Religious History of South Asia II (REL 276)

Fall 2011
MW 1:10–2:30

PROFESSOR: Andy Rotman
OFFICE: Pierce Hall 203
OFFICE HOURS: MW 2:40–4:00 or by appointment
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REQUIREMENTS

1. You are expected to attend class regularly, finish the assigned readings on time, and participate in class discussions actively and, I hope, enthusiastically.

2. To facilitate class discussion, you will be expected to make regular postings on Moodle, responding to the readings directly as well as to the postings of other students. I expect you to post 250+ words each week, though you can skip one week during the semester. Your postings 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 to contextualize that material within the rest of the week’s readings. Postings for each week should be submitted by Friday at midnight of that week. In short, postings made during a particular week should be posted in the folder for that week. At the end of the semester, you will be expected to print out all of your posts and submit them to me. These are due on the last day of classes.

3. A take-home exam, involving about 10 pages of writing, will be distributed on Wednesday, November 30th, discussed in class on Monday, December 5th, and due in class on Wednesday, December 7th.

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 and collaborative efforts 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 take-home exam—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 postings on Moodle, your midterm exam, and your final project.
REQUIRED READING


*Source Book* (=SB)

- texts are available at Grécourt Bookshop in the Campus Center
- the source book is available at Paradise Copies, 21 Conz Street, (413) 585–0414

The cover image on the sourcebook is from a Brahmakumari poster. For more, see: http://www bkwsu org/
WEEK 1 (9/11, 9/14)
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 (handout)

WEEK 2 (9/19, 9/21)
i. JAINISM: RELIGION, CATECHISM, AND NARRATIVE
• Richard Davis, “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 16–18 (RIP)
  “Introduction to Jainism,” 1–19 (handout)
• 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 (handout)

WEEK 3 (9/26, 9/28)
i. MUSLIM INDIA, INDIAN MUSLIMS, AND THE MUSE
• Richard Davis, “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 31–37 (RIP)
• Carl Ernst, “India as Sacred Islamic Land,” 556–563 (RIP)
  “Understanding the Urdu Ghazal,” 26–52 (SB)
  Excerpt, 2.3–2.5, 79–88 (SB)
• Read the lyrics of “Thare Rahiyo” (Stay A While) (SB):
  http://www.hindilyrics.net/translation-Paakeezah/Thare-Rahiyo.html
• Then watch it being performed in the movie Pakeezah (Pure of Heart):
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugx2jqK4hmE

ii. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A TEACHING TO BE RELIGIOUS?
• Carl Ernst, “Conversations of Sufi Saints,” 513–517 (RIP)
**WEEK 4 (10/3, 10/5)**

i. **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)

ii. **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)

**WEEK 5 (10/10, 10/12)**

i. **Autumn Recess—No class**

ii. **Is the Goddess a Feminist?**
     “Power in its Place: Is the Great Goddess of Hinduism a Feminist?” 151–165 (handout)
     “Female Sexuality in the Hindu World,” 39–59 (handout)

**Screening outside of class: Devi (*The Goddess*).** Adapted, produced, and directed by Satyajit Ray. In Bengali, with English subtitles, 93 minutes. 1960.

*Note:* The film will be screened on Wednesday (10/12) and Thursday (10/13) at 7:30 pm. The location of the screenings will be announced.

**WEEK 6 (10/17, 10/19)**

i. **Darśan: Thoughts on seeing and being seen**
     “Seeing the Sacred,” 3–31 (SB)

**Optional:**
ii. PŪJĀ: WORSHIPPING THE DIVINE
  “Worship,” 57–82 (SB)

WEEK 7 (10/23, 10/24)
.i. KRṢṆA: EROTICS AND DEVOTION
  entire book
  “The Feast of Love,” 200–212 (SB)

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

WEEK 8 (10/31, 11/2)
.i. ŚIVA: VĪRĀṢAIVISM IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA
  “The Purānic myths of liṅga-worship,” 137–154 (SB)
  Excerpts, 2–13, 32–38 (skim), 231–266 (SB)

ii. RENUNCIENTS: 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)
WEEK 9 (11/7, 11/9)
i. RĀM: RELIGION AND THE CULTURAL IMAGINATION
  entire book
  “Epic Contests: Television and Religious Identity in India,” 134–151 (handout)

ii. THE REGIME OF RĀM: RELIGION AND THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION
  “Yes to Sita, No to Ram!: The Continuing Popularity of Sita in India,” 20–31 (SB)
  “Religious Nationalism,” 1–12 (12–24 is optional) (handout)

WEEK 10 (11/14, 11/16)
i. SATĪ: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE
  “Introduction,” 3–14 (handout)
  “Perfection and Devotion: Sati Tradition in Rajasthan,” 79–91 (handout)
  “Epilogue,” 227–228 (handout)

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

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 (handout)
NOTE: The film will be screened on Wednesday (11/16) and Thursday (11/17) at 7:30 pm. The location of the screenings will be announced.

WEEK 11 (11/21, 11/23)
i. RETHINKING RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES: THE POLITICS OF CASTE
  “Social Distinctions of Caste and Class,” 167–172 (SB)
  “Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India’s Caste System,” 227–228 (SB)
  Excerpts, 67–82
  “Dr. Ambedkar’s Indictment” (by Mahatma Gandhi), 1–10 (SB)
  “A Reply to the Mahatma,” 11–29 (SB)

ALSO: I am scheduled to be at the American Academy of Religion Annual Conference from 10/19–10/22. It is likely that you’ll be on your own for this class.

ii. THANKSGIVING RECESS—NO CLASS

WEEK 12 (11/28, 11/30)
i. DR. AMBEDKAR AND THE ONUS OF UNTOUCHABILITY
  “Untouchability,” 169–171 (handout)
• Christopher S. Queen. In *Engaged Buddhism.* Edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King. State University of New York Press, 1996.
  “Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation,” 45–71 (handout)
  “A Corpse in the Well,” 73–78 (handout)
  “The Story of My Sanskrit,” 96–106 (handout)
  “Mother,” 183–190 (handout)
ii. Engaged Buddhism: Dalit Buddhists speak out...and what about the Maoists?
  “The Enemy Within,” 77–98 (SB)
  “Gandhi, But With Guns,” 1–35 (SB)

Note: take-home exam distributed

Week 13 (12/5, 12/7)
i. In-class discussion of exam


Note: take-home exam due in class

Week 14 (12/12, 12/14)
i. Presentations
  “Epilogue,” 152 (SB)

ii. Presentations