

Religions of Asia

(Rel 100: 3 CR. HUM/GA).

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(The Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha became the Buddha.)

Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, and to lesser extent other religious traditions found throughout Asia. The goal of this course is to provide you with an overview that will help you engage the worlds of Asian religions in an informed manner for the rest of your life. During this course your understanding of what religions are will probably undergo radical transformation. For example, you will encounter the following distinctive religious ideas: that the divine possesses many different names and forms, that religions can function without a single god at the center, and that there is no permanent core to our innermost being. Over the course of the semester you will also gain a preliminary understanding of what is involved with the study of religion in a university setting.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN AND HOW YOU WILL LEARN IT. **You will leave this class able to begin to answer these “big questions”:**

1. *What would I need to know before walking into a Hindu/Buddhist/Jain/Sikh place of worship in the upper Midwest in 2021?*
2. *How have specific Asian religious traditions changed over time and space?*
3. *What can we learn from specific Asian religions about what it means to be human?*
4. *How do different Asian religions approach the nature of the divine/ the nature of reality?*

You will fulfill the following learning outcomes:

- **GEP Humanities 1:** Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).
- **GEP Humanities 2:** Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.
- **GEP Global Awareness 1:** Identify and explain various components of a culture that is distinct from those found within the United States.
- **GEP Global Awareness 2:** Analyze how cultural similarities and differences are negotiated in ways that help shape the modern world.
- **RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** Demonstrate the ability to interpret, describe, and compare religious phenomena as they intersect with diverse historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Assessment of learning outcomes:

- **Quizzes** that assess your knowledge of key terms and key information (GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2, Religious Studies)
- **Class polls and interactive activities** (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2, Religious Studies).
- **3-Step Worksheets** (details will be explained during course) teach you to bracket your own initial response to religious/cultural difference and engage in interpretation using religious studies ideas (GEP Humanities 2, Religious Studies, GEP Global Awareness 1)
- **Short Answer Questions** that will measure your understanding of specific concepts (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2, Religious Studies).
- **Short Essay questions** that will ask you to construct an answer to a more complex question that pulls together information and concepts from across a unit. (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2, Religious Studies).

Explanation of Alignment with GEP Learning Outcomes

Religions, almost by definition, center on "perennial questions concerning the human condition" because at their root religions help people to deal with being alive (GEP Humanities 1, Religious Studies). You will learn specific Religious Studies methods for encountering, analyzing, and responding to a diverse set of religious situations (GEP Humanities 2, Religious Studies) in a way that demonstrates an awareness of the importance of placing a specific example in its specific historical, social, and cultural context (Religious Studies). Most of this course focuses on specific aspects of Asian religious traditions as they are found in specific Asian cultural contexts (GEP 1). There are parts of this course that explicitly focus on how specific Asian religions change as they undergo processes connected to colonialism and globalization (GEP 2).

Grading and Student Expectations

Canvas quizzes: 15%. There will be short weekly quizzes due most Fridays that will check your basic comprehension of class materials.

Short Answer Questions: 15%. These will be short (100-300 word) mini-essays due on many Fridays that will ask you to apply your understanding of the week's material to a specific question.

3-Step Worksheets: 10%. These worksheets are based on the 3-Step Method for Engaging Religion (guidelines given before first assignment). There will be four 3-step worksheets in the course (each due on a Friday), one per religious tradition.

Unit Essays (x3): 45%. Each of the three units concludes with a 500-700-word essay that explores a big question related to the overall unit.

Participation: 15%. You should aim to actively participate at least 30 times during the semester. Active participation is defined as some combination of the following:

- Attending synchronous Zoom sessions AND participating in thoughtful discussions with other students that demonstrate that you have prepared the class materials.
- Regular contributions to Padlet, Flipgrid, and other interactivities activities.
- Posting relevant, thoughtful, informed comments in the asynchronous class discussion forum each week that you have missed class.
- Discussing class material with me outside of synchronous class meetings.

At the end of the semester you will need to submit a self-evaluation form. This form will function as your own self-evaluation of the participation grade you feel you deserve for the semester. I will then take this self-evaluation into account when determining your participation grade.

NOTE: If you miss more than 6 synchronous Zoom classes for any reason your participation grade will be a zero unless you meet with me and we determine that your absences are not impacting your ability to be successful in this class.

Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+:77-79, C: 73-76.
C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower.

Course Structure

This course is delivered entirely online through Canvas and related tools such as Zoom. This syllabus does **not** contain the actual topic and assignments of the course. Under the Important Course Materials module in Canvas you will find an outline of the structure of this course. Week-by-week assignments are found within Canvas modules (e.g. Week 1 Module, Week 2 Module). Materials should be prepared BEFORE the date of the class for which they are assigned. Actual assignments will appear on the Canvas calendar at least a week in advance of their due date.

