# Religious History of South Asia I: Ancient to Medieval (REL 275)

Fall 2015
Seelye 313, MW 1–2:30


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| PROFESSOR: | Andy Rotman |
| OFFICE: | Pierce Hall 203 |
| OFFICE HOURS: | MW 4–5 or by appointment |
| EMAIL: | arotman@smith.edu |


**REQUIREMENTS**

1. Read attentively. Finish the assignments for each class before class time and think hard about them.

2. Attend class regularly. Being present is an important part of your class participation grade, and more than two unexcused absences will put that grade in jeopardy.

3. Listen actively and speak thoughtfully. Although class is large, this is not just a lecture course. We plan to discuss the materials with you, so be prepared to talk about them. Keep in mind Wittgenstein's aphorism, "Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal."

4. Make regular postings on Moodle, responding to the readings, class discussion, and/or the postings of other students. I expect you to post 250+ words each week. Your postings should demonstrate a *thoughtful* engagement with the material. To that end, I don't care if your posts are informal. Being chatty is fine as long as you're insightful. Ideally, you will post multiple times each week such that conversations develop. Postings made during a particular week should be posted in the folder for that week, and all postings for a particular week should be submitted by Saturday at midnight of 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, December 14th.

4. Complete a take-home exam, involving about 10 pages of writing. The exam questions will be distributed on Wednesday, November 18th, discussed in class on Monday, November 23rd, and due in the box outside my office by 6 pm on Wednesday, November 25th. (Electronic versions of the paper are accepted in extenuating circumstances.)

5. Produce a final creative project. These projects are not meant to be involved works of research; instead, they should be imaginative 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 (30%), your postings on Moodle (30%), your take-home exam (35%), and your final project (5%).

If you have any questions about an assignment or need help or an extension, please let me know. Just send me an email or stop by during my office hours. I will do my best to be accessible, and I'm happy to make special arrangements to meet.

**REQUIRED READING**

Ainslee T. Embree, ed. 1988. *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 1. 2nd edition. New York: Columbia University Press. (=SIT)

Barbara Stoller Miller, trans. 1986. *The Bhagavad Gītā*. Penguin Books.

*"Rama's Last Act" by Bhavabhuti*. Translated by Sheldon Pollock. New York: Clay Sanskrit Library.

*Source Book*. (=SB)

**•texts are available at Grécourt Bookshop, 585–4140**
**•the source book is available at Paradise Copies, 21 Conz Street, (413) 585–0414**
**http://www.paradisecopies.com/**

**WORKS ON RESERVE**

Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, trans. 2002. *Kamasutra*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. (HQ470.S3 V313)

Ainslee T. Embree, ed. *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 1. 2nd edition. New York: Columbia University Press. (DS423.S64)

Barbara Stoller Miller, trans. 1986. *The Bhagavad Gītā*. Penguin Books. (BL1138.62 E5)

Sheldon Pollock, trans. 2007. *"Rama's Last Act" by Bhavabhuti*. New York: Clay Sanskrit Library. (PK3791.B58 U713)

R. C. Zaehner, trans. 1973. *The Bhagavad Gītā*. New York: Oxford University Press. (299.12 M27b Ez)

**GENERAL REFERENCE WORKS**

Wendy Doniger, et al. 1988. *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism*. Totowa: Barnes & Noble. (BL1111.32 E5 T48)

Gavin D. Flood. 1996. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (BL1202.F56)

Thomas J. Hopkins. 1971. *The Hindu Religious Tradition*. Encino: Dickenson Publishing Company. (BL1202.H66)

Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund. 1998. *A History of India*. London and New York: Routledge. (DS436.K8513)

Romila Thapar. 1990. *A History of India, vol. 1*. New York: Penguin Books. (DS436.T37)

**WEEK 1** (9/9)
i. INTRODUCTION
•map of South Asia (SB)
•additional maps of India available online at sites such as—
http://dsal.uchicago.edu/reference/schwartzberg/
www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/india.html
http://www.mapsofindia.com/

**WEEK 2** (9/14, 9/16)
i. SOUTH ASIA, THE EARLY DAYS: WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
•Wendy Doniger. 2009. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin.
3. Civilization in the Indus Valley: 50,000 to 1500 BCE, 65–84 (handout)
4. Between the Ruins and Text: 2000 to 1500 BCE, 85–102 (handout)
•View "Around the Indus in 90 Slides" (www.harappa.com/indus/indus1.html), paying particular attention to "Harappan Religion and Belief Systems" (www.harappa.com/indus/indus7.html). Look through the slides and see what you can glean about Harappan religious beliefs and practices. For more on the ancient Indus Valley, check out the rest of the site (www.harappa.com/har/har0.html).

