

Rel 100: Religions of Asia (Spring 2016)

Professor Luke Whitmore

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-4 and by appointment (CCC 417)

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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 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.

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.
- The ability to interact in informed, respectful, and successful ways with persons connected to diverse Asian religious communities.

Grading and Requirements

Participation: 10% (includes group work and contributions to discussion forum)

Attendance: 5%

Pop Quizzes: 15% (lowest grade dropped, no make-ups)

Unit 1 Short Answer Assignment: 15%

Mid-Term Test: 15% (part in-class, part take-home)

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

Final Exam: (take-home): 20% (cumulative, 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

Text Rental:

Religions of Asia Today, Third Edition.

Text Purchase:

R. K. Narayan. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. Penguin Classics. ISBN-13: 978-0143039679

Even Against the Wind: The Journey of One Buddhist Nun by Sid Brown. State University of New York Press, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0791450963.

Notes:**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 the assignment.

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 at a magnification you can actually read. You may NOT view the readings on a smart phone.

Smart Phones.

Please do not use a smart phone in class without explicit permission.

Assignments.

The date and content of assignments may change. I'll inform you when I make changes.

Participation and Conversation

It is of the utmost importance that in our work together we find ways of speaking and talking that aim for a blend of respect, empathy, honesty, and critique. This aim builds on the rights and responsibilities that frame the UWSP community as a whole. If you have not read about UWSP Rights and Responsibilities please do so here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/rightsCommBillRights.pdf>

Learning Accommodations

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a

federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability Services Office and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability Services Office, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here:

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

ABSENCES

More than two unexcused absences will adversely impact your grade. Please do not inform me in advance if you simply cannot make it to class unless you are making a request that the absence be excused. I would also strongly prefer that you not ask me what you have missed until you have done the reading and gotten notes from a colleague. At that point, I will be very happy to meet with you and go through the class material in as much detail as necessary. Leaving before the end of class, without explanation, constitutes an unexcused absence.

PLAGIARISM

When you use the words and/or ideas of others you must cite them properly and make it clear that they are not your own words and/or ideas. For detailed information, see the following:

<http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>.

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! Penalties for academic misconduct (of any sort, not limited to plagiarism) range from oral reprimand to expulsion from the university. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the Rights and Responsibilities document, Chapter 14, and can be accessed here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

I assume that you have reviewed this document.

Schedule of Assignments:

- Week 1: Orienting to the Study of Religion
 - Tuesday, January 26

- Thursday, January 28
 - Upload "About Me" document (found under Important Course Documents) to "About Me" Dropbox
 - RAMAYANA vii-xii
 - RELIGIONS OF ASIA TODAY (henceforth ROAT): 3-10, 23-26
 - Study Questions:
 - How does ROAT's definition of religion match with how you might define religion?
 - How would you summarize the structure that each chapter in ROAT will take?
 - What connections did you see between the ROAT reading and the introduction to the Ramayana?
- Week 2:
 - Tuesday, February 2
 - ROAT: 77-85
 - RAMAYANA 3-21
 - Study Questions:
 - How would you summarize the main plot of the Ramayana thus far, and how would you show it on a map?
 - In one sentence, how would you summarize what ROAT says about Hinduism in modern South Asia?
 - Thursday, February 4
 - ROAT: 85-92
 - RAMAYANA 22-32
 - The Bold Beggar (PDF on D2L, no need to print)
 - Study Questions:
 - How would you connect The Bold Beggar to the ROAT readings?
- Week 3
 - Tuesday, February 9 (MADISON)
 - RAMAYANA 33-61
 - Watch Even Sita Sings the Blues in-class, finish the rest for Thursday
 - Study Questions (upload answers to D2L discussion forum Topic February 9)
 - What is one reaction and one question you had about the film? Where did you see connects and disconnects between the film and our class readings?
 - Thursday, February 11
 - RAMAYANA 62-89
 - Study questions:
 - What do you think of the idea that Rama is supposed to be an exemplar of perfect behavior?
 - Short Answer Assignment 1 handed out.