Office Hours

Office hours will be through Zoom at the following times: Monday 3-5, Friday 4-5, and by appointment. Let me know when you would like to meet (either during an office hour or at another time) and I will send you a Zoom invitation.

Text Rental

You should obtain the following book from Text Rental at the bookstore:

Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives by Lewis Vaughn.

Course Policies

Assignment Submission and Late Work Policy

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested *before the due date*. Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines—there will be no make-up assignments or quizzes, or late work accepted without a compelling reason and instructor approval. If such a reason exists, please let me know as soon as possible and we will figure it out. **I am always ready to work with students who are struggling.** Without instructor permission, late or missing assignments may affect the student's grade.

Course Technology Requirements

- View this website to see [minimum recommended computer and internet configurations for Canvas](#).
- You will also need access to the following tools to participate in this course.
 - Laptop, tablet with keyboard, or desktop computer
 - webcam
 - microphone
 - printer
 - a stable internet connection (don't rely on cellular)

Protecting your Data and Privacy

UW-System approved tools meet security, privacy, and data protection standards. For a list of approved tools, visit this website.

<https://www.wisconsin.edu/dle/external-application-integration-requests/>

Tools not listed on the website linked above may not meet security, privacy, and data protection standards. If you have questions about tools, contact the UWSP IT Service Desk at 715-346-4357.

Here are steps you can take to protect your data and privacy.

- Use different usernames and passwords for each service you use
- Do not use your UWSP username and password for any other services
- Use secure versions of websites whenever possible (HTTPS instead of HTTP)
- Have updated antivirus software installed on your devices

This course requires posting of work online that is viewable only by your classmates. None of the work submitted online will be shared publicly. Some assignments require account creation for online programs. The instructor of

this course will not share your academic records (grades, student IDs). Confidentiality of student work is imperative, so you should not share the work of your peers publicly without their permission. By participating in these assignments, you are giving consent to sharing of your work with others in this class and you recognize there is a small risk of your work being shared online beyond the purposes of this course. Examples of additional risks include data mining by the company providing the service, selling of your email to third parties, and release of ownership of data shared through the tool. If you elect to not participate in these online assignments due to confidentiality concerns, then an alternate assignment will be offered to you. **[UWSP Handbook Chapter 9 Section 5]**

Technology Support

- Visit with a [Student Technology Tutor](#)
- Seek assistance from the [IT Service Desk](#) (Formerly HELP Desk)
 - IT Service Desk Phone: 715-346-4357 (HELP)
 - IT Service Desk Email: techhelp@uwsp.edu

Help Resources

Tutoring	Advising	Safety and General Support	Health
Tutoring and Learning Center helps with Study Skills, Writing, Technology, Math, & Science. 018 Albertson Hall, ext 3568	Academic and Career Advising Center, 320 Albertson Hall, ext 3226	Dean of Students Office, 212 Old Main, ext. 2611	Counseling Center, Delzell Hall, ext. 3553. Health Care, Delzell Hall, ext. 4646

Inclusivity Statement

My goal in this course is to create and maintain a learning community that feels welcoming to students from all different kinds of backgrounds and experiences. Diversity (of sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture) makes our learning better, but only if our class feels like a safe space for learning and growth. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

If you have experienced a bias incident (an act of conduct, speech, or expression to which a bias motive is evident as a contributing factor regardless of whether the act is criminal) at UWSP, you have the right to report it using this [link](#). You may also contact the Dean of Students office directly at dos@uwsp.edu.

Incomplete Policy

An incomplete will only be assigned if extenuating circumstances prohibit normal completion of the course and it must be completed within the following semester. If necessary, I will refer the student petition to the Dean of Students office.

Netiquette Guidelines¹

Netiquette is a set of rules for behaving properly online. Your instructor and fellow students wish to foster a safe online learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse. You are encouraged to comment, question, or critique an idea but you are not to attack an individual. Working as a community of learners, we can build a polite and respectful course community. The following netiquette tips will enhance our learning:

- Do not dominate any discussion.
- Give other students the opportunity to join in the discussion.
- Do not use offensive language. Present ideas appropriately.
- Be cautious in using Internet language. For example, do not capitalize all letters since this suggests shouting.
- Popular emoticons such as 😊 or / can be helpful but do not overdo or overuse them.
- Never make fun of someone's ability to read or write.
- Share tips with other students.
- Keep an "open-mind" and be willing to express even your minority opinion. Minority opinions have to be respected.
- Think and edit before you push the "Send" button.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- Using humor is acceptable.

Religious Beliefs Accommodation

It is UW System policy ([UWS 22](#)) to reasonably accommodate your sincerely held religious beliefs with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements.

