Religious History of South Asia II: Medieval to Modern (REL 276)

Spring 2016
Seelye 208, 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. 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, Wednesday, April 27th.

5. Complete a take-home exam, involving about 10 pages of writing. The exam questions will be distributed on Wednesday, April 13th, discussed in class on Monday, April 18th, and due in the box outside my office by 6 pm on Wednesday, April 20th. (Electronic versions of the paper are accepted in extenuating circumstances.)

6. 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/
WEEK 1 (1/25, 1/27)
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 (2/1, 2/3)
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 (2/8, 2/10)
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 (2/15, 2/17)
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. RALLY DAY—NO CLASS

WEEK 5 (2/22, 2/24)
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)
  “Power in its Place: Is the Great Goddess of Hinduism a Feminist?” 151–165 (SB)

Note: Class will begin today at 1 pm.

ii. NO CLASS

  NOTE: The film will be screened on Wednesday (2/24) and Thursday (2/25) at 7:00 pm in Seelye 106.

WEEK 6 (2/29, 3/2)
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 (3/7, 3/9)
i. KRŚNA: 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 (3/14, 3/16)
RELAX . . . SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9 (3/21, 3/23)
i. Śīva: VĪRĀṢAIIVISM IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA
   “The Purānic myths of liṅga-worship,” 137–154 (handout)
   Excerpts, 2–13, 32–38 (skim), 231–266 (handout)

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)
WEEK 10 (3/28, 3/30)
i. RĀM: RELIGION AND THE CULTURAL IMAGINATION
  entire book (mediocre copy available on Moodle; proper copy available on iTunes)
  “Epic Contests: Television and Religious Identity in India,” 134–151 (SB)

ii. THE REGIME OF RĀM: RELIGION AND THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION
• Madhu Kishwar. Manushi 98 (January-February 1997).
  “Yes to Sita, No to Ram! The Continuing Popularity of Sita in India,” 20–31 (SB)
  “Religious Nationalism,” 1–12 (12–24 is optional) (SB)

WEEK 11 (4/4, 4/6)
i. SATĪ: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE
  “Introduction,” 3–14 (SB)
  “Perfection and Devotion: Sati Tradition in Rajasthan,” 79–91 (SB)
  “Epilogue,” 227–228 (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)

   NOTE: The film will be screened on Wednesday (4/6) and Thursday (4/7) at 7:00 pm in Seelye ***.

WEEK 12 (4/11, 4/13)
i. THE POLITICS OF CASTE, DR. AMBEDKAR, AND THE ONUS OF UNTOUCHABILITY  
     “Social Distinctions of Caste and Class,” 167–172 (SB)  
     “Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India’s Caste System,” 227–228 (SB)  
     “Untouchability,” 169–171 (SB)  
     “Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation,” 45–71 (SB)  
     “A Corpse in the Well,” 73–78 (SB)  
     “The Story of My Sanskrit,” 96–106 (SB)

ii. ENGAGED BUDDHISM: DALIT BUDDHISTS SPEAK OUT  
     “The Enemy Within,” 77–98 (SB)  

NOTE: take-home exam distributed

WEEK 13 (4/18, 4/20)
i. IN-CLASS DISCUSSION OF EXAM


NOTE: take-home exam due in class
WEEK 14 (4/25, 4/27)
i. PRESENTATIONS
  “Epilogue,” 152 (SB)

ii. PRESENTATIONS