

Rel 100: Religions of Asia (Fall 2018)

Professor Luke Whitmore

(CCC 417: Office Hours: Tues. 3:20-4; Wed. 4-5; Thurs 3:20-4, and by appointment)

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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 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 Other Shore: A New Translation of the Heart Sutra with Commentaries*. (Palm Leaves Press: 2017). ISBN: 978-1941529140

Rel 100 Course Reader (available at bookstore)

Assessments and Requirements

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

Pop Quizzes: 20% (lowest grade dropped, no make-ups)

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 or the reader, you must print out the reading (you will find PDF versions on our D2L site) and bring to class.

Electronics

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

Regular attendance is expected.

- 2 or fewer unexcused absences (Excellent) = 90-100%
- 3-6 unexcused absences (Good) = 80-90%
- 6-10 unexcused absences (Poor) = 66-79%
- More than 10 unexcused absences = failing grade for attendance.

Absences will be excused only when the excuse is provided (via email or in person) in advance of the class that will be missed. You should also be sure to upload a note/relevant information (including a copy of emails to me) into the "Absence-Related Info" folder on D2L. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence are illness, family emergency, or school sponsored trip or athletic competition.

If you miss class (excused or unexcused) you should complete the assignments, request and review notes from a colleague, and then come to discuss with me any questions you have about the material. and study any class notes posted on D2L.

Note: If you miss more than 5 classes I strongly suggest that we meet in person to discuss how things are going. I have found that repeated absence usually means you are struggling with something.

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 closest Red Emergency Phone. 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.
- In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner.
- 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 4: Beginning

Thursday, September 6

- Studying "Religion," Orienting to the course
- Read in preparation for today's class:
 - In the Ramayana vii-xii, xxiii-xxv
 - In *Religions of Asia Today* (henceforth ROAT) read p. 9-11
 - Fill out the About Me document (Under Important Course Documents) and upload it to the About Me dropbox on D2L
 - In the Course Reader
 - The Textures of Tradition; What Does "Hindu" Mean; A Context for Diversity (all from Harvard's *Pluralism Project*)
 - If you do not yet have access to the Course Reader print out the PDF versions of this assignments available on D2L.
 - 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 and in the Pluralism Project?

Week 2

Tuesday, September 11

- Read in preparation for today's class:
 - *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.
 - Course Reader:
 - Many Gods and One; Ganesha: Lord of the Beginnings (listen to Ganesha Sharanam); Balaji: Vishnu in America; The Great Night of Shiva; Many Ma's: Goddess in America -- all from *The Pluralism Project*
 - 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 is your current understanding of how different Hindu deities relate to each other?

Thursday, September 13

- Read and view in preparation for today's class:
 - Course Reader:
 - Agni: The Fire Altar; Veda: The Scripture and Authority; Brahman and Atman: That art Thou; Vedanta: The Way of Wisdom - *Pluralism Project*
 - The Bold Beggar comic book excerpt (color version also available on D2L, no need to print)
 - Tat Twam Asi: The Story of Uddalaka and Svetaketu
 - View ""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 18

- In the *Ramayana*: 22-61
- Course Reader:
 - Dharma: The Social Order - from *The Pluralism Project*
- 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 20:

- Course Reader
 - Karma - The Way of Action; Krishna's chariot festival; Bhakti: The Way of Devotion -- from *The Pluralism Project*
 - *Bhagavad Gita* selections
- "Three Minute Summary of Bhagavad Gita" (link on D2L)
- Study Questions:
 - How would you express the most important teaching(s) of the *Bhagavad Gita* in your own words?
 - What does the *Bhagavad Gita* have to say about karma? About bhakti?
 - Who are Arjuna and Krishna?

Week 4

- Tuesday, September 25: Start *Mokshh* in-class
 - *Ramayana* 62-105
 - Course Reader:
 - Rama-Sita-Hanuman -- from *The Pluralism Project*
 - **Study Question: Which examples in the reading for today seemed to touch on questions of *dharma*?**
- Thursday, September 27 - continue *Mokshh*
 - *Ramayana* extravaganza
 - *Ramayana* graphic novel excerpt (Color PDF on D2L - no need to print); *Ramayana* 134-157 (106-133 optional because the plot is covered in the graphic novel)
 - 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"?