You will be permitted to make up an exam or other academic requirement at another time or by an alternative method, without any prejudicial effect, if:

- There is a scheduling conflict between your sincerely held religious beliefs and taking the exam or meeting the academic requirements; and
- You have notified your instructor within the first three weeks of the beginning of classes (first week of summer or interim courses) of the

¹ Adapted from: Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Kernek, C., & Lozada, H. R. (2010). *Netiquette: Make it part of your syllabus*. Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 6(1). Retrieved from http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm and Shea, V. (1994). Netiquette. Albion.com. Retrieved from: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/>.

specific days or dates that you will request relief from an examination or academic requirement.

- Your instructor will accept the sincerity of your religious beliefs at face value and keep your request confidential.
- Your instructor will schedule a make-up exam or requirement before or after the regularly scheduled exam or requirement.
- You may file any complaints regarding compliance with this policy in the Equity and Affirmative Action Office.

Title IX

UW-Stevens Point is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and institutional policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In the event that you choose to disclose information about having survived sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, and specify that this violence occurred while a student at UWSP, federal and state laws mandate that I, as your instructor, notify the Title IX Coordinator/Office of the Dean of Students.

Please see the information on the [Dean of Students webpage](#) for information on making confidential reports of misconduct or interpersonal violence, as well as campus and community resources available to students. For more information see the [Title IX page](#).

Other Policies

Absences due to Military Service

As stated in the UWSP Catalog, you will not be penalized for class absence due to unavoidable or legitimate required military obligations, or medical appointments at a VA facility, [not to exceed two \(2\) weeks](#) unless special permission is granted by the instructor. You are responsible for notifying faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible and for providing documentation to the Office of the Dean of Students to verify the reason for the absence. The faculty member is responsible to provide reasonable accommodations or opportunities to make up exams or other course assignments that have an impact on the course grade. For absences due to being deployed for active duty, please refer to the [Military Call-Up Instructions for Students](#).

Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures

Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures

UWSP 14.01 Statement of principles

The board of regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff and students of the university of Wisconsin system believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the university of Wisconsin system. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions.

UWSP 14.03 Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action.

- (1) Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:
 - (a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
 - (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
 - (c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
 - (d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
 - (e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or
 - (f) Assists other students in any of these acts.

- (2) Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas; stealing examinations or course materials; submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course; tampering with the laboratory experiment or computer program of another student; knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

Clery Act

The US Department of Education requires universities to disclose and publish campus crime statistics, security information, and fire safety information annually. Statistics for the three previous calendar years and policy statements are released on or before October 1st in our [Annual Security Report](#). Another requirement of the Clery Act is that the campus community must be given timely warnings of ongoing safety threats and immediate/emergency notifications. For more information about when and how these notices will be sent out, please see our [Jeanne Clery Act](#) page.

Commit to Integrity

As a student in this course (and at this university) you are expected to maintain high degrees of professionalism, commitment to active learning and participation in this class and also integrity in your behavior in and out of the classroom.

Confidentiality

Learning requires risk-taking and sharing ideas. Please keep your classmates' ideas and experiences confidential outside the classroom unless permission has been granted to share them.

Copyright infringement

This is the act of exercising, without permission or legal authority, one or more of the exclusive rights granted to the copyright owner under section 106 of the Copyright Act. Each year students violate these laws and campus policies, putting themselves at risk of federal prosecution. For more information about what to expect if you are caught, or to take preventive measures to keep your computing device clean, visit our [copyright page](#).

Dropping UWSP Courses

It is the student's responsibility to understand when they need to consider unenrolling from a course. Refer to the UWSP [Academic Calendar](#) for dates and deadlines for registration. After this period, a serious and compelling reason is required to drop from the course. Serious and compelling reasons includes: (1) documented and significant change in work hours, leaving student unable to attend class, or (2) documented and severe physical/mental illness/injury to the student or student's family.

Drug Free Schools and Communities Act

The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA) requires institutions of higher education to establish policies that address unlawful possession, use, or distribution of alcohol and illicit drugs. The DFSCA also requires the establishment of a drug and alcohol prevention program. The Center for Prevention lists information about alcohol and drugs, their effects, and the legal consequences if found in possession of these substances. [Center for Prevention – DFSCA](#)

Emergency Procedures

- See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”

Equal Access for Students with Disabilities

UW-Stevens Point will modify academic program requirements as necessary to ensure that they do not discriminate against qualified applicants or students with disabilities. The modifications should not affect the substance of educational programs or compromise academic standards; nor should they intrude upon academic freedom. Examinations or other procedures used for evaluating students' academic achievements may be adapted. The results of such evaluation must demonstrate the student's achievement in the academic activity, rather than describe his/her disability.

If modifications are required due to a disability, please inform the instructor and contact the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) to complete an Accommodations Request form. Phone: 346-3365 or Room 609 Albertson Hall.

