Religious History of South Asia II (REL 271)
SYLLABUS

REQUIREMENTS
1. You are expected to attend class regularly, finish the assigned readings on time, and participate in
   class discussions actively (and, one hopes, enthusiastically).

2. To facilitate class discussion, 8 weekly reaction papers will be due during the semester. These
   reaction papers should be 1–2 pages in length, and should demonstrate a thoughtful and rigorous
   engagement with the material. Creativity is encouraged, rambling is not. Although you are welcome
   to focus on a particular article or passage within a week’s assignment, you should try and
   contextualize that material within the rest of the week’s readings. These reaction papers are due on
   the Friday of each week, and will be graded on a √+, √, √- system, corresponding roughly to an
   A/A-, B+/B, and B-/etc. In addition, twice during the semester you are permitted to double-up and
   write a double-length reaction paper to count as two reaction papers. At least 4 reaction papers
   should be turned in by midterm break. Please label each reaction paper accordingly—e.g., Reaction
   Paper no. 7, week 9; Reaction Papers nos. 8–9, week 11. And please save all of your returned and
   graded reaction papers so that you can resubmit the full corpus on the last day of classes.

3. A take-home exam, involving about 10 pages of writing, will be distributed on Wednesday, April
   14th, discussed in class on Friday, April 16th, and due in class on Wednesday, April 21st.

4. You will also be expected to produce a final project. These projects are not meant to be involved
   works of research; instead, they should be creative efforts to engage with the materials from the
   semester. This may involve reading a few poems or a story that you’ve written and then discussing
   how you felt producing this writing, what you understand it to mean, or how you would like it to be
   understood. You may also choose to show the class some images that you’ve produced or procured
   and offer similar insights. Performance pieces are also encouraged. This is your chance to produce
   something in creative conversation with the religious world of South Asia—not just in intellectual
   conversation as you will do in your midterm—and you may do so through any of the senses.

In summary, your grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in class, your
reaction papers, your midterm exam, and your final project.

REQUIRED READING

Donald S. Lopez, editor. Religions of India in Practice. Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1995. (=RIP)

A. K. Ramanujan, Velcheru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman, trans. When God is a Customer:


Source Book. (=SB)

•texts are available at Grécourt Bookshop, 100 Green Street, 585–4140
•the source book is available at Paradise Copies, 30 Crafts Avenue, 585–0414
WEEK 1 (1/26, 1/28, 1/30)
i. INTRODUCTION
• various maps of South Asia (SB)
• additional maps of India at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/india.html

ii. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY: WHAT IS IT, WHERE IS IT, AND HOW DO WE DESCRIBE IT?
• Richard Davis, “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 3–7 (RIP)
  “Introduction,” 1–30 (SB)
  “Social Distinctions of Caste and Class,” 167–172 (SB)

iii. BANARAS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A CITY TO BE RELIGIOUS?
  “Kashi: City of All India,” 138–155 (SB)
  “Through ‘Divine Eyes,’” 11–32 (SB)
  “Dog Ladies and the Beriya Baba,” 263–268 (SB)

WEEK 2 (2/2, 2/4, 2/6)
i. JAINISM: RELIGION, CATECHISM, AND NARRATIVE
• Richard Davis, “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 16–18 (RIP)
  “Introduction to Jainism,” 1–19 (SB)
• John Cort, “Jain Questions and Answers: Who is God and How is He Worshipped?” 598–608 (RIP)
• Phyllis Granoff, “Jain Stories Inspiring Renunciation,” 412–417 (RIP)

ii. A JAIN AUTOBIOGRAPHY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A TEXT TO BE RELIGIOUS?
  1–97 (SB)

iii. SCREENING: The Frontiers of Peace: Jainism in India (40 minutes), a BBC-TV production in association with Educational Communications-TVKC, 1986

WEEK 3 (2/9, 2/11, 2/13)
i. MUSLIM INDIA, INDIAN MUSLIMS, AND THE MUSE
• Richard Davis, “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 31–37 (RIP)
  “Shiism: An Overview,” 3–10 (SB)
• Carl Ernst, “India as Sacred Islamic Land,” 556–563 (RIP)
  excerpt, 2.3–2.5, 79–88 (SB)
ii. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A TEACHING TO BE RELIGIOUS?
• Carl Ernst, “Conversations of Sufi Saints,” 513–517 (RIP)
• Mustansir Mir, “Teachings of Two Punjabi Sufi Poets,” 518–529 (RIP)

iii. SCREENING: I am a Sufi, I am a Muslim (52 minutes), written and directed by Dirk Dumon, 1996

WEEK 4 (2/16, 2/18, 2/20)
i. DARSAN: THOUGHTS ON SEEING AND BEING SEEN
  “Seeing the Sacred,” 3–31 (SB)
  “A Taste of India: On the Role of Gustation in the Hindu Sensorium,” 221–230 (SB)

ii. no class

iii. PUJA: WORSHIPPING THE DIVINE
  “Worship,” 57–82

WEEK 5 (2/23, 2/25, 2/27)
i. DEVI: MANIFESTATIONS OF THE GODDESS
• Ann Grodzins Gold, “Mother Ten’s Stories,” 434–448 (RIP)
• Rachel McDermott, “Bengali Songs to Kali,” 55–76 (RIP)
  “Santoshi Ma Dissolved—the Goddess Constituted,” 12–28 (SB)

ii. IS THE GODDESS A FEMINIST?
  “Power in its Place: Is the Great Goddess of Hinduism a Feminist?” 151–165 (SB)
  “Female Sexuality in the Hindu World,” 39–59 (SB)
OPTIONAL:
iii. SCREENING: Devi (89 minutes), adapted, produced, and directed by Satyajit Rai (first half)

