

Rel 100: Religions of Asia (Fall 2017)

Professor Luke Whitmore

(CCC 417. Office Hours: Tues. 3:30-5:30, Wed. 1:30-2:30 and by appointment)

lwhitmor@uwsp.edu

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. Over the course of the semester your understanding of what religions are will probably undergo radical transformation. For example, you will encounter the following distinctive religious ideas: that we are all part of a single reality, 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.

Learning Outcomes:

This course offers you the tools necessary to achieve the following outcomes:

(These outcomes are designed to work with the General Education Program goals for the Humanities and Global Awareness designations.)

- The ability to understand, use, and explain basic vocabulary connected to different Asian religious traditions.
- The ability to imagine, at both intellectual and experiential levels, ways of being in the world that are VERY DIFFERENT from those with which you are familiar.
- The ability to explain how, in Asian contexts, religions change over time and space. This includes understanding changes caused by colonialism and globalization.
- The ability to interact in informed, respectful, and successful ways with persons connected to diverse Asian religious communities.

Required Texts: For Rental

Religions of Asia Today, ed. Esposito (3rd Edition)

Required Texts: For Purchase

R.K. Narayan. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. (Penguin). ISBN 9780143039679.

Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Heart of Understanding 20th Anniversary Edition* edition 2005 (Parallax Press). ISBN 978-1888375923.

Assessments and Requirements

Participation and Attendance: 10% (includes group work/ contributions to discussion forums).

Pop Quizzes: 20% (lowest grade dropped, no make-ups, questions will usually be taken from study questions)

Unit 1 Test: 20% (part in-class, part take-home)

Unit 2 Test: 20% (part in-class, part take-home)

Group Project: 10%

Final Exam: 20% (part in-class, part take-home)

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

Learning Accommodations

UWSP is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities and temporary impairments. If you have a disability or acquire a condition during the semester where you need assistance, please contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center on the 6th floor of Albertson Hall (library) as soon as possible. DATC can be reached at 715-346-3365 or DATC@uwsp.edu. <https://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>

Written Assignments

If you are not able to turn in on time due to particularly extenuating circumstances, some flexibility may be possible. If this is the case, you must have asked and received permission from me no later than the day before the assignment is due. Without permission, a grade penalty will be assigned at my discretion or I may not allow you to submit.

Required Readings

If I do not provide photocopies of an assigned reading not in one of our books, you must print out the reading (you will find PDF versions on our D2L site) and bring to class.

Smart Phones

Please do not use a smart phone in class without permission. Tablets or laptops for the purposes of note-taking are fine, with permission. If your smart phone use is causing our collective energy to decrease I will let you know. If it continues to be an issue it will impact your grade.

Assignments

Assignments will change. Be sure to check D2L before each assignment.

Attendance

Everyone is automatically entitled to two unexcused absences. Anything beyond this should be discussed with me and will impact your final grade. If you miss more than 4 classes we will need to meet in person to discuss how class is going. Your presence and participation matter. Please place a copy of any absence-related information (including emails to me) in the Absence-Related Info Dropbox on D2L.

Mutual Respect (avoid bad *karmas*)

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>

Academic Misconduct (avoid bad *karmas*)

<http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>
<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf#page=11>

Emergency Response Guidance:

- In the event of a medical emergency call 9-1-1 or use the Red Emergency Phone outside of CCC Room 227 (located near the middle of each of the two long hallways on this floor). Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim.
- In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure. Our classroom is one of these designated rooms.
- In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner. Meet in the middle of Parking Lot E (the parking lot between CCC and NFAC).
- Active Shooter/Code React – Run/Escape, Hide, Fight. If trapped hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so. Follow instructions of emergency responders. See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”

Schedule of Assignments

Week 1

Tuesday, September 5: Beginning

Thursday, September 7

- Studying "Religion," Orienting to the course
- Read in preparation for today's class:
 - In *Religions of Asia Today* (henceforth ROAT) read p. 9-11
 - Have a look at the home page for the The Hindu Temple of Wisconsin (look under Week 1 for the link)
 - Read the 3 Step Rules of Engagement (Under Important Course Documents on D2L)
 - Fill out the About Me document (Under Important Course Documents) and upload it to the About Me dropbox on D2L
 - In the *Ramayana* vii-xii, xxiii-xxv
 - Study Questions:
 - What did you think of the definition of religion offered in ROAT?
 - How might you apply that definition to what you read in the *Ramayana*?