FERPA

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) provides students with a right to protect, review, and correct their student records. Staff of the university with a clear *educational need to know* may also have to access to certain student records. Exceptions to the law include parental notification in cases of alcohol or drug use, and in case of a health or safety concern. FERPA also permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records, without consent, to another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.

Lecture materials and recordings for Rel 100 Spring 2021 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

NOTE: The Schedule of Assignments is actually a series of HTML pages within Canvas. Those pages have been copied here but the formatting does not transfer perfectly.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 Materials

To-Do Date: Jan 26 at 3:30pm

Question for the Week

What is involved in studying "religion"?

Overview

Welcome to Religions of Asia! This first week is all about orientation -- to UWSP, to how our Canvas works, to the academic study of religion, and to the world of Asian religions.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 1 Canvas Quiz](#) (due by the beginning of Thursday's class. This means you need to prepare the material and take the quiz BEFORE class).

[Week 1 Short Answer](#) (writing assignments will usually be due on Fridays at midnight).

Head to [Flipgrid](#) and do your self-introduction.

Class Preparation

Tuesday, January 26

Orientation to course through Zoom meeting. If you were not able to make our first meeting send me an email and I will follow up with you. Here is where you find [the Zoom info for our class](#).

Thursday, January 28

READ:

In *Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives* (after today we will call this textbook VAUGHN) read p. 3-5 ("First Look"), 6-7 ("Studying Religions"). If you do not have your text rental copy yet you can read [this pdf version](#).

1) Read the following mini-essays about Hindu traditions from Harvard University's Pluralism Project website (we'll be using this website a great deal):

[A. The Textures of Tradition](#)

[B. What Does "Hindu" Mean?](#)

[C. A Context for Diversity \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

NOTE: You can always read these essays in PDF format as well. On each page there is a link to download the page as a PDF.

Week 2 Materials

To-Do Date: Feb 2 at 3:30pm

Questions for the week:

How does yoga connect to Hinduism? What does it mean to say that religions can be "messy"?

Week Overview

Some parts of the "tapestry" of Hinduism are over 3000 years old. This week introduces you to some of the earliest layers or aspects of what we today call "Hinduism": the fire ritual, the idea of the "oneness of everything," and some of the earliest examples of the practice of yoga, and others as well. These ideas connect to the scriptural collections known as the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Hindu traditions have historically followed what some textbooks term an "additive" model. That means that as new developments happen old ideas, beliefs, and practice are not rejected. Rather, they join the mix. So today there are some aspects of Hindu traditions today that are at least 3000 years old, some aspects that are 2300 years old, some aspects that are 1200 years old, some aspects that are 300 years old, some aspects that are 20 years old, etc. This is a very important feature of Hindu traditions: when you are learning about the past you are also literally learning about part of the present. When we examine conversations about the relationship of modern-day forms of yoga to the history of Hinduism the entire sweep of this history becomes extremely relevant.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 2 Canvas Quiz.](#)

[Week 2 Short Answer.](#)

See what examples you can find on the Internet of Hindu responses to Covid that involve yagnas and [post them to Padlet by Friday at midnight. \(Links to an external site.\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#) Password: Fluffy

Post your response to the Yoga and South Asian Religions Flipgrid by Friday at midnight. To find this Flipgrid just [go to our main Flipgrid page \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and look for this specific topic.

Class Preparation

Tuesday, February 2

- 1) In VAUGHN, read 102-103 (A Prayer to the God Agni).
- 2) View this video from the Hindu Temple of Minnesota:
- 3) In the Pluralism Project, read
[A. Agni: The Fire Altar \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
[\(Links to an external site.\)](#) [B. Veda: The Scripture and Authority \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- 4) View two examples of a Vedic yagna (also spelled yajna, also referred to as a havan or homam). Note: you do not need to watch these entire videos. Just have a quick look.

And, just in case you think this sort of thing only happens in Asia.....

Thursday, February 4

- 1) From the Pluralism Project, read:
[A. Brahman and Atman: That art Thou \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
[\(Links to an external site.\)](#) [B. Vedanta: The Way of Wisdom \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

2) In VAUGHN, read 88-89 (Hindu Beginnings, Hinduism Timeline), 103-104 (Selections from the Upanishads -- Chandogya Upanishad), and 119-121 (Yoga: Discipline of Freedom).

3. View the following videos that briefly illustrate current debates about the relationship of Hinduism to yoga.

Week 3 Materials

To-Do Date: Feb 9 at 3:30pm

Question of the Week

How do Hindus understand the idea and practice of dharma?

