

Rel 100: Religions of Asia (Spring 2018)

Professor Luke Whitmore

(CCC 417: Office Hours: Wed. 3-5 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 (will be 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, 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.

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

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/Escapes, 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, January 23: Beginning

Thursday, January 25

- 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
 - Pluralism Project: Hinduism:
 - The Textures of Tradition; What Does "Hindu" Mean; A Context for Diversity
 - Note: links can always be found on D2L. I will also turn the web pages in PDFs that may be printed out if I do not hand them out in class.
 - 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, January 30

- Read and view 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.
 - Pluralism Project: Hinduism:
 - Many Gods and One (view "Many 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 (listen to "The Goddess")
 - 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, February 1

- Read and view in preparation for today's class:
 - The Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Agni: The Fire Altar; Veda: The Scripture and Authority; Brahman and Atman: That art Thou; Vedanta: The Way of Wisdom
 - The Bold Beggar comic book excerpt (PDF on D2L under Week 2, COLOR, no need to print)
 - Tat Twam Asi (PDF on D2L, print out and bring to class)
 - 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, February 6

- Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Dharma: The Social Order
- Read in preparation for today's class
 - Ramayana 22-61
 - 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, February 8:

- Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Karma - The Way of Action; Krishna's chariot festival; Bhakti: The Way of Devotion
- *Bhagavad Gita*
 - 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?

Week 4

- Tuesday, February 13, 2018
 - Ramayana 62-105
 - Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Rama-Sita-Hanuman
 - Start Mokshh in-class
 - **Study Question: Which examples in the reading for today seemed to touch on questions of *dharma*?**
- Thursday, February 15, 2018
 - 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*"?
 - Continue Mokshh

Week 5

- Tuesday, February 20, 2018
 - Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Home Altar; Building A Temple; Consecration - Kumbhabhishekham; Murti - Image of Godi; Lamp Offerings - Hindu Worship; Abodes of God - Temple and Image
 - 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?**
- Thursday, February 22, 2018
 - Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Hinduism in the World
 - 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)
 - 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?
- STUDY GUIDE FOR TEST HANDED OUT

Week 6

- Tuesday, February 27, 2018
 - Hinduism in the World cont'd
 - Pluralism Project: Hinduism
 - Ashram; Upanayana; Hindu Diaspora
 - Explore Hindu Temple of Wisconsin website (link on D2L)
- Thursday, March 1, 2018
 - **Unit 1 Test.** Out-of-class part of test due by beginning of class.

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Week 7

Tuesday, March 6, 2018:

- **Pluralism Project: Buddhism (handout, PDF on D2L)**
 - **The Path of Awakening**
 - **Prince Siddhartha: Renouncing the World**
 - **Becoming the "Buddha": The Way of Meditation**
- ***The Other Shore: 27-29 (Interbeing)***
- **"Celebrating the Buddha's Birthday" (link on D2L)**
- Thursday, March 8, 2018:
 - Begin watching: *The Buddha: A Film* by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)
 - The Other Shore: Chapters 2-3: Empty of What, The Way of Understanding
 - "Buddha in His Time and Ours" by Hallisey (packet)
 - Pluralism Project (packet)
 - The Dharma: The Teachings of the Buddha
 - The Three Treasures
 - STUDY QUESTION: Write out your own version of the 4 Noble Truths.

Week 8

- Tuesday, March 13, 2018:
 - Pluralism Project (packet)
 - The Sangha: The Buddhist Community
 - **The Other Shore:** Chapters 4-6 (Long Live Emptiness, The Mark of Emptiness, Happy Continuation)
 - The Acceptance of Women into the Order (packet)
 - continue watching: *The Buddha: A Film* by David Grubin (view through Films on Demand, available through the UWSP library site)
 - 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, March 15, 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: (packet)
 - 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, March 20, 2018:
 - Pluralism Project (packet)
 - 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, March 22, 2018
 - Pluralism Project (packet)
 - Celebrating the New Year
 - Building a Pure Land on Earth
 - One Hand Clapping
 - Sesshin: A Meditation Retreat
 - Chanting the Sutras
 - Creating a Mandala
 - From Street Gangs to Temple
 - Monastery in the Hudson Valley
 - Study Questions:
 - Which, of the practices described, involve Buddhist laypeople and which are primarily for monks and nuns?