ii. SOUTH ASIA, THE EARLY DAYS: THE UNIVERSE AS ART?
•Richard Davis. 1995. In *Religions of India in Practice*. Edited by Donald S. Lopez. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
"A Brief History of Religions in India," 5–12 (handout)
•William K. Mahony. 1998. In *The Artful Universe: An Introduction to the Vedic Religious Imagination.* Albany: State University of New York Press.
"Reality Veiled and Revealed: On the Artistic Order of the Universe," 41–58 (handout)
"The Priest as Artist," 104–123 (handout)

**WEEK 3** (9/21, 9/23)
i. THE VEDAS, THEIR PRINCIPAL GODS, AND THE SACRIFICE
•R. N. Dandekar and R. Weiler, "The Brahmanical Tradition: The Vedic Period," 3–28 (SIT)
•Stephanie W. Jamison. 1996. In *Sacrificed Wife/ Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
"Some General Observations on Women's Conceptual Position in Ancient Indian Society," 12–17 (handout)
"The Wife and Other Ritual Actors," 29–38 (handout)
OPTIONAL (FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN SEX, RITUAL, AND HORSES):
•Stephanie W. Jamison. 1996. In *Sacrificed Wife/ Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
"Sexuality and Fertility: The Aśvamedha," 65–88 (handout)

ii. THE UPANIṢADS
•R. N. Dandekar and R. Weiler, "The Ultimate Reality in the Upanisads," 29–33 (SIT)
•Patrick Olivelle. 1996. *Upaniṣads*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.4, pp. 88–93 (SB)
*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.5–15, pp. 169–176 (SB)
*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.5, pp. 69–71 (SB)
*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.11–5.24, pp. 143–148 (SB)
*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.1–16, pp. 148–156 (SB)
•Patrick Olivelle. 1995. In *Religions of India in Practice*. Edited by Donald Lopez. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
"Ascetic Withdrawal or Social Engagement," 533–546 (SB)

**WEEK 4** (9/28, 9/30)
i. BUDDHISM REPLIES: THE REWORKING OF SACRIFICE, CASTE, AND BRAHMANS
•A. L. Basham, "The Background of Jainism and Buddhism," 43–48 (SIT)
•Maurice Walshe, trans. 1987. *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (*Dīgha-nikāya*). London: Wisdom Publications.
"A Bloodless Sacrifice" (*Kuṭadanta-sutta*), 1–8 (SB)
•Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. 1996. *The Middle Discourses of the Buddha* (*Majjhima-nikāya*). London: Wisdom Publications.
"The Sutta at Madhura" (*Madhura-sutta*), 1–4 (SB)
•H. Saddhatissa, trans. 1985. *The Sutta-nipāta*. London: Curzon Press.
"The Outcaste" (*Vasala-sutta*), 13–15 (SB)
•John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana, trans. 1987. *The Dhammapada*. New York: Oxford University Press.
*The Brahmana* (*Brahmana-vaggo*), 77–82 (SB)

ii. BASIC BUDDHISM: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS
•Rupert Gethin. 1998. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
"The Buddha," 7–27 (SB)
"Four Truths: The Disease, the Cause, the Cure, the Medicine," 59–84 (SB)
•Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. 1996. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (*Saṃyutta-nikāya*). London: Wisdom Publications.
"The Fire Sermon" (SB)

**WEEK 5** (10/5, 10/7)
i. JAINISM REPLIES: RENUNCIATION, ASCETICISM, AND NON-VIOLENCE
•Paul Dundas. 1992. *The Jains*. London and New York: Routledge.
"The Fordmakers," 11–20 and 36–39 (21–35 optional) (SB)
•A. L. Basham, "The Basic Doctrines of Jainism," 49–75 (SIT)