Overview

Weeks 3 and 4 introduce you to what is sometimes termed "classical Hinduism" -- the parts of Hinduism that historically come after the Upanishads and that involve some of the most recognizable features of Hinduism today: famous deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, and the Goddess, the worship of deities in image forms, temples, and the concepts of "dharma" and "bhakti." This layer of Hinduism also includes several additional and highly important scriptures: the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* (which contains the *Bhagavad Gita*), and the many *Puranas* that tell some of the most famous stories about well-known Hindu deities.

This week (Week 3) focuses specifically on Hindu understandings of *dharma*. *Dharma* ("teaching," "religion," "structure of reality," "cosmic balance," "moral duty") is a foundational religious idea for Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and has somewhat different meanings within each tradition.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 3 Canvas Quiz.](#)

[Week 3 Short Answer question.](#)

Do the [Flipgrid \(Links to an external site.\)](#) topic "Explaining Hindu Dharma" by Friday at midnight.

Class Preparation

Tuesday, February 9

1. From the Pluralism Project, read the following:

[Dharma: The Social Order \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Karma - The Way of Action \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[\(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Bhakti: The Way of Devotion \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

2. Exploring *dharma*, *karma*, and *bhakti* also brings us into contact with famous Hindu religious texts such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the many different *Puranas*. These texts contain stories that talk about *dharma*, *karma*, and *bhakti* in connection with Hindu deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, and many others. We can therefore begin our engagement with this material by meeting the god Vishnu in his different forms. ***On that note, please explore the Emory Odyssey South Asia pages on [Vishnu \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and [Krishna. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)*** Please note that when you are assigned websites like this I expect that you will explore throughout the site, not just on the first page you see when you click the link.

3. The *Ramayana* is one of (note that "one of" is not the same as "the only" or "the most important") the most important religious stories that make up the tapestry of Hindu traditions. There are many versions of the *Ramayana*. Many Hindus would say that the *Ramayana* is an exploration of *dharma* in the form of a story. **Read and view the following *Ramayana*-related resources:**

- A. [Introduction to The Career of Rama \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- B. [The Story \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- C. [A True Hero \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- D. [Wives of Kosala \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- E. [Loyal Allies \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- F. [Rama's Enemies \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- G. [Divine Power \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

H. a traditional *Ramayana* performance

I. A futuristic graphic novel *Ramayana*.

[J. A wide variety of different kinds of Ramayanas found in South Asia AND Southeast Asia. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) See if you can find one from Thailand and one from Cambodia.

OPTIONAL:

A. An animated version of the *Ramayana* children.

Thursday, February 11

We continue our exploration of *dharma* with a focus on the famous text of the *Mahabharata*, and on the perhaps more famous section of the *Mahabharata* that is called the *Bhagavad Gita*. *The Bhagavad Gita* is one of the most famous religious scriptures in the world.

1. In Vaughn, read 91-95 (Hindu Scriptures: After the Vedas). You do not need to read the inset window about Hindu-Muslim violence.

2. A mind-blowing excerpt from a modern graphic novel version:

3. Now, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Read and view the following:

A. The *Bhagavad Gita* in 3 Minutes:

B. The beginnings of *Bhagavad Gita* as presented in 18 Days.

C. Another presentation of the teachings of the Gita:

C. Now that you are warmed up, read the following two primary sources carefully in VAUGHN: *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom* (119-121), and *Selections from Bhagavad Gita* (105-107). In lecture we will discuss how these two primary sources are related.

OPTIONAL:

A really fun way of engaging *the Mahabharata*:

Week 4 Materials

To-Do Date: Feb 16 at 3:30pm

Questions of the Week

How do Hindus practice and experience bhakti (devotion), and to which forms of the divine are Hindu devotional practices directed?

Overview

To the outside observer Hinduism sometimes appears to be a tradition of many deities yet for many Hindus these deities are all manifestations of an underlying oneness (Brahman) that cannot be known or expressed directly in language. There is a dynamic tension between this sense of manyness and oneness in Hindu traditions that comes together around the rise to prominence of bhakti traditions and temple worship, the popularity of Vishnu and Shiva and the Goddess, and the ways that other religious traditions in the medieval period such as Islam and Sikhism related to Hindu traditions. *Bhakti*, or "devotion," has to do with both the experience of passionate devotion to some form of the divine as well as the many kinds of social changes (new scriptures, different ideas about how to worship and who has the ability to worship) that go along with the experience of that passionate devotion. Worship through the ritual of *puja* in different settings (home, temple, festival, pilgrimage) is one of the important ways that this *bhakti* is expressed.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Take the Week 4 Canvas quiz.](#)

[Submit the Hinduism Three-Step Worksheet.](#)

Make a post in the *bhakti* topic on Flipgrid by Friday night at midnight.