Week 5

- Tuesday, October 2
 - Course Reader:
 - Home Altar; Building A Temple; Consecration - Kumbhabhishekham; Murti - Image of Godi; Lamp Offerings - Hindu Worship; Abodes of God - Temple and Image -- from *The Pluralism Project*
 - View: Puja: *Expressions of Hindu Devotion* (link on D2L)
 - Study Questions:
 - **Try to write a sentence that includes the following terms: home altar, temple, puja, murti.**
 - **Where do pujas happen?**
- Study guide for test handed out.**

- Thursday, October 4, 2018
 - Course Reader:
 - Hinduism in the World, Ashram; Upanayana; Hindu Diaspora-- from *The Pluralism Project*
 - Hari Kondabolu (links on D2L)
 - Smithsonian Diamonds Exhibit AND My English Relationship
 - Obama talks about Gandhi and Vivekananda (link on D2L)
 - "Take Yoga Back" (link on D2L)
 - Explore Hindu Temple of Wisconsin website (link on D2L)
 - Study Questions:
 - According to the reading, what religions and world groups have been part of the history that produced what we call "Hinduism" today?
 - Why is Hari Kondabolu angry?

Week 6

- Tuesday, October 9, 2018
 - Unit 1 Test. Out-of-class part of test due by beginning of class.

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Week 6 cont'd.

- Thursday, October 11: NO PHYSICAL CLASS! Assignment instead of class.
 - Watch: *The Buddha: A Film* by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site or through link on D2L under Week 6)
 - Answer the Following Questions and upload to the October 11 D2L dropbox by 3:15 pm. I will grade your answers and they will count as an (easy!) online quiz.
 - Where did you see connections in this film to our Hinduism unit? Mention specific moments.
 - What questions did viewing this film make you want to ask about Buddhism?

Week 7

Tuesday, October 16, 2018:

- Course Reader:
 - Pluralism Project:
 - The Path of Awakening
 - Prince Siddhartha: Renouncing the World
 - Becoming the "Buddha": The Way of Meditation
 - The Three Treasures
 - *The Other Shore: 27-29* (Interbeing)
 - "Celebrating the Buddha's Birthday" (link on D2L)
- Thursday, October 18, 2018:
 - The Other Shore: Chapters 2-6: Empty of What, The Way of Understanding, Long Live Emptiness, The Mark of Emptiness, Happy Continuation
 - Course Reader
 - The Dharma: The Teachings of the Buddha (yes, AGAIN)
 - "Buddha in His Time and Ours" by Hallisey (packet)

- **STUDY QUESTION: Did the Buddha think it is possible for an individual person to be happy as an individual? Is individual happiness possible according to the Buddha?**

Cont'd on next page...

Week 8

- Tuesday, Oct 23 2018:
 - Pluralism Project (reader)
 - The Sangha: The Buddhist Community
 - The Acceptance of Women into the Order (reader)
 - Issues around the Ordination of Women (link on D2L)
 - STUDY QUESTION(S):
 - What questions do you have about the 4 Truths? Write them out.
 - What kinds of issues and challenges would a Buddhist sangha face, both internally and externally?

- Thursday, Oct 25, 2018:
 - Explore the Ekoji Buddhist Sangha's website:
 - <http://www.ekojirichmond.org/index.php>
 - **The Other Shore:** Author's Preface, the gray pages ("The Heart Sutra)
 - Pluralism Project: (reader)
 - Buddhism in the World (Timeline)
 - The Expansion of Buddhism
 - Theravada: The Way of the Elders
 - Mahayana: The Great Vehicle
 - Vajrayana: The Diamond Vehicle

 - Study Questions:
 - What makes Theravada different from Mahayana?
 - What makes Vajrayana different from Mahayana?

Week 9

- Tuesday, Oct. 30, 2018:
 - Pluralism Project (reader)
 - The Image of the Buddha
 - The Practice of Mindfulness
 - Becoming a Monk
 - Devotion to Guanyin
 - Buddha's Birthday
 - Remembering the Ancestors
 - **The Other Shore:** Can You See the Sunflowers?, Roses and Garbage, The Moon is Always the Moon, What's in a Name
 - Study Questions:
 - Which, of the practices described, involve Buddhist laypeople and which are primarily for monks and nuns?

- Thursday, Nov. 1, 2018
 - Pluralism Project (reader)
 - Celebrating the New Year (A)
 - Building a Pure Land on Earth (C)
 - One Hand Clapping (C)
 - Sesshin: A Meditation Retreat (B)
 - Chanting the Sutras
 - Creating a Mandala (B)
 - From Street Gangs to Temple (A)
 - Monastery in the Hudson Valley
 - Study Questions:
 - Which, of the practices described, involve Buddhist laypeople and which are primarily for monks and nuns?

