Translator). NYU Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780814762165.
3. *A Biography of the Tripitaka Master of the Great Ci'en Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty* BDK English Tripitaka Translation Series, 2006. ISBN: 9781886439009. Free internet download at: https://www.bdkamerica.org/system/files/pdf/dBET_Alpha_T2053_BiographyoftheTripitakaMasteroftheGreatCienMonastery_1995.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=458
4. *My Spiritual Journey* by the Dalai Lama. Harper One, 2011). ISBN: 9780062018090 ISBN-13:– Free Kindle book for Prime members, also check Moodle.
5. *Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism: portraits of his life*. Ronald S. Green. UW-Madison PhD dissertation, 2003. OCLC: ocm53304305. Free internet download at academia.edu (link provided on Moodle).
6. **Other required readings are posted on Moodle.** These include passages and short readings from the *Nihon Reiiki*, Barthes, Foucault, Heidegger, and Gadamer.

* Please keep up with the reading assignments and bring the appropriate books to class.

Required Assignments and Grading

1. **Tests on the readings.** There will be four tests, one on each of the first four texts listed above. Each of these four tests is worth 20% of the final grade for the term. Each test will consist of ten short-answer questions primarily on the contents of the books and secondarily on theories of interpretation.
2. **Final Exam.** The final exam is on Tuesday, May 5 at 4:00 p.m. in our regular classroom. It is one the fifth required text listed above (*Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism*). Exactly like the other four tests on the readings (item 1 above), it will consist of ten short-answer questions and is worth 20% of the grade for the term.

<i>Summary of grading:</i>	Test 1: <i>Life of Ramakrishna</i>	= 20%
	Test 2: <i>Life of Buddha</i>	= 20%
	Test 3: <i>Biography of the Tripitaka Master</i>	= 20%
	Test 4: <i>Dalai Lama</i>	= 20%
	Final Exam: <i>Kūkai, founder of Shingon Buddhism</i>	= 20%

Based on this, students will earn a letter grade for the term according to the following system:

A = 90 - 100	C = 70 - 76
B+ = 87 - 89	D+ = 67 - 69
B = 80 - 86	D = 60 - 66
C+ = 77 - 79	F = below 60

Schedule of Classes

Week One – January 14-16

- **Overview of the course and introduction to the required texts**
- **Yajnavalkya, Veda Vyasa, and the Fundamentals of Hinduism in relation to hagiography and myth** (part 1)

Weekend reading assignment: read passages from Barthes, available on Moodle, and start reading *Life of Ramakrishna*

Week Two – January 21-23

- **Fundamentals of Hinduism in relation to hagiography and myth** (part 2)
Models for lives of saints (part 1): **Rama (*Ramayana*) and Krishna**
- **Film: *Awake: The Life of Yogananda* (2015)**

Weekend reading assignment: finish reading *Life of Ramakrishna*

Week Three – January 28-30

*** TEST 1:** January 28 - *Life of Ramakrishna*

- **Life of Ramakrishna**

Weekend reading assignment: start reading *Life of Buddha*

Week Four- February 4-6

- **Models for lives of saints** (part 2): **Shankara and Chaitanya**
- **Film: *Adi Shankaracharya* (1983)**

Weekend reading assignment: finish reading *Life of Buddha*

Week Five- February 11-13

*** TEST 2:** February 11 - *Life of the Buddha*

- **Life and hagiography of the Buddha**

Weekend reading assignment: read passages from Foucault, available on Moodle

Week Six – February 18-20

- **Life of the Buddha**
- **Film: Meissonnier's *Life of the Buddha (La Vie de Bouddha, 2004)***

Weekend reading assignment: start reading *Biography of the Tripitaka Master*

Week Seven – February 25-27

- **Life of the Buddha**

Weekend reading assignment: finish reading *Biography of the Tripitaka Master*

Week Eight – March 3-5

*** TEST 3:** February 25 - *A Biography of the Tripitaka Master of the Great Ci'en Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty*

- ***Tripitaka Master Xuanzang*** (with reference to Kuiji)
- **Film - *A Chinese Tale Story***

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SPRING BREAK  
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Week Nine – March 17-19

- **Visit Meher Spiritual Center, 10200 N Kings Hwy, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572**
- **Film: *Sai Baba***

Weekend reading assignment: read passages from Heidegger and Gadamer on Moodle

Week Ten – March 24-26

- **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1917-2008) Transcendental Meditation (TM), a trademark of Maharishi Foundation, Ltd.**
- **Film clips from Baba Ram Das *Fierce Grace* (2001)**

Weekend reading assignment: begin reading *My Spiritual Journey* by the Dalai Lama

Week Eleven- March 31-April 2

- **Film: *Kundun***
- **Dalai Lama**

Weekend reading assignment: finish reading *My Spiritual Journey* by the Dalai Lama

Week Twelve- April 7-9

***TEST 4:** April 7 - *My Spiritual Journey* by the Dalai Lama

- **Dalai Lama**

Weekend reading assignment: read passages from *Nihon Reiki*, available on Moodle.

Week Thirteen – April 14-16

- ***Nihon Reiki, Miraculous Lives of Japanese Saints and Bodhisattva Gyōki***
- **Life of Kūkai, Kūkai manga and illustrated biographies**

Weekend reading assignment: *Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism* Chapter 1 - 4

Week Fourteen – April 21-23

- **Life of Kūkai and the Shikoku Pilgrimage**
- **Film:** (students' choice) *Kūkai* (1984) or *Legend of the Demon Cat* (2017)

Weekend reading assignment: *Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism* Chapter 5 - end

Week Fifteen – April 28

Conclusions and discussion of the Final Exam

****The Final Exam is on Tuesday, May 5 at 4:00 p.m. in our regular classroom***