- Week 4
 - Tuesday, February 16
 - ROAT: 92-98
 - Jain Reading 1: Select Primary Sources (PDF on D2L)
 - Flueckiger: Note on Caste (PDF on D2L)
 - Study Questions:
 - What distinguished early Jains from other religious groups in early pre-modern India?
 - How does what Flueckiger wrote about "caste" match what you have thought or heard about this idea/word/practice?
 - Thursday, February 18
 - Esposito Reading 5, I.E. ROAT (98-103)
 - RAMAYANA 90-107
 - Short Answer Assignment 1 Due

Week 5

- Tuesday, February 23
 - ROAT 104-105
 - RAMAYANA 106-133 (Optional); RAMAYANA 135-157
 - RAMAYANA comic book excerpt (color PDF on D2L, no need to print)
- Thursday, February 25
 - ROAT 107-112
 - Sikhs Reading 1: Poems of Nanak (PDF on D2L, remember to print)

Week 6

- Tuesday, March 1
 - ROAT 107-112
 - Sikhs Reading 1: Poems of Nanak (PDF on D2L, remember to print)
- Thursday, March 3
 - ROAT 131, 135-141
 - View Film for Class: Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion (link on D2L, twenty minutes)
 - Life of Hinduism: "Divali: The Festival of Lights" (PDF on D2L, remember to print)
 - Study Question: Bring three questions/specific comments to class about how the material for today connects with what we have done so far in the semester.

Week 7

- Tuesday, March 8
 - ROAT: Modernity in South Asia: 112-123
 - Life of Hinduism: "Militant Hinduism" and "Tolerant Hinduism" (PDF on D2L)
 - Study Question, with strong likelihood of pop quiz: Give three specific examples of how "religion" in South Asia changed as a result of contact with Europe.
 - Mid-Term Review Sheet Handed Out
- Thursday, March 10

- ROAT: Jains, Sikhs, and Global South Asian Modernities: 118-123
- Ahimsa in Daily Life (PDF on D2L)
- View Sikhs in America: (26 minutes. See link on D2L)
- Study Question: What is one way that the experience of being Jain today and being Sikh are similar, and what is one way that they are different?

Week 8

- Tuesday, March 15
 - ROAT: 123-130, 157-163
 - Life of Hinduism: "Hinduism in Pittsburgh" (PDF on D2L)
- Thursday, March 17
 - Mid-Term Test in-class, out-of class answers due at the beginning of class.

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

- Tuesday, March 29
 - "Interbeing" (PDF on D2L)
- Thursday, April 1
 - The Journey of One Buddhist Nun: Even Against the Wind (henceforth BROWN)
 - Introduction and Chapter 1: A Young Buddhist Goes Forth (1-23)
 - Study Question: How does the story of "Siddhattha Gotama" relate to Maechi Wabi?

Week 10

- Tuesday, April 5
 - BROWN Reading 2
 - Chapter 2: Who Gets to Drink in the Dhamma and How (24-36)
 - Chapter 3: A Friend in Need (37-41)
 - Study Question: How are "karma" and "dharma" in play in these chapters?
- Thursday, April 7
 - ROAT 169-185
 - Study Question: What questions and/or comments do you have about how the beginnings of Buddhism relate to the other religious ideas and practices that were going on in South Asia at the time?

Week 11

- Tuesday, April 12
 - BROWN: Chapter 4 (42-61) and Chapter 5 (62-66)
- Thursday, April 14
 - ROAT 191-198 (READ CAREFULLY)
 - Further Selections from Interbeing (PDF on D2L- READ CAREFULLY)

Week 12

- Tuesday, April 19
 - Chapter 6: Like a Corpse-Filled Bowl: Meditation and Maechi (67-75)
 - Chapter 7: A Heart Defeated in Faith: Crisis and Loss (76-85)

- Thursday, April 21
 - ROAT 199; 204-211 OR
 - Primary Sources Relating to the Spread of Buddhism (PDF on D2L)
 - If there is a quiz, there will be a choice between two questions, one on each of these assignments. You choose the assignment.

Week 13

- Tuesday, April 26
 - Chapter 8: Perseverance and Striving: Resolution of the Crisis (86-91)
 - Chapter 9: Confidence in a New Way of Living Dhamma (92-105)
- Thursday, April 28
 - ROAT: 211-218

Week 14

- Tuesday, May 3: Test
- Thursday, May 5:
 - Chapter 10: Possibilities and Resolution (106-115)
 - Chapter 11: Meditation and Social Work: The Institute and Maechi Leaders (116-131)
 - Primary Source: "Divisional Issues: The Veneration of Relics" (PDF on D2L, handout)

Week 15:

- Tuesday, May 10: Debate
- Thursday, May 12: Final Remarks