Class Preparation:

Tuesday, February 16

1. Read [Hinduism and Hindu Art. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

2. The experience and practice of bhakti has considerable overlap with different forms of Hindu worship / ritual/ religious practice. Read about some of the most common forms of Hindu practice and worship in these readings from the Pluralism Project:

[Abodes of God - Temple and Image \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Murti - Image of God \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Lamp Offerings - Hindu Worship \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

3. In Vaughn read p. 110 (The Path of Devotion: Bhagavata Purana), 117-119 (Selections from the Secret Garland), and Bhakti Yoga (122-123).

4. View the short film [Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

5. View the short film A Hindu Shrine:

6. PLEASE EXPLORE THESE DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF BHAKTI: Bhakti is not only expressed through worship rituals. It can also be expressed through [visual art, \(Links to an external site.\)](#) [poetry, \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and dance. Here are two examples of bhakti expressed through dance. In the second the dancer Shasikala Penumurthy of Atlanta begs the god Shiva to help the world fight COVID-19.

Thursday, February 18

1. Read [this important Pluralism Project essay about the relationship of many-ness and one-ness \(Links to an external site.\)](#) in Hinduism.
2. Read the following mini-essays that introduce important Hindu deities. We have been slowly building up to a formal introduction the variety of important Hindu deities. I urge you to note that the Pluralism Project essays typically both introduce you to the concept and ALSO show how it is already part of the fabric of life in the United States. This is true for these essays about Hindu deities as well.
[Ganesha: Lord of the Beginnings \(Links to an external site.\)](#).
[Balaji: Vishnu in America \(Links to an external site.\)](#).
[Rama-Sita-Hanuman \(Links to an external site.\)](#).
[The Great Night of Shiva \(Links to an external site.\)](#).
[Many Ma's: Goddess in America \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
3. Investigate, from the Odyssey South Asia exhibit at Emory's Carlos Museum, [Durga Battles the Buffalo Demon \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and [Ganesha \(Links to an external site.\)](#).
4. View this amateur [documentary about the festival of Navaratri \(also known as Durga Puja\)](#).

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Week 5 Materials

To-Do Date: Feb 23 at 3:30pm

Question

How do Hindu traditions today reflect the significant presence of Islam in South Asia as well as historical contact with Europe and North America?

Overview

In this week we will pay close attention to the ways that Hindu traditions changed between 1000 CE and the post-1947 era when India became an independent nation-state.

Student Tasks (To Do)

No quiz this week. :)

[Week 5 Short Answer](#)

Do the "Legacy of Colonialism" Flipgrid.

Class Preparation

Tuesday, February 23

1. From the Pluralism Project: [A Context for Diversity \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
2. [Islam in South Asia: \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
3. Vaughn: p. 89 (Hinduism Timeline); 93 ("A Closer Look: Hindu-Muslim Violence"), 96-97 (Challenges to Hinduism)
4. Selection from [Darwadker Kabir 3.0.pdf](#) "Kabir" by Vinay Dharwadker (from *Religions of India in Practice*, edited by Donald Lopez)
5. [The Islamic Shrine Where Hindus Pray \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Thursday, February 25

1. Read this [clear summary of the history of British rule in South Asia. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
2. From the Pluralism Project: [A Context for Diversity \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

3. View [How the British Stole 45 Trillion Dollars from India with Trains. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
4. [Christianity in India \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
5. Read an [excerpt from the "infamous" Macauley Minute, \(Links to an external site.\)](#) a speech given by a British historian-politician who argued that South Asian civilization and culture did not contain anything of value. Please note that there were also Europeans who felt the exact opposite -- for example [Sir William Jones. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
6. Read a response to the anti-Hindu views put forth by some Europeans by the 19th century Indian intellectual Rammohan Roy entitled [Hinduism Is Not Inferior to Christianity-1.pdf](#)
7. View a scene from a famous fictionalized presentation of the life of Mohandas Gandhi.
8. Martin Luther King on Gandhi

Week 6 Materials

To-Do Date: Mar 2 at 3:30pm

Question

How can we apply what we have learned in this unit to understand the lives of Hindus in the upper Midwest (and America more broadly) today?

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Unit 1 Essay \(due by class on Tuesday, March 9](#)

[There WILL be a quiz, but not about class content.](#) As discussed, end-of-unit assignment will be presented on Tuesday, March 2 and due the following Tuesday.

Class Preparation

Tuesday, March 2

1. From The Pluralism Project
[The New Hindu Immigrants \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
[The Temple Builders \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
2. [How Americans Came to Embrace Meditation, and with it, Hinduism \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
3. [Held Globalization excerpt.pdf](#)
4. Sakthi Puja in Brookfield, Wisconsin.

Thursday, March 4

1. [A Pandit's Reflection on Protest, Ahimsa, and Black Lives Matter \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
2. [All Lives Matter \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
3. [Hindu Students Council Statement on the Murder of George Floyd \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
4. [Hindu American Foundation: Dharma and Racial Justice \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
5. [Black Lives Matter and So Do Dalit, Adivasi, and Muslim Lives \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Week 7 Class Materials

To-Do Date: Mar 9 at 3:30pm

Week 7: How do pre-existing ideas we have about Buddhism connect to different Buddhist beliefs about the Buddha?