THE BRAHMANICAL SYNTHESIS: ŚĀSTRA AND THE SYSTEMIZATION OF THE WORLD
ii. DHARMA: READINGS IN DHARMAŚĀSTRA
•Ainslee T. Embree and V. Raghavan, "The Hindu Way of Life," 203–212 (SIT)
•Wendy Doniger. 2009. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin.
"The Three (Or is it Four?) Aims of Life in the Hindu Imaginary," 199–211 (SB)
•R. N. Dandekar, "Dharma: The First End of Man," 213–233 (SIT)
•Wendy Doniger and Brian Smith. 1991. *The Laws of Manu* (*Manusmṛti*). Penguin Books.
1.79–119, pp. 12–16 (SB)
NOTE: Some of these verses also occur in SIT (219–223).
2.154–249, pp. 33–42 (SB)
OPTIONAL:
3.1–83, pp. 43–51 (SB)
5.26–56, pp. 102–104 (SB)

**WEEK 6** (~~10/12~~, 10/14)
i. AUTUMN RECESS—NO CLASS

THE BRAHMANICAL SYNTHESIS: ŚĀSTRA AND THE SYSTEMIZATION OF THE WORLD
ii. DHARMA IN ACTION: THE STORY OF ŚAKUNTALĀ
•Edwin Gerow. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.
"Kālidāsa," 1–2 (handout)
•Edward C. Dimock, Jr., et al. 1974. *The Literatures of India: An Introduction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
"Śakuntalā," 96–99 (handout)
•Barbara Stoller Miller, trans. 1984. *Theater of Memory: The Plays of Kālidāsa*. New York: Columbia University Press.
"Śakuntalā," 85–176 (handout)
•K. Krishnamoorthy, trans. 1977. *The Vakrokti Jīvita of Kuntaka*. Dharwad: Karnatak University.
extract, 541–544 (handout)

**WEEK 7** (10/19, 10/21)
THE BRAHMANICAL SYNTHESIS: ŚĀSTRA AND THE SYSTEMIZATION OF THE WORLD
i. KĀMA: READINGS IN KĀMAŚĀSTRA
•Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, trans. 2002. *Kamasutra*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
Introduction, xi–xxi (SB)
1.1–2, pp. 3–13 (SB)
2.1, pp. 28–39 (SB)
2.7, pp. 56–60 (SB)
3.1–3, pp. 75–86 (SB)
5.1, pp. 104–109 (SB)
•V. Raghavan, "Kāma: the Third End of Man," 254–256, 264–270 (SIT)

ii. KĀMA IN ACTION: LOVE IN POETRY
•Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. 1991. *The Absent Traveler: Prākrit Love Poetry from the Gāthāsaptaśati of Sātavāhana Hāla*. Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publishing.
"Translator's Note," ix–xii (SB)
selected poems, 1–25 (SB)
•W. S. Merwin and J. Moussaieff Masson. 1981. *The Peacock's Egg: Love Poems from Ancient India*. San Francisco: North Point Press.
"Love (excerpt from introduction)," 28–35 (SB)
selected poems, 38–101 (SB)

**WEEK 8** (10/26, 10/28)
THE BRAHMANICAL SYNTHESIS: ŚĀSTRA AND THE SYSTEMIZATION OF THE WORLD
i. ARTHA: READINGS IN ARTHAŚĀSTRA
•R. N. Dandekar, "Artha: The Second End of Man," 233–253 (SIT)
•Patrick Olivelle, trans. 2013. King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra. *The Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya*. New York: Oxford University Press.
13.1, pp. 405–407 (SB)
1.12–1.13, pp. 78–81 (SB)
3.2–4, pp. 182–190 (SB)
8.3, pp. 336–339 (SB)
•Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, trans. 2002. *Kamasutra*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
6.3, 5–6, pp. 142–147, 151–160 (SB)

ii. THE RULERS: BUDDHIST KINGS AND KINGSHIP—
WILL THE REAL AŚOKA PLEASE STAND UP!
•A. L. Basham, "Society and the State in Theravāda Buddhism," 125–141 (SIT)
•N. A. Nikam and Richard McKeon, ed. and tr. 1959. *The Edicts of Aśoka*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
selections, 25–69 (SB)
•John Strong. 1983. *The Legend of King Aśoka* (*Aśoka-avadāna*). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
selections, 16–18, 286–294 (SB)
OPTIONAL:
•Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund. *A History of India*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
Excerpt from "The Great Ancient Empires," 47–69 (SB)

