

2012

RELI-231-51 Hindu Traditions

E H. Jarow

Vassar College, jarow@vassar.edu

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Vassar College, Spring Semester 2012
Religion 231

Hindu Religious Traditions

Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:45
BH201

Instructor: **E. H. Jarow**, Associate Professor of Religion
Office: Blodgett 206, Ext. #5516, email: jarow@vassar.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 3:30-5:30

Course Description and Organization

This year's course follows the structure of the traditional Indian astrological chart as an organizing principle to explore the diverse traditions, sacred writings, rituals, images, ideas, and social realities that Western scholars, Indian activists, and post-independence popular cultures have labeled as "Hinduism." The exploration includes an overview of both doctrinal and popular traditions and surveys the basic concepts, deities, myths, and forms of popular religious expression that have arisen and remain vital on the sub-continent. We also look at meetings between tradition and modernity, and observe how our own encounters with Hindu religious thought and practice challenge and expand our world view and self-understanding.

Course Requirements

Regular attendance and punctual completion of reading and writing assignments are required (more than two unexcused absences will result in a one unit lowering of the final grade). Attendance and class participation count for 30% of your grade ("participation" includes four mandatory postings on the Vassar Moodle page as well taking part in class discussions). One ten page essay is due two weeks after Spring break. Topics will be suggested, but can also be of your own choosing (or an expansion of one of your response papers). The essay counts for 30% of the final grade. A final take home examination will assess your familiarity with and understanding of the *Hindu Samaj* Temple in Wappingers Falls and will count for 40% of your grade. There is one class field trip to the Samaj, but students are expected to make numerous visits to the temple during the semester. In addition, there will be 3-5 film showings. Attendance is mandatory.

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please schedule an appointment with the instructor early in the semester to discuss any accommodation that may be needed for the course. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Disability and Support Services (ext. 7584) as indicated in their accommodation letter

Required Texts

Divakaruni, *The Palace of Illusions*
Falk, N. *Living Hinduisms*
Haberman, *Journey through the Twelve Forests*
Mehta, G., *A River Sutra*
Miller, B.S. (trans.) *The Bhagavadgītā, The Yoga-Sūtras*
Narayan, R.K. *The Financial Expert*

Recommend Texts

Hawley, Wulff, *Devi, Goddesses of India*
Lal, *Introducing Hinduism*
Urban, *Tantra: Politics, Sex, and Secrecy*
Narayan, R.K., *The Ramayana*

Class Schedule

Jan. 19: *Ganesha*: Lord of Beginnings

Introduction: Om Śri Ganeṣaya Namaḥ!
Presuppositions of Dharma
“Spatial” versus chronological methods

FIRST HOUSE (Jan. 24-26) *Agni, Mangala*- Going Forward

Three Myths of Origin: The Sanatana Dharma, The Kali Yuga,
The Aryan Migrations

Reading: Falk, “The Brahmins”
Rg Veda 1,1
Indra and the Ants

SECOND HOUSE (Jan 31-Feb 2) *Lakshmi* - Goddess of Wealth and Value

Reading: Narayan, *The Financial Expert*
Tagore, *Life's Stages*
“Lakshmi”

☞ Class Visit to Hindu Samaj – Wappingers Falls, NY (Feb 1, 5:00pm)

THIRD HOUSE (Feb 7-9) Saraswati (Ganesha) Language, Narrative & Reality:

Reading: Coward, Mantra
Panikkar, The Vedic World
Divakaruna, I

FOURTH HOUSE (Feb. 14-16) Ma: Home is Where the Heart Is.

.Reading: Divakaruna, II.
Herman, "Sita in the Kitchen"
Falk, "In the Home"

FIFTH HOUSE (Feb. 21-23) Krishna at Play:

Reading: Haberman, Journey through the Twelve Forests
(selections)

SIXTH HOUSE (Feb. 28-March 1): Vishnu: The Preservation of the World

Reading: *Bhagavadgita*, VII. 14, XVI
Mariot, "Varna and Jati"
Ramanujan, "On Woman Saints"
Wadley, "Women and the Hindu Tradition"
Laws of Manu

★ **SPRING BREAK**

SEVENTH HOUSE (March 20-22) Radhe Krishna, Sita Ram, Sita Parvati: The Divine Couple

Reading: *A River Sutra*
Jacobson, "Marriage, Women in India"

EIGHTH HOUSE (March 27-29) Siva: The Erotic Ascetic

Reading: *Bhagavadgita*, VIII
Sinha, "The Five-Fold Sacrament"

Parry, "The Last Sacrifice"
Falk, "The Sadhus", "On the Road"

NINTH HOUSE (April 3-5) Guru (Brhaspati): Pathways to God:

Reading: *Bhagavadgita*, XII, Selected Verses
Tri-Vedanta
Halstrom, "Anandamayi Ma; God Came as Woman"
Falk, "Bhaktas and Shaktas"

Essay Due

TENTH HOUSE (April 10-12) Durga: "The World"

Reading: Pollock, "Ramayana and Political Imagination in India"
Falk, III, IV ("In Politics")
Coburn, "The Great Goddess" (e-reserve)
Film: The Bandit Queen

ELEVENTH HOUSE (April 17-19) Dhanvantari: Magic and Divine Medicine Ele

Reading: Kakar, Lord of the Spirit World (e-reserve)
Erndl, "Serevnali, The Mother Who Possesses"
Smith, The Self Possessed (excerpts)

TWELFTH HOUSE (April 24-26) Isvara, Two kinds of release

Reading: *Yoga Sutras*
Selected Poems of Mira Bai and Kabir

May 1: The Spiritual Gifts of Modern India: Ramakrishna, Aurobindo,
Krishnamurti

★ TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE MAY 10

Suggested Readings

Gandhi, M. *My Experiments with Truth*
Ghose, Aurobindo, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, The Life Divine*

Goldman, trans., et. al. *The Ramayana*
Hopkins, T. *The Hindu Religious Tradition*
Kakir, Sudhir, *The Inner World: Childhood and Society in Indian Culture* (Dehli, Oxford University Press, 1978)
Kinsley, David, *Hindu Goddesses*
Knipe, David, *Hindu Experiments in the Sacred*
Lutgendorf, Philip. *The Life of a Text, Ramayan the Video*
Panikkar, R. *The Vedic Experience: Mantramañjarī*
Parry, Jonathan, *Death in Banaras*
Ramanujan, A.K. *Speaking of Siva*
Richman, Paula, *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of Narrative Tradition in South Asia*
Singer, Milton, *When A Great Tradition Modernizes*
Sukthankar, V.S. *On The Meaning of the Mahabharata*
Tagore, *Collected Poems and Plays*
Thapar, *Interpreting Early India*
Zimmer, Heinrich, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization*

Suggested Websites

Harappa.com (www.harappa.com)
Journal of South Asian Women's Studies (<http://www.shore.net/-india/isaws/index.html>)
Kumbha Mela Home Page <http://www.smsu.edu.contrib/relst-/kumbjamela.html>
Mohandas K. Gandhi (<http://www.acusd.edu/theo/ref-gandhi.html>)
Cooking for the Gods (<http://www.arth.upenn.edu/nalin.html>)
Ammachi (<http://www.ammachi.org>)
Internet Kali Tenple (<http://www.kalimandir.org>)
Smithsonian Website-Puja Video (www.asia.si.edu/education/pujaonline/puja/)
Hindu Temples (<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/vasu>)
Shiva Shakti Mandalam (<http://www.religiousworlds.com/mandalam/index.html>)
Yoga Information (<http://www.yrec.org/publications.html>)