Week 10

- Tuesday, November 6, 2018: (ELECTION DAY!)
 - Unit 1 Test Review, Study Skills Boot Camp
 - Bring your tests, notes, and materials from Unit 1
- Thursday, November 8, 2018:
 - **The Other Shore:** Stars are Consciousness, Everything is a Formation, The Path of Happiness, Chasing Butterflies, Freedom, No Longer Afraid, The Mantra, A Tangerine Party
 - Be sure to bring *The Other Shore* to class for a special activity.
 - Study Guide for Unit 2 Test handed out.

Week 11

- Tuesday, November 13, 2018:
 - Pluralism Project (reader)
 - Buddhism in the World (Timeline) redux
 - Veneration of Relics (reader)
 - A Story of a Buddha Image (reader)
 - "Why are we surprised when Buddhists turn violent?" (reader)
 - OPTIONAL:
 - Introduction to the Modern Buddhist Bible (PDF on D2L)
- November 15, 2018
 - Unit 2 Test

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Week 12

Tuesday, November 20

We are not meeting as a class. Instead, there is a D2L activity. Under Week 12 there are links to three films about the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism. Choose one of the films and watch it. It is your responsibility to test the link and make sure you are in a situation (e.g. on campus, with a good wifi connection, etc) where you can watch the film. When you are done, answer the three following questions and upload your answers to the Nov 20 Dropbox on D2L. Your answers will be graded as a quiz. Your answers should make clear that you watched the entire documentary.

Here are the three questions:

- What surprised you about this film?
- Where did you see connections to our Buddhism unit?
- What seems distinctive/unique about Tibetan Buddhism relative to other forms of Buddhism that we studied?

If you are looking for extra credit, watch all three films and then write a short (max 500 word essay) compare/contrast essay that discusses the similarities and differences in how each film portrays Tibetan Buddhism. The grade of this essay will replace your lowest quiz grade. Submit this essay to the extra credit dropbox.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13

Tuesday, November 27

- **The Monk's Story (a chapter from *A River Sutra* by Gita Mehta)**
- **From the Pluralism Project**
 - **"A Hospital for Birds"**
 - **"Mahavira"**
 - **"Tirthankaras"**
 - **"Jiva: The Souls of All Beings"**
 - **"Karma: The Clouding of the Soul"**
 - **The story of the Monk Sudrsti**

Thursday, November 29

In Course Reader:

- **Pluralism Project:**
 - **Ahimsa: Reverence For Life**
 - **View video clip on ahimsa here:**
 - <http://pluralism.org/religions/jainism/introduction-to-jainism/ahimsa-reverence-for-life/>
 - **An Ethic for Living**
 - **Anekantavada: The Relativity of Views**
 - **Paryushan and the Festival for Forgiveness**
 - **Ahimsa In Daily Life**
- **"Selections from Jain Primary Sources"**
 - **The Eternal Law**
 - **Respect for Life**

View

- **Jainism Basics**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BShI3UIZhV4>

Study Question: *Scenario: Imagine that a Jain-American (a LAY Jain) 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?*
- Optional
 - Jain FAQ
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1k9xFu1bIq>
 - Practicing Jainism in America
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqAuYf9sdnA>

See next page....

Week 14

Tuesday, December 4

- View (link on D2L): Worship in the Sikh Gurdwara
- In Course Reader
 - Guru Nanak
 - Guru Nanak's Message
 - Poems of Nanak
 - Teachings of Two Punjabi Sufi Poets
 - Kirtan: Singing God's Praise
 - Langar: The Communal Meal
 - The Gurdwara
 - The Guru Granth Sahib
 - Japji (Optional)
 - The Sikh Scripture
 - The Word of God

Study Question: Who is Guru Nanak, what is the Guru Granth Sahib, and how to the two relate?

Thursday, December 6

- View: *Viewfinder: Sikhs in America* (link on D2L)
- Course Reader
 - The Development of the Sikh Community
 - The Khalsa
 - Taking Amrit: Initiation
 - The Five K's
 - The Struggle for Survival
 - Sikh Renewal and Identity
 - Growing Up Sikh
 - Sikhism Post 9/11
 - The Five K's and the Courts
 - The Sikh Community Today

Study Question:

In what ways are issues faced by Sikhs in America today similar to issues faced by Sikhs during the time when the khalsa was first formed?

Week 15

Tuesday, December 11

- Work on Group Project.
- Start watching *Fremont, USA* (link under Important Documents on D2L). There will be a question on the final about this film.
- Start watching *The Asian and Abrahamic Faiths: A Divine Encounter in America* (link under the e-reserves module in the Content section on D2L). There will be a question on the final about this film.

Thursday, December 13

- Group Project due by beginning of class.
- Closing Conversations.
- Handout of Review Sheet for Final Exam.