Syllabus History of Hinduisms
Spring 2021, Rutgers University-Newark
Tuesdays 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. EST
*synchronous remote course

INSTRUCTOR
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am -12:30 pm on Zoom and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this course, we analyze the development of Hindu traditions from 3,500 years ago until the present day, emphasizing the diverse forms of Hinduism in different times and places. We begin by considering the notably recent category of “Hinduism” and identify key concepts that will guide our study. We will read selections from a range of theological texts, epics, and stories of the gods that have permeated many aspects of daily Hindu life. We will also emphasize ritual activities, the importance of visual experiences in temples, and networks of pilgrimage places that dot the subcontinent. Last, we will survey the many modern incarnations of Hinduism throughout South Asia and the diaspora. By the conclusion of this course, students will be conversant in the major texts, beliefs, and practices of Hindu traditions in their cultural and historical contexts and also have a working knowledge of basic categories important for the study of religion more broadly.

PANDEMIC PEDAGOGY – NEED TO KNOW FOR REMOTE LEARNING

We have synchronous class meetings on Tuesdays 6-9 p.m. EST You need a reliable internet connection.

Class meetings on are Zoom; you can find the link on Canvas.

Our Canvas class site has a module for each week, with all readings and assignments. Please come to class having completed all readings and ready to discuss, debate, and engage.

Each week features an overview document on Canvas that lists everything you need to accomplish that week.

The professor wants you to succeed; if you have issues or concerns, please be in touch.
**Required Texts**

There are three required books in this course. Two are available through Rutgers Libraries (see Canvas for details). All are affordable to buy and widely available.

Barbara Stoler Miller, *The Bhagavad Gita*
Diana L. Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*

**Grading and Assignments**

Your grade is based on four components:

- Class Attendance and Verbal Participation 25%
- Class Participation in weekly online assignments 25%
- 2 written assignments in the course 20%
- Final Project 30%

**Class Attendance:** Your attendance grade includes

1. attending and participating in our weekly class meetings
2. completing all listed readings

**Class Preparation:** You should carefully read all listed readings. Then, most weeks, there will be some kind of advance work, such as writing out some questions or thoughts. The goal is to get you thinking critically before class.

**2 Written Assignments:** There are two written assignments; further information available on Canvas. Each is worth 10% of your final grade.

**Final Project:** Each student will complete a final project on a topic of their choice. Students can choose both their topic and the format of their final project. The only non-negotiable part of the final project is that each students works on a subject that they find interesting.
CLASS POLICIES

Absences: If you have more than two absences from online lectures, discussions, or quizzes, your grade may suffer. If you find yourself missing class or having difficulties, whether for pandemic-related or other reasons, please reach out to the professor to discuss the best way to succeed in this course. Please note the following Rutgers University policies on absences:

- **Excused Absences:** Recognized grounds for absence include illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, and recognized religious holidays. You must contact the professor, in advance where possible, or absences will be counted as unexcused.
- **Extended Absences:** Any student who misses four or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

Academic Integrity: The professor expects full academic honesty from all students. If you plagiarize, cheat, help another student cheat, or are otherwise academically dishonest, you will face disciplinary action. Being caught cheating is the last thing anybody needs in the middle of a pandemic, and you will be caught. So, Don’t Cheat. See: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/

Please include the Rutgers honor pledge on all major course assignments submitted for grading: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).”

Intellectual Property. Lectures, powerpoints, assignments, and other materials utilized in this course are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. You are not permitted to share any of these without written consent from the instructor. Similarly, all original work that you produce for this course is covered by copyright protections, and the instructor will not share your work without written consent from you.

Late Work: All late work incurs a penalty of one letter grade (10% reduction) for every 24 hours late. If you find yourselves having difficulties in this department for pandemic-related reasons, please talk to the professor.
**Support and Assistance**

**Counseling Center:** The Rutgers–Newark Counseling Center provides a number of counseling and consultative services to enrolled and eligible undergraduate and graduate students. For students, if you are seeking individual or group therapy, you can expect to find a safe, supportive space to collaboratively identify and begin to change the thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs that prevent you from being your best self. http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu.