Week 2

Tuesday, September 12

- Topic: Beginning "Hinduism," beginning the *Ramayana*
- Read and view in preparation for today's class:
 - ROAT: 80-83
 - "Hinduism" paragraph from the *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion* online exhibition
 - *Ramayana* 3-21. **Note:** the first *Ramayana* reading is a little confusing. We will clarify in class and future readings will definitely feel easier. Here is a hint: use geography to think about how the numerous digressions connect to the main plot in in the second part of the reading.
 - Study Questions
 - Our *Ramayana* has two main plots: a cosmic conflict about the stability of the universe and a human drama about the stability of a kingdom. What are each of these plots and how do they relate to each other?
 - What similarities/differences did you notice between how ROAT talks about Hinduism and how the *Meeting God* online exhibit talks about Hinduism?

Thursday, September 14

- Topic: Pre-Modern Hinduism: The Formative Era

- Read and view in preparation for today's class:
 - ROAT 85-92 (Religion in Vedic and Classical South Asia)
 - The Bold Beggar comic book excerpt (PDF on D2L under Week 2, COLOR, no need to print) - Read twice, once before ROAT and once after.
 - "The Controversial History of Yoga" (link on D2L under Week 2, no need to print)
 - Tat Twam Asi (PDF on D2L, print out and bring to class)
 - View "We are Pure Awareness" and "Deepak on Vedanta" (links on D2L under Week 2)
 - Study Question:
 - What details or themes from The Bold Beggar seemed similar to details or themes from the other course materials? Be specific.

Week 3

Tuesday, September 19

- Introduction of "dharma" in the Ramayana
- Read in preparation for today's class
 - *Ramayana* 22-61
 - "Dharma and Hinduism" (according to Georgetown University's Berkeley Center, link on D2L)
 - Study questions
 - Among other things, the Ramayana functions as an exploration of what constitutes proper behavior. Where in today's reading did you see this theme explored?

Thursday, September 21:

- caste and the idea of social dharma
- Read in preparation for today's class
 - *Ramayana* 62-89
 - Flueckiger 13-17 (Note on Caste, PDF on D2L, print out and bring to class)
 - Study questions: What, in your view, was the inner logic governing Rama's behavior in the reading for today? What reactions and questions did you have to the reading about caste?

Week 4

Tuesday, September 26

- Pre-Modern Hinduism: The Classical Era
- In preparation for today's class:
 - ROAT: 92-103
 - Selections from *Bhagavad Gita* (PDF on D2L, print out and bring to class)
 - Hindu Temple of Wisconsin Bhagavad Gita (there spelled Geeta) page ("Geeta Sammelan," link on D2L)
 - "Three Minute Summary of Bhagavad Gita" (link on D2L)
 - Study Questions:
 - In ROAT, what new sacred texts were discussed in the reading for today and how do those texts exemplify the idea of an "add-on-pattern?"
 - How would you express the most important teaching(s) of the *Bhagavad Gita* in your own words?

Thursday, September 28

- Pre-Modern Hinduism: The Post-Classical Era
- bhakti, Islam, and the Sikhs
- In preparation for today's class:
 - ROAT 107-109
 - Flueckiger 73-85 (PDF on D2L, print out and bring to class)
 - Film: Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion (link on D2L)
 - Explore the Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion online exhibition and read each of the paragraphs ("Morning Prayers," "Household Worship," "Community," etc.)
 - "Bhakti Poets: An Introduction" (link on D2L, no need to print but take good notes)
 - Study questions:
 - How would you explain to a friend the relationship of bhakti to puja?
 - What was the historical relationship of Islam in South Asia to the Sikhs?

