

# Rel 100: Religions of Asia (Spring 2019)

Professor Luke Whitmore

(CCC 417: Office Hours: Tues. 3:20-3:45; Wed. 1:30-3:00; Thurs 3:20-3:45, 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 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

**In-Class Participation and Preparation: 10%**

**Attendance: 5%** (see policy below)

**4 Out of Class Writing Assignments: 20 %** Writing assignments typically include a combination of short answers, mini-essays, and 3-step worksheets. Full guidelines will be provided in advance of each due date.

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

**Unit 1 Test: 15%** (in-class, closed book)

**Unit 2 Test: 15%** (in-class, closed book)

**Final Exam: 15%** (in-class, closed book)

## 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 Canvas 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 or if it is distracting me I will let you know. If it continues to be an issue it will impact your participation and preparation grade.

## Assignments

Assignments will change. Be sure to check Canvas 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 absences of any kind = failure of class as a whole unless you and I meet in person and agree that it is possible for you to continue and succeed in the class. This option may require the completion of extra work.

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 Canvas. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence are illness, family emergency, or school (not club) sponsored trip or athletic competition. If you miss class (excused or unexcused) you should complete the assignments, request and review notes from a colleague, review class material (e.g. lectures) posted on Canvas, and then come to discuss with me any questions

you have. *It is not the professor's responsibility to fill you in on what you missed if you were absent.*

***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/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CH17-UWSP-Updated2018.pdf>

## Academic Misconduct (avoid bad *karmas*)

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

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

<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/UWS%2014-1.pdf>

## 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](http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures) for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”

# Schedule of Assignments

## Unit 1

### Week 1

- Tuesday, January 22, 2019
  - Beginning
  
- Thursday, January 24, 2019
  - Studying "Religion," Orienting to the course
  - Read in preparation for today's class:
    - In the *Ramayana* vii-xii, xxiii-xxv. If you do not yet have a copy of this text, read the "First Ramayana Reading " PDF on Canvas
    - In *Religions of Asia Today* (henceforth ROAT) read p. 9-11
    - Fill out and upload the About Me Assignment (found in the Week 1 module) as a .docx document
    - 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 read the PDF versions of this assignments available on Canvas.
    - 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 29, 2019 (SK visits- Sect 2 at 2:10, Sect 1 at noon)
  - 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 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, January 31, 2019
  - Section 1 (11:00-12:15): **Class is cancelled** because university is closed. In place of class, please start watching a film (you can find it on Netflix or for \$3 on YouTube called *Oh My God (OMG)* starring Paresh Rawal. We might end up writing something about this film...
  - Section 2 (2:00-3:15): **Class meets because university is open.** What are we doing? It will be a surprise.
  - PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ASSIGNMENT FOR TODAY IS NOW THE ASSIGNMENT FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5. WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE OUR FIRST "POP" QUIZ ON THIS MATERIAL. 😊
  - Please note that some assignments after this point in unit 1 are now DIFFERENT, including the due date for our first out of class assignment.

## Week 3

- Tuesday, February 5, 2019
  - 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 Canvas, no need to print)
    - Tat Twam Asi: The Story of Uddalaka and Svetaketu
  - View ""Deepak on Vedanta" (links on Canvas 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.
  
- Thursday, February 7, 2019
  - In the Ramayana: 22-61
  - Course Reader:
    - Dharma: The Social Order - from The Pluralism Project
    - Flueckiger, Note on Caste
  - 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?

## Week 4

- Tuesday, February 12, 2019
  - 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 Canvas)
  - 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?
  
- Thursday, February 14, 2019
  - 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?

## Week 5

- Tuesday, February 19, 2019
  - Out of Class Writing 1 Due (details will be provided)
  - In-Class focus on Hindu worship and temples
  
- Thursday, February 21, 2019
  - Ramayana extravaganza
    - Ramayana graphic novel excerpt (Color PDF on Canvas - 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 6

- Tuesday, February 26, 2019
  - Chronology Redux; Reread Hinduism in the World timeline
  - "Take Yoga Back" (link on Canvas)
    - Hinduism in the World, Ashram; Upanayana; Hindu Diaspora-- from The Pluralism Project
  - Hindu Group Stirs Debate over Yoga's Soul (link on Canvas)
  - Explore Hindu Temple of Wisconsin website (link on Canvas)
  - Hari Kondabolu's anger
    - **Overview of Colonialism in South Asia TBD**
  - Study Questions:
    - According to the reading, what religions and world groups have been part of the history that produced what we call "Hinduism" today?
- Thursday, February 28, 2019
  - **Unit 1 in-class test.**