Overview

Buddhist traditions, like Hindu traditions, also originated in ancient South Asia and also think in terms of dharma, karma, and samsara. However, there are both similarities and key differences when compared with Hindu traditions. Further, while Hindu traditions, after beginning in South Asia, did spread into Southeast Asia and then (in recent centuries) across the world, Buddhist traditions have made their way out of South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia even more substantially. That means that the story of Buddhism is also, fundamentally, a story of change over time and space across much of Asia. The main goal of our encounter with Buddhism is to give you an overarching way to think about numerous different examples within Buddhist traditions rather than acquaint you with all of the specifics. To do so we are going to identify key issues that one sees time and time again in the history of Buddhist and connect those issues to two overlapping frameworks: the life story of the Buddha and the Buddhist concept of the Triple Jewel: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. For these reasons Week 7 first offers a brief overview and then starts to look a bit more specifically at Buddha-related concepts. Over the next several weeks we will then proceed to focus on Buddhist dharma, followed by a more in-depth exploration of Buddhist sangha. We bring all these elements back together by focusing on a variety of modern-day Buddhist practices, concepts, and communities.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 7 Canvas Quiz](#)

No short answer this week.

Tuesday, March 9

Complete Unit 1 Short Answer test. No other assigned materials.

Thursday, March 11

1) Read (from Harvard University's Pluralism Project):

[The Path of Awakening](#)

[Prince Siddhartha: Renouncing the World](#)

[Becoming the "Buddha": The Way of Meditation](#)

[27 The Path of Awakening The Pluralism Project.pdf](#)

[27.5 Prince Siddhartha Renouncing the World The Pluralism Project.pdf](#)

2) In Vaugh read "The Awakened One" (p. 168-169).

3) Read a brief overview of how the [beginnings of Buddhism connect to Hinduism and Jainism](#).

Week 8 Class Materials

To-Do Date: Mar 16 at 3:30pm

Overview

This week introduces you to Buddhist dharma. You'll discover that key Buddhist concepts are simply stated but extremely difficult to understand in their entirety. The ideas at the center of Buddhist dharma are officially very difficult and we will not totally understand them. We are just making a beginning. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind about approaching "Buddhist dharma":

The meanings of the term "dharma" in Buddhism are structurally similar to what the term means in Hinduism. In both cases dharma refers to "how reality works," "how humans ought to act," and "teachings about both how reality works and how humans ought to act such that they are in tune with that larger reality." The DIFFERENCE is that Buddhist understandings of dharma do not think that reality works in exactly the same way as Hindu understandings of dharma thinks reality works. Both frameworks think in terms of karma and samsara but have different views about how karma and samsara work, which means that they also have different understandings of how to achieve freedom from samsara.

The 4 Truths (sometimes referred to as the 4 Noble Truths) are a very famous expression of Buddhist dharma. **However, the 4 Truths (and the 8-fold path described in Truth #4) are not the single way that all (or even most) Buddhists think about Buddhist dharma. Buddhism is more more complex than that.**

It is easy enough, when asked, to list the 4 Truths and recite the 8-fold path. **What I would like you to ponder is not so much the fact of the 4 Truths but rather why they are thought to work.** The answer is not "Because Buddhists believe that they work." The answer is something more akin to a scientific explanation of a phenomenon like gravity. Gravity is an inherent property in a Newtonian universe. We don't believe that it works --- we learn how it works through experimentation, discovery, and testing. I encourage you to think about the 4 Truths in this way, and to use the study questions mentioned above as a guide for how to do so.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 8 Canvas Quiz](#)

[Week 8 Short Answer.](#)

Flipgrid on Dukkha and Climate Change.

Tuesday, March 16

READ:

FROM THE PLURALISM PROJECT:

The Dharma: The Teachings of the Buddha (be sure to LISTEN to the additional content on the bottom of the page).

[The Buddha in His Time and Ours](#) by Charles Hallisey.

Note: It is very important that you read this source carefully and in its entirety.

"When Things Fall Apart" by Pema Chodron (see Vaugh p. 194-197)

[The Practice of Mindfulness](#)

Week 9 Class Materials

To-Do Date: Mar 30 at 3:30pm

What do Buddhist teachings think is the key to happiness and freedom? Part 2. What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice? Part 1.