SPRING BREAK

- Tuesday, March 27, 2018: SPRING BREAK
- Thursday, March 29, 2018: SPRING BREAK

Week 10

- Tuesday, April 3, 2018:
 - **The Other Shore:** Stars are Consciousness, The Path of Happiness, Chasing Butterflies, The Mantra, A Tangerine Party, Everything is a Formation, Freedom, No Longer Afraid
 - Be sure to bring *The Other Shore* to class for a special activity.
- Thursday, April 5, 2018:
 - Pluralism Project (packet)
 - Buddhism in the World (Timeline) redux
 - Veneration of Relics (packet)
 - A Story of a Buddha Image (packet)
 - "Why are we surprised when Buddhists turn violent?"
 - OPTIONAL:
 - Introduction to the Modern Buddhist Bible (PDF on D2L)
 - Study Guide for Unit 2 Test handed out.

Week 11

- Tuesday, April 10, 2018:
- Read the following (handed out in class, PDF on D2L)
 - Buddhism and Sexuality_Its Complicated
 - Buddhism in the Age of Black Lives Matter
 - The True Source of Political Success by the Dalai Lama
 - New Asian Immigration and the Temple Boom
 - Smokey the Bear Sutra
- **Thursday, April 12, 2018**
 - **Unit 2 Test**

SEE NEXT PAGE...

Week 12

Tuesday, April 17: Beginning Jain Dharma

Read the following (handed out in class, PDF on D2L)

- **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”

Thursday, April 19

- **Pluralism Project:**
 - **Ahimsa: Reverence For Life**
 - **An Ethic for Living**
 - **Anekantavada: The Relativity of Views**
 - **Paryushan and the Festival for Forgiveness**
 - **Ahimsa In Daily Life**
- **From "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 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=-1k9xFu1bIg>
 - Practicing Jainism in America
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqAuYf9sdnA>

Week 13

- Tuesday, April 24, 2018 (probable quiz)
 - View (link on D2L): Worship in the Sikh Gurdwara
 - Two Punjabi Sufi Poets (reader)

- Nanak poetry (reader)
- The Japji (Optional, PDF on D2L)
- Pluralism Project (reader)
 - Guru Nanak
 - Guru Nanak's Message
 - Kirtan: Singing God's Praise
 - Langar: The Communal Meal
 - The Gurdwara
 - The Sikh Scripture
 - The Word of God
 - The Guru Granth Sahib
- Thursday, April 26, 2018 (probable quiz)
 - View: *Viewfinder: Sikhs in America* (link on D2L)
 - Pluralism Project (handout, PDF on D2L)
 - Intro to Sikhism
 - The Development of the Sikh Community
 - The Khalsa
 - Taking Amrit
 - The Five K's
 - The Struggle for Survival
 - Sikh Renewal and Identity

Week 14

Tuesday, May 1, 2018:

- "First-Ever Sikh Event at the Pentagon" (link on D2L)
- "Sikh Captain America" (link on D2L)
- Sikhs One Year Later (link on D2L)
- Pluralism Project
 - Growing Up Sikh
 - The 5 K's and the Courts
 - Sikhism Post 9/11
 - Growing up Sikh

Thursday, May 3, 2018:

- **Bring all of your course materials and a laptop or tablet to class. This class will be devoted to working on GROUP PROJECTS.**

Other Important Dates:

Thursday, April 12, 2018 (Unit 2 Test) - note new date

Thursday, May 10, 2018 (Final Day of Classes, Due date for Group Project)

Final Exam, Section 1: May 14, 2018: 12:30-2:30

Final Exam, Section 2: May 17, 2018: 8:00 AM-10:00 AM