**WEEK 9** (11/2, 11/4)
THE BRAHMANICAL SYNTHESIS: ŚĀSTRA AND THE SYSTEMIZATION OF THE WORLD
i. MOKṢA: THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ—DUTY AND LIBERATION RECONSIDERED
•J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans. *The Mahabharata: 1, The Book of the Beginning*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1973.
"The Mahabharata Introduction: The Central Story," pp. xiii–xvi (handout)
•Barbara Stoller Miller, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Penguin Books, 1986.
"Introduction—*The Bhagavad Gita: Context and Text*," pp. 1–13
The First Teaching–The Sixth Teaching, pp. 21–69
SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
•R. C. Zaehner, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
chapter introductions (handout)
**NOTE**: Read these chapter introductions along with Miller's translation. For example, read Zaehner (pp. 120–122) and then Miller's translation of The Second Teaching (pp. 29–39).

ii. THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ: DUTY AND LIBERATION RECONSIDERED
•Barbara Stoller Miller, trans. 1986. *The Bhagavad Gītā*. Penguin Books.
entire book

**WEEK 10** (11/9, 11/11)
i. HINDUISM AND STATECRAFT: WAR AND PEACE
•Patrick Olivelle, trans. *The Pañcatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
"Introduction," ix–xxi (SB)
"The Prelude to the Story," 3–4 (SB)
"Book 1: On Causing Dissension among Allies," 5–70 (SB)

ii. HINDUISM AND DEVOTION: WAR AND PEACE
•Wendy Doniger. 2009. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin.
"Bhakti in South India: 100 BCE to 900 CE," 338–369
•Dharwadker, Vinay, trans. In *Religions of India in Practice*. Edited by Donald S. Lopez. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
"Kabir," 77–91 (SB)

**WEEK 11** (11/16, 11/18)
i. THE RAMAYANA: WHAT MAKES A GREAT STORY IN SOUTH ASIA?
•Velcheru Narayana Rao. 1987. In *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* edited by Mircea Eliade. New York: Macmillan Press.
"Ramayana," vol. 12, pp. 213–215 (SB)
•Robert Goldman, Sheldon Pollock, Rosalind Lefeber, Sally J. Sutherland, et al., trans. 1984– . *The Rāmāyaṇa of Valmīkī*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
"The Story," vol. 1, pp. 6–13 (SB)
Book ii, sarga 16, pp. 114–118 (SB)
Book ii, sargas 100–101, pp. 299–302 (SB)
Book iii, sargas 8–9, pp. 100–104 (SB)
Book iii, sargas 56–62, pp. 209–224 (SB)

ii. MANY RAMAYANAS AND THE POLITICS OF TELLING THEM
•A. K. Ramanujan. 1991. In *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, edited by Paula Richman. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
"Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation," 22–49 (SB)
•Jebaraj, Priscilla. *The Hindu*, 28 October 2011.
"The Richness of the Ramayana, The Poverty of a University," 1–4 (SB)
•A. K. Ramanujan. 1991. In *Gender, Genre, and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, Frank J. Korom, and Margaret A. Mills. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
"Toward a Counter-System: Women's Tales," 33–55 (SB)

For more on the Ramanujan controversy, see
•http://sausociology.wordpress.com/from-south-asian-media/attacking-the-academic-freedom-the-case-of-ramanujan-ramayana/
•http://www.firstpost.com/india/ramanujam-essay-do-universities-give-a-damn-about-critical-thinking-115284.html

NOTE: take-home exam distributed

**WEEK 12** (11/23, ~~11/25~~)
i. IN-CLASS DISCUSSION OF THE EXAM

ii. NO CLASS
NOTE: take-home exam due by 6 pm

**WEEK 13** (11/30, 12/2)
ARE THEY SERIOUS? SANSKRIT SATIRE AND A QUESTIONING OF THE TRADITION
i. *"Rama's Last Act" by Bhavabhuti*. Translated by Sheldon Pollock. New York: Clay Sanskrit Library.
29–52, 65–231
READING NOTES: The footnotes are worth following; they're on the bottom of the page. The asterisks reference critical notes in the back of the book. You'll likely find those baffling, so you can give them a miss. There's a list of characters on page 62. You'll probably want to mark the page so you can flip back and forth.

ii. *"Rama's Last Act" by Bhavabhuti*. Translated by Sheldon Pollock. New York: Clay Sanskrit Library.
235–389

**WEEK 14** (12/7, 12/9)
i. TO BE ANNOUNCED

ii. PRESENTATIONS

**WEEK 15** (12/14)
i. PRESENTATIONS