Week 5

Tuesday, October 3

- finishing the *Ramayana*!
- In preparation for today's class:
 - *Ramayana* 90-105, *Ramayana* comic book excerpt (Color PDF on D2L - no need to print), *Ramayana* 134-157 (106-133 optional because it is in comic book)
 - Study Question:
 - How could you make the argument that the interactions of Rama with Vali and his post-war treatment of Sita were "according to dharma"?
 - How could you make the argument that these interactions (either or both) were "against dharma"?

Thursday, October 5

- STUDY GUIDE FOR TEST HANDED OUT
- "Hindu Reform" primary sources (PDF on D2L)
- ROAT: 112-123
- Obama talks about Gandhi and Vivekananda (link on D2L)
- Hari Kondabolu (links on D2L)
 - Smithsonian Diamonds Exhibit AND My English Relationship
- Study Questions:
 - How did the presence of the British in India effect Hindu religious ideas and practices? Why do you think Hari Kondabolu dislikes the British so much?

Week 6

Tuesday, October 10

- Look through entire Hindu Temple of Wisconsin website and see what you now recognize and understand
- ROAT 132-141
- "Diwali" from Life of Hinduism (PDF on D2L)
- Study Questions
 - What connections did you find between ROAT and specific details on the Hindu Temple of Wisconsin website?
 - Pick a Hindu practice/ritual (daily, festival, home, temple or other) that you found particularly interesting. Find an Internet video or blog description of that practice ritual and post it to the "Hindu ritual practice" dropbox, along with one-two sentences about why you found it interesting or how you saw it connecting to what we did in this unit. I'll take some of what you found and post for all on D2L.

Thursday, October 12

- Unit 1 Test. Out-of-class part due at the beginning of class.

Week 7

Tuesday, October 17

- ROAT 107-112
- Japji (PDF on D2L)
- view (links on D2L)
 - Sikh Captain America
 - Worship in the Sikh Gurdwara

Thursday, October 19

- Pluralism Project: "Issues for Sikhs in America" (all 4 essays):
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/sikhism/issues-for-sikhs-in-america/>
 - (not necessary to print out, but take good notes)
- Pluralism Project: "The Sikh Experience" (all 7 essays, take good notes)
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/sikhism/the-sikh-experience/>
- "First-Ever Sikh Event at the Pentagon" (take good notes)
 - <https://vimeo.com/116515588>
- "Sikhs in America" (take good notes)
 - <http://vids.kvie.org/video/1978745738/>
- STUDY QUESTION: In addition to notes, write down questions and bring to class. If there is a quiz you will be allowed to use your notes.

Week 8

Thursday, October 24

- ROAT: 92-95
- Pluralism Project: Introduction to Jainism (all 13 extremely short essays):
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/jainism/introduction-to-jainism/>
 - Be sure to watch the short video in the Ahimsa section
- Study Question: What is a jiva and what, according to Jains, is karma? If there is a quiz you will be allowed to use your notes.

Thursday, October 26

- Pluralism Project: The Jain Experience (all six extremely short essays):
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/jainism/the-jain-experience/>
- Make sure to watch the Paryushan video
- **GROUP QUIZ ASSIGNMENT TO BE DONE DURING CLASS TIME:**
 - Scenario: Imagine that a Jain-American philanthropist has offered UWSP a ten million dollar gift. There is, however, a condition: UWSP must develop some sort of ahimsa-compliant policy to receive the gift.
 - Your group, working together in-class, must develop answers to the following three questions:
 - What would need to be in an ahimsa-compliant policy at UWSP?

- Should UWSP accept the gift and develop the policy? Why or why not?
 - What questions about Jainism came up during your discussion?
- Your group must upload your collective answers to the discussion topic thread entitled ahimsa-compliant policy. The post should state each person's name (e.g. these answers came from the group of Sarah, Kumar, Yasmin, Dao, John, Ruth, and Eleanor) and should be uploaded by no later than 24 hours after class. The post will be graded as a quiz and each member of the group will receive the same grade for the quiz.
- How do we know who is in our group, you ask? You have two choices: you may use the colored-sticker defined groups we've been using so far this semester (this is, after all, what they are for) or you may create your own group. If you create your own group, there must be least FIVE members in the group or I will not grade the quiz.