**Disabilities:** Rutgers welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form: https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration.

**Food:** PantryRUN, the campus food pantry, helps students who have difficulty affording enough healthy food to remain focused on their studies and stay healthy. You can find hours and information here: https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/pantryrun.

**Pandemic:** Your go-to for how COVID-19 is being handled at Rutgers University-Newark is MyRun Student Resources: https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19.

**Writing:** The Rutgers University-Newark Writing Center provides tutoring for students who want to strengthen their reading, writing, and research skills. They offer individual sessions and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers University-Newark campus; they are offering remote tutoring. More details here: https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center.
**Week 1: Jan 19**  
**Categories: historically, conceptually, and practically**

Nicholson, “Contesting the Unity of Hinduism,” 1-6  
Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, 5–22  
Doniger, “Hinduism by Any Other Name”

**Section 1: Old Stuff, Especially Texts**

**Week 2: Jan 26**  
**Vedas and Vedic Society**

*Rg Veda*, trans. Doniger, TOC and sections on “Creation” and “Horse Sacrifice”  
*Upanisads*, Olivelle trans., 34–52, 69–71

**Week 3: Feb 2**  
**Gita and Mahabharata**

Doniger, *The Hindus*, chap. 11  
Dhand, *Mahabharata Podcast*, select episodes  
Stoler Miller, *Gita* (focusing on select chapters)

**Week 4: Feb 9**  
**Ordering Life and Society**

Doniger, *Redeeming the Kamasutra*, chap. 2  
Olivelle, *Dharma Reader*, 69–80  
*Kamasutra*, trans. Doniger, book 1  

**Week 5: Feb 16**  
**Ramayana**

Narayan, *Ramayana*

**Section 2: Practices or What People Do**

**Week 6: Feb 23**  
**Multiplicity and Retelling stories**

*Ramayana comparative exercise

Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas”

**Week 7: March 2**  
**Temples**

Eck, *Darshan*
Week 8: March 9  
Tantra and Bhakti

Doniger, “Sects and Sex”
McDermott, Singing to the Goddess, excerpts
Songs of the Saints of India (Hawley and Juergensmeyer), excerpts
“A Dalit Poet-Saint” (Hawley and Juergensmeyer) in Life of Hinduism

Week 9: March 16  
SPRING BREAK – No CLASS

Week 10: March 23  
Holi, Other Festivals, and Pilgrimages

Marriott, “Holi: The Feast of Love”
Nine Nights of the Goddess, excerpts
Maclean, Pilgrimage and Power, 11-14, 145-217

Section 3: Present Day

Week 11: March 30  
Representing Hindu Practices

*Ethnography / film review / book review assignment

Wendy Doniger, “India: Censorship by the Batra Brigade”
Ananya Vajpeyi, “Triumph of the Hindu Right”
Hindu Nationalism, excerpts on California textbook controversy

Week 12: April 6  
Caste and Dalit Perspectives

Khilnani, “Ambedkar”
Ambedkar, “Away from the Hindus”
Ilaiah, Why I am Not a Hindu, excerpts
Tharoor, Why I am a Hindu?, excerpts
Ilaiah Shepherd, “The political Hinduism of Shashi Tharoor”

Week 13: April 13  
Some Reformulations of Hinduism

Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, excerpts
Sarvakar, “Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?”
Advani excerpts from Hindu Nationalism, 280-298
Mishra, “The invention of the Hindu”
“Militant Hinduism” in Life of Hinduism
Week 14: April 20  Global Hinduism

ACK excerpts
“Hinduism in Pittsburg” (Narayan) in *Life of Hinduism*
Kaur and Ramaswamy, “The Goddess and the Virus”

Week 15: April 27  Recap and Final Project Presentations

*Student Presentations in Class*