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

Fall 2015
Seelye 313, MW 1–2:30

PROFESSOR: Andy Rotman
OFFICE: Pierce Hall 203
OFFICE HOURS: MW 4–5 or by appointment
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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


*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


GENERAL REFERENCE WORKS


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?
  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.
  “A Brief History of Religions in India,” 5–12 (handout)
  “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
• 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 UPANIŠADS
  Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4, pp. 88–93 (SB)
  Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.5–15, pp. 169–176 (SB)
  Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.5, pp. 69–71 (SB)
  Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.11–5.24, pp. 143–148 (SB)
  Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.1–6.1, pp. 148–156 (SB)
  “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)
  “A Bloodless Sacrifice” (Kuṭadanta-sutta), 1–8 (SB)
  “The Sutta at Madhura” (Madhura-sutta), 1–4 (SB)
  “The Outcaste” (Vasala-sutta), 13–15 (SB)
  The Brahmana (Brahmana-vaggo), 77–82 (SB)

ii. BASIC BUDDHAMA: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS
  “The Buddha,” 7–27 (SB)
  “Four Truths: The Disease, the Cause, the Cure, the Medicine,” 59–84 (SB)
  “The Fire Sermon” (SB)

WEEK 5 (10/5, 10/7)
i. JAINISM REPLIES: RENUNCIATION, ASCETICISM, AND NON-VIOLENCE
• 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)
  “The Three (Or is it Four?) Aims of Life in the Hindu Imaginary,” 199–211 (SB)
  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)
  “Śakuntalā,” 96–99 (handout)
  “Śakuntalā,” 85–176 (handout)
  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

  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)
ii. **KĀMA IN ACTION: LOVE IN POETRY**
  - “Translator’s Note,” ix–xii (SB)
  - selected poems, 1–25 (SB)
  - “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 ARTHĀŚĀSTRA**
  - 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)
  - 6.3, 5–6, pp. 142–147, 151–160 (SB)

ii. **THE RULERS: BUDDHIST KINGS AND KINGSHIP—**

- **WILL THE REAL AŚOKA PLEASE STAND UP!**
  - selections, 25–69 (SB)
  - selections, 16–18, 286–294 (SB)

**OPTIONAL:**
  - 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. MOKSHA: THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ—DUTY AND LIBERATION RECONSIDERED
  The First Teaching–The Sixth Teaching, pp. 21–69
SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
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
  entire book

WEEK 10 (11/9, 11/11)
i. HINDUISM AND STATECRAFT: WAR AND PEACE
  “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
  “Bhakti in South India: 100 BCE to 900 CE,” 338–369
  “Kabir,” 77–91 (SB)

WEEK 11 (11/16, 11/18)
i. THE RAMAYANA: WHAT MAKES A GREAT STORY IN SOUTH ASIA?
  “Ramayana,” vol. 12, pp. 213–215 (SB)
  “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

  “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)
  “Toward a Counter-System: Women’s Tales,” 33–55 (SB)

For more on the Ramanujan controversy, see

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
  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.

  235–389

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

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