Week 9

Tuesday, October 31

- Begin watching: The Buddha: A Film by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)
- ROAT: 169-176 (with only light emphasis on the timeline)
- Celebrating the Buddha's Birthday:
http://archive.boston.com/bigpicture/2011/05/vesak_day_2011.html
- Study Questions:
 - How does the Buddha connect to the Upanishads? How was the Buddha similar to Mahavira?

Thursday, November 2

- ROAT: 178-182
- continue watching: The Buddha: A Film by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)
- Begin The Heart of Understanding/The Other Shore
 - Other Shore/Heart of Understanding: Chapters 1-3 (Interbeing, Empty of What, The Way of Understanding)
- "Buddha in His Time and Ours" by Hallisey (PDF on D2L)

Week 10

Tuesday, November 7

- ROAT: 182-185, 191-197. READ CAREFULLY.

- Web version of 4 Truths
- The Other Shore: Chapters 4-6 (Long Live Emptiness, The Mark of Emptiness, Happy Continuation)/ Heart of Understanding Chapters 4-5: Long Live Emptiness, Happy Continuation
- STUDY QUESTION: Write out your own version of the 4 Noble Truths.
- continue watching: The Buddha: A Film by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)

Thursday, November 9

- ROAT 185-191
- continue watching: The Buddha: A Film by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)
- The Acceptance of Women into the Order (PDF on D2L, print out and bring to class)
- finish watching: The Buddha: A Film by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)
- Explore the Ekoji Buddhist Sangha's website:
 - <http://www.ekojirichmond.org/index.php>
- STUDY QUESTIONS: How does the Buddhist sangha spread? Does the Buddha say no to his aunt? How many different Buddhist groups can be found at Ekoji?
- Review sheet for Unit 2 Test handed out

Week 11

Tuesday, November 14

- Excerpts from The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia (PDF on D2L)

Thursday, November 16

- Unit 2 Test on Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhism Part 1
- In-Class Test, Out-of-class Unit 2 Questions due on D2I by beginning of class.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR WEEK 12...

Week 12

Tuesday, November 21: **No in-class meeting**. Assignment **in place of class**. **Have a good break!**

- Read
 - In *The Other Shore*: Can You See the Sunflowers?, Roses and Garbage, The Moon is Always the Moon, What's in a Name

- in *The Heart of Understanding*: Roses and Garbage, The Moon is Always the Moon, Buddha is made of non-Buddha elements
- Using the Pluralism Project's website, how many different Buddhist communities can you find in Wisconsin?
 - <http://pluralism.org/profiles/>
- Once you have done this reading and research, upload your answer to the following two questions to the dropbox entitled Pre-Thanksgiving Tuesday by Wednesday, November 22 at 5 PM.
 - Pick one passage from the Thich Nhat Hanh reading for today and try to explain it to a friend. Summarize how the conversation went.
 - How many Buddhist communities did you find in Wisconsin?

SUCCESSFUL, THOUGHTFUL COMPLETION OF THIS ASSIGNMENT GETS YOU 2 EXTRA CREDIT POINTS ON THE UNIT 2 TEST.

Week 13

Tuesday, November 28

- *Heart of Understanding*: Freedom, Svaha, A Tangerine Party
- *The Other Shore*: Stars are Consciousness, The Path of Happiness, Chasing Butterflies, The Mantra, A Tangerine Party
- Optional in *Other Shore*: Everything is a Formation, Freedom, No Longer Afraid

Be sure to bring a copy of the reading to class for a special activity.

Thursday, November 30

- **Veneration of Relics (PDF on D2L)**
- **A Story of a Buddha Image (PDF on D2L)**
- **Vipassana Meditation (link on D2L)**
- **Break for a Body Scan (link on D2L)**
- **Be prepared for a quiz.**

LOOK ON NEXT PAGE FOR WEEK 14!

Week 14

Tuesday, December 5

- Introduction to the “Modern Buddhist Bible (handout, PDF on D2L)

Thursday, December 7

- Beginning of Group Projects (details to be discussed next week)
- Start watching *The Asian and Abrahamic Religions: A Divine Encounter in America*. Part of the group project, as well as part of the final, will be based on this documentary. You can view it by clicking on the “ereserve” tab in the “Content” section of our D2L site.