Overview:

This week continues our exploration of Buddhist dharma (see overview from last week). **This week also begins to focus on sangha (Buddhist community) and how it relates to different understandings of "buddha" and "dharma."** What does it mean to be part of a Buddhist community? What have Buddhist communities looked like at different times and places? What counts as true Buddhist dharma and who gets to say? There have been many different understandings in different times and in different places of who belongs to a Buddhist community (sangha) and what that commitment means.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 9 Canvas Quiz](#)

[Week 9 Short Answer.](#)

Class Preparation

For Tuesday, March 30

[Interbeing by Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

[Building A Pure Land On Earth \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

VAUGHN: Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism (182-186)

For Thursday, April 1.

[The Pluralism Project: Sangha \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[The Pluralism Project: The Three Treasures \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

VAUGHN: The Five Precepts p. 169-171

[Pluralism Project: The Expansion of Buddhism \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Pluralism Project: Buddha's Birthday \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Watch: [\(Links to an external site.\)Breakfast for the Buddha, Monks, and Hungry Ghosts](#)

Week 10 Class Materials

To-Do Date: Apr 6 at 3:30pm

Note: Several people have said they are **confused about how Buddhism relates to Hinduism.** [Have a look at this document. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice? Part 1: Focus on Theravada Buddhisms.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 10 Quiz](#)

[Week 10 Short Answer](#)

Prepare for Class

Tuesday, April 6:

REREAD:

[The Expansion of Buddhism](#)

READ:

[Theravada: Way of the Elders](#)

[The Practice of Mindfulness \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Kathina Ceremonies in Rural Thailand \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Explore [this site](#) about the main scripture of Theravada Buddhism: the Tipitaka. ([Links to an external site.](#))

Thursday, April 8:

READ:

[Becoming a Monk \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[From Street Gangs to Temple \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

VAUGHN: Women in Buddhism (p. 204-205).

[The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

VIEW:

[Wat Buddha Haksa - Vessantara Jataka \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Sulak Sivaraksa -- How to Fight Oppression \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Week 11 Class Materials

To-Do Date: Apr 13 at 3:30pm

What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice? Part 2: Focus on Mahayana Buddhisms.

Student Tasks (To Do)

[3-Step Worksheet #2.](#)

Tuesday, April 13

[Mahayana: The Great Vehicle \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Chanting The Sutras](#)

[Building a Pure Land on Earth \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Devotion to Guanyin \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Difference between Theravada and Mahayana \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Thursday, April 15

[Monastery in the Hudson Valley](#)

[Celebrating the New Year \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Vaughn: No Need for Precepts (p. 191-192), The Koan Exercise (192-194)

Finish watching ["To the Land of Bliss" \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Week 12 Class Materials

To-Do Date: Apr 20 at 2:00pm

Overview

In the final week of our Buddhism unit, we will briefly examine Tibetan forms of Tantric (Vajrayana) Buddhism. We will then turn our attention to recent chapters in the history of globalization have impacted both the practice of Buddhism today as well as how Buddhism is perceived.

Student Tasks (To Do)

Start working on [Unit 2 Essay](#).

Class Preparation

Tuesday, April 20

Read and view

[Vajrayana: The Diamond Vehicle \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Creating a Mandala \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

In Vaughn: "Freedom in Exile: The Dalai Lama (p.198-200); "Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism" by Chogyam Trungpa (p.182-186)

Thursday, April 22

[How do Buddhists handle the coronavirus? The answer is not just meditation. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Why are we so surprised when Buddhists are violent?](#)

[The Problem with Mindfulness \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Week 12 Class Materials

Student Tasks (To Do)

[Week 12 Short Answer Question](#)

Tuesday, November 17

[Mahayana: The Great Vehicle \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Chanting The Sutras](#)

[Building a Pure Land on Earth \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Devotion to Guanyin \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Difference between Theravada and Mahayana \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Thursday, November 19

[Monastery in the Hudson Valley](#)

[Celebrating the New Year \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Vaughn: No Need for Precepts (p. 191-192), The Koan Exercise (192-194)

Finish watching ["To the Land of Bliss" \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Week 13 Class Materials

Student Tasks (To Do)

Submit [Unit 2 Short Answers](#).

Prepare for Class:

Tuesday, April 27:

Submit Unit 2 Short Answers, come to class.

Thursday, April 29:

TBD.

Weeks 14 and 15 Class Materials

To-Do Date: May 4 at 11:59pm

Student Tasks (To Do)

Work on [Individual Research Presentations](#).

Think about the [Final Essay](#).

[Self-evaluation](#) worksheet due.

Tuesday, May 4:

Work on Individual Research Presentations, come to class.

Thursday, May 6:

Work on Individual Research Presentations, come to class.

Tuesday, May 11

Individual Research Presentations, Part 1.

Thursday, May 13

Individual Research Presentations, Part 2.

Final Conversations.

Week 15 Class Materials

Student Tasks (To Do)

Read assigned materials, work on [Final Essay](#), and complete missing assignments.

Fill out [Self-Evaluation worksheet](#).