Course Content.

This course will examine the beliefs, values, and practices of South Asian Hinduism and Buddhism, especially as enunciated in foundational texts. Two-thirds of the course will be dedicated to reading, analyzing, and discussing the following "holy" books: The Upanishads, The Bhagavad-Gita, The Dhammapada, and The Bodhicharyavatara by Shantideva. The last third will involve a study of the role of goddess(es) and women in village Hinduism and the religiously inspired political leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Teaching and Learning Objectives.

This course is designed so that students will: (1) develop an understanding of the methods and perspectives proper to the academic study of religion; (2) develop an informed appreciation for the beliefs, values and practices of South Asian Hinduism and Buddhism; (3) improve their ability to analyze and interpret culturally unfamiliar texts; (4) become more aware of their own cultural and personal assumptions, beliefs, and biases; (5) develop skills to think critically about their own and others' worldviews; (6) develop an appreciation for writing as a way both to clarify for themselves the content of the course and to communicate their understanding to others; (6) improve their listening and speaking skills, and (7) develop an ability to synthesize and integrate ideas.

Format: Discussions with Appropriate Lecturing

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the texts and any problems they might have had understanding them. Writing-to-learn assignments, whether outside or inside class, are intended to help students grasp the material and re-present it in their own words. Participation in discussions is expected.

Evaluation.

(1) Writing-to-learn assignments. Frequent but short writing-to-learn assignments will encourage students to actively engage with the primary sources especially and to prepare themselves for class discussions. Either prepared at home or written at the beginning of class, these assignment
will normally be graded "S" or "U." A missed assignment is automatically given a "U" and cannot be made up (except in unusual circumstances where it might receive a check mark noting that it was turned in). If 80% or more of the graded assignments receive an "S", the student's final grade will be raised one level (e.g. C to C+). If 50% or fewer of graded assignments are graded Satisfactory, the final grade will be reduced by one-level (C to C-). Otherwise, it will not change (51%-79%).

(2) Essay Exams. Three non-cumulative essay exams (including the final) will enable the student to demonstrate his or her grasp of the material under consideration. Analytic as well as synthetic skills will be evaluated.

(3) Participation. There is no separate grade for participation. However, the instructor reserves the right to reward participation of a consistent and high quality where deemed appropriate, e.g. when a final grade average is borderline.

(4) Plagiarism. Zero tolerance on either a writing assignment or an essay exam. An automatic "F" for the course. Consult the "Academic Honesty Policy."

TEXTS


COURSE OUTLINE

I. HINDUISM

A. Brahmanism

August 29 Introduction to the Course
August 31 Vedic Religion: Devas
    Read: Handouts
September 02 Vedic Religion: Yajna
    Read: Handouts
B. TEXT: Upanishads Olivelle, tr.
Passages & Page Numbers

September 07 Katha Upanishad
1.1-9 (232)
1.19-29 (234-5)
2.1-5 (235)
2.18-25 (237-8)
3.3-17 (238-40)
4.1-5 (240-1)
4.10-15 (241-2)
5.1, 6-15 (242-4)

September 09 Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
3.1.1-2 (34)
3.8-3.9.1 (44-6)
3.2.13 (37-8)
4.4.1-25 (64-7)
4.3.1-21 (58-61)
4.3.31-38 (62-4)
4.5.1-6 (69-70)

September 12 Chandogya Upanishad
3.14-15.1 (123-4)
6.1.1-7 (148)
6.2 (149)
6.9-13 (153-5)
7.25-26 (165-6)
8.1 (167)
8.7-12 (171-5)

September 14 Mundaka Upanishad
1.1.1-7 (268)
1.2.7-13 (270-1)
2.1 (271-2)
3.1.1-8 (274-5)
3.2 (275-7)

September 16 Kena and Isa Upanishads
(Complete)

II. HINDUISM: DEVELOPMENT

September 19 A. The Rise of Classical Hinduism
The Bhagavad-Gita Translated by E. Easwaran,
Read: "Introduction"

B. TEXT: The Bhagavad-Gita

September 21 Chs. 1&2
September 23 Chs. 3&4
September 26 Chs. 5&6
September 28 Chs. 9-11
September 30 Chs. 12-13

October 03 EXAM #1

III. BUDDHISM

A. Early Buddhism
October 05 The Buddha and his Teachings
The Dhammapada translated by E. Easwaran
Read: Introduction, pp. 7-33

October 07 Read: Introduction, pp. 34-46; 58-72

October 12 Theravada Buddhism: Sri Lanka
Video: “In the Footprints of the Buddha”

B. TEXT: The Dhammapada (Path of the Truth)
October 14 Chs. 1-8
October 17 Chs. 9-14
October 19 Chs. 15-20
October 21 Chs. 21-26

C. Mahayana Buddhism
October 24 1. Introduction to Mahayana
“Introduction” to The Way of the Bodhisattva

2. TEXT: The Bodhicharyavatara
October 26 Chs. 1-3
October 28 Chs. 4-5
October 31 Chs. 6&7
November 2 Ch. 8
November 4 Ch. 10 and Appendices 2&3
NOVEMBER 7 EXAM #2

IV. POPULAR HINDUISM

A. Introduction to Bhakti
NOVEMBER 9 Devotionalism
Read: Handout

November 11 Video
Read: Handout

B. Gods/Goddesses; Men/Women
Following Readings from DEVI, ed. Hawley
November 14 Devi and the Devi Mahatmya
Read: “DEVI The Great Goddess”
November 16 Radha and Krishna
Read: “RADHA: Consort and Conqueror of Krishna”
November 18 Kali and Shiva
Read: “KALI: Blood and Death Out of Place”
November 21 The Ganges as Sacred
Read: “GANGA: The Hindu Goddess…”
November 28 Goddess Possession
Read: “SERANVALI: The Goddess who Possesses”
November 30 Immolation
Read: “SATI: The Story of Godavari”
V. MAHATMA GANDHI: RELIGION, POLITICS
AND THE BIRTH OF FREE INDIA

TEXT: All Men are Brothers by Mahatma Gandhi

December 2 Autobiography
  Film: Gandhi (Prosser)
  Read: Gandhi, T.B.A.

December 5 Religion, Truth and Ethics
  Read: Gandhi, pp. 51-76

December 7 Ahimsa, Non-Violence
  Read: Gandhi, pp. 77-97

December 9 Self-Discipline, Poverty and Plenty
  Read: Gandhi, pp. 97-112; 118-125

December 12 Democracy and Women
  Read: Gandhi, pp. 126-137; 146-152

T.B.A.   FINAL EXAM