WEEK 6 (3/1, 3/3, 3/5)
i. KRSHA: EROTICS AND DEVOTION
  entire book
  “The Feast of Love,” 200–212 (SB)

ii. WOMEN AND THEISM: EROTICS AND DEVOTION RECONSIDERED
  9–40, selections between 63–126

iii. SCREENING: Devi (89 minutes), adapted, produced, and directed by Satyajit Rai (second half)
  Excerpt from “Revelation and Doubt: Sant Tukaram and Devi,” 252–264 (SB)

WEEK 7 (3/8, 3/10, 3/12)
i. SIVA: VIRAŠAIVISM IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA
  “The Puranic myths of liṅga-worship,” 137–154 (SB)
  2–13, 32–38 (skim), 231–266 (SB)

ii. RENUNCiants: THE VENERABLE AND THE NOT SO VENERABLE
  “Sādhus,” 63–73 (SB)
  “The Behavior and Customs of Renouncers,” 101–112 (SB)
•Rahul Bonner, Mattavilāsa, 1–15 (SB)
  “Beyond the Hallowed Ashes: Yogic Yahoos,” 220–241 (SB)

iii. SCREENING: Lotan Baba, The Rolling Saint (52 minutes), directed by Naresh Bedi

WEEK 8 (3/15, 3/17, 3/19)
RELAX . . . SPRING BREAK
WEEK 9 (3/22, 3/24, 3/26)
i. RĀM: RELIGION AND THE CULTURAL IMAGINATION
  entire book
  “Epic Contests: Television and Religious Identity in India,” 134–151 (SB)

ii. THE REGIME OF RĀM: RELIGION AND THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION
  “Religious Nationalism,” 1–12 (12–24 is optional) (SB)
  “The Iconography of Rama’s Chariot,” 27–54 (SB)

iii. SCREENING: Father, Son, and Holy War (part 2), directed by Anand Padwardhan (60 minutes)

WEEK 10 (3/29, 3/31, 4/2)
i. SATĪ: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE
  “Introduction,” 3–14 (SB)
  “Perfection and Devotion: Sati Tradition in Rajasthan,” 79–91 (SB)

OPTIONAL:
  “Sati as Profit Versus Sati as a Spectacle:
  The Public Debate on Roop Kanwar’s Death,” 131–149 (SB)

ii. SIKHISM: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE
•Richard Davis, “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 43–44 (RIP)
  “The Logic of Religious Violence,” 382–393 (SB)
  “The Discreet Charms of Indian Terrorism,” 1–31 (SB)

iii. SCREENING: Father, Son, and Holy War (part 1), directed by Anand Padwardhan (60 minutes)
WEEK 11 (4/5, 4/7, 4/9)

i. CHRISTIANITY AND CONVERSION—COERCION?
• miscellaneous newspaper articles concerning Christians in India (SB)

ii. RETHINKING RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES: CHRISTIANITY, HINDUISM, AND JUDAISM

iii. SCREENING: (to be announced)

WEEK 12 (4/12, 4/14, 4/16)

i. DR. AMBEDKAR AND THE ONUS OF UNTOUCHABILITY
ii. ENGAGED BUDDHISM: DALIT BUDDHISTS SPEAK OUT
• Barbara R. Joshi, ed. Untouchable! Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement. Delhi: Selectbook
  Service Syndicate, 1986.
  “The Enemy Within,” 77–98 (SB)
• Eleanor Zelliot. In From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement. Delhi:
• D.R. Nagaraj, “From Political Rage to Cultural Affirmation: Notes on the Kannada Dalit Poet-
  Activist Siddalingaiah.” India International Centre Quarterly (New Delhi) 21/4 (Winter 1994):
  15–26 (SB)
• NOTE:
  take-home exam distributed

iii. DISCUSSION OF TAKE-HOME EXAM

WEEK 13 (4/19, 4/21, 4/23)

i. no class

ii. SCREENING: My Son the Fanatic (87 minutes), written by Hanif Kureishi, directed by
  Udayan Prasad, 1997 (first half)
  • NOTE:
  take-home exam due in class

iii. THE POLITICS OF SECULARISM I
My Son the Fanatic (87 minutes), written by Hanif Kureishi, directed by Udayan Prasad, 1997
  (second half)
• Ashish Nandy. In Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia. Edited
• SEE REVIEWS:
  -http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/MySontheFanatic-1087925/

WEEK 14 (4/26, 4/28, 4/30)

i. THE POLITICS OF SECULARISM II
• Partha Chatterjee. In Secularism and its Critics. Edited by Rajiv Bhargava. Delhi: Oxford
  “Secularism and Tolerance,” 345–380 (SB)
  or
• Ashish Nandy. In Tradition and Pluralism and Identity: In Honour of T. N. Madan. Edited by
  Veena Das, Dipankar Gupta, and Patricia Uberoi. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional
  “The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Hindu Nationalism and Other Masks of
  Deculturation,” 401–418 (SB)

ii. PRESENTATIONS
  “Epilogue,” 152

iii. PRESENTATIONS