

## RELS 245.01 The Hindu Tradition (Fall 2022)

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### Course Description

“Hinduism” refers to a vast and diverse culture of religious ideas and devotional practices, sacred stories and social norms that have spanned the millennia in India. This course will focus on enduring themes that have shaped and reshaped tradition and that lend a sense of unity to the complex puzzle of Hinduism. The themes that we will explore relate to philosophy (the relationship between illusion and reality, the soul and the body, the One and the Many), ritual practices (sacrificial rituals to gain worldly power vs. ascetic renunciation, pilgrimage and yoga) and social institutions and ethics (kingship and nationalism, caste, race, and gender roles, violence and tolerance). We will trace the transmission and transformation of these beliefs and values, practices and institutions, from ancient to modern India and into the United States. We will learn that Hindu culture is plural and inclusive and it has evolved to meet the needs of people in different times and in different geographic regions within India and abroad.

The course presumes no previous experience in religious studies. The only prerequisite is the desire to read interesting materials about Hinduism and a willingness to engage in conversations about them. We will read classical Hindu texts, like the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramayana*. But we will also read essays that describe Hinduism as a living religion, and two books, a travelogue and a pilgrim’s story, that feature western seekers of enlightenment through sacred narratives. We will also watch documentary films that illustrate how Hindu values and customs are woven into their daily lives.

### Course goals and student learning outcomes

- to acquire religious literacy in the key ideas and practices of Hinduism
- to develop interpretive skills by reading classic Hindu texts, place them in their social and historical contexts, and analyze their multiple religious dimensions
- to demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft an argument in defense of a thesis
- to make what seems strange more familiar, and what is familiar seem more strange



This course also satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes** for the Humanities:  
1) *Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, and valued in various expressions of human culture;* 2) *Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.* These two General Education learning outcomes will be demonstrated on the **2<sup>nd</sup> essay** due 9/22 (10%)

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### Course Requirements

This course presumes no previous experience in Hinduism, but it has as a prerequisite the desire to read challenging and unusual materials about Hinduism and to engage in conversation about these readings.

- **Two Required Texts** are available from Amazon or the Barnes & Noble **CofC Bookstore**:  
Jonah Blank, *Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God*. Grove Press edition 1992. ISBN: 9780802137333  
Ariel Glucklich, *Climbing Chamundi Hill: 1001 Steps...* Harper Pub 2004. ISBN 978006075047
- **Electronic Readings (ER#1-30)** are also required, pdf selections from classical texts, scholarly articles and short stories on Hinduism, available on **OAKS** under **RELS 245**. Registered students can access it after you login to **MyCharleston** (<http://my.cofc.edu>). Please **download all pdf files** onto your computer or a memory stick, **print out each article**, and bring it to class on the day that it is due. You should **read the assignment before** we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures on it. We pay close attention to these readings in class and “unpack” their content. **OAKS**, including Gradebook, will be used throughout the semester to provide the class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

- **Attendance Policy**

Attendance records will be kept for each class: there will be **3** allowed absences; **4** or more will negatively affect your grade. After **8** absences, the student will earn a **failing grade** for excessive absences. You are responsible for making up any absences; please get any notes on missed lectures from a classmate. One form of disruption occurs when students arrive late or leave early; please don't leave in the middle of class unless you absolutely must!

- **Regular participation in class discussions (10% of grade)**

Whatever you get out of this course is directly related to how much you put into it. Please prepare for class by reading the assignment and formulate questions and comments that can help us to engage in meaningful discussion. You cannot participate if you are not present. Quality counts more than quantity, but you must speak up. If you are worried about participation, meet with me as soon as possible to strategize (after class, during office hours, or by email).

- **Weekly Reflection Cards (15% of grade)**

There will be regular homework assignments. Once a week on days marked on syllabus with **RC due** you are to bring to class a thoughtful, written reflection related to the assigned reading for that week. The reflection should be written on a 3x5 or 5x7 card, and be based on a topic or issue that you have found puzzling, thought provoking, challenging, or interesting, and demonstrate critical thinking.

Grades for RC are:     + = **100**;   √+ = **90**;   √ = **80**;   √- = **75**;   — = **70**.

- **Midterm and Final Exam (15% each, or 30% of grade)**

These two exams consist of short answer questions and identification and explanation of scriptural passages that we have discussed in class. An unexcused missed exam counts as a **0**. Review sheets will be provided beforehand and the exam will be open book but timed at 75 or 90 minutes.

- **3 Short Essays** (two 2 pp. essays worth **10%**; one 3 pp. essay worth **15%** for **35%** of grade) These essays will be based upon assigned topics and may not exceed two or three pages each. The first paper will focus on an Indian story about a hunter and a sage and it's due on **9/8**; the second paper will be based upon the stories in *Climbing Chamundi Hill* and it's due on **9/22** in class; the third paper (3 pp. in length) will be based on *Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* and you will have a choice of topics, one due on **10/20**, the other due **10/27**. *Late papers are not accepted* since the topic will be discussed in class.

- **Creative Project or UnEssay due 11/17 (10% of grade)**

For this project you will creatively adapt key themes from the course into a new form of media. The project will include a creator's statement that explains what you sought to accomplish, the sources that inform your project (a Hindu sacred text or a key idea like *karma*, *dharma*, *yoga*, or *ahimsa*), and how you reinterpret them. *Climbing Chamundi Hill* and *Searching for the Blue-Skinned God* can serve as inspiration for your own creative adaptation of Hindu stories, ideals in sacred texts, or religious themes.

**Grading Scale:** A = 100-93   A- = 92-90   B+ = 89-87   B = 86-83   B- = 82-80   C+ = 79-77  
C = 76-73   C- = 72-70   D+ = 69-67   D = 66-63   D- = 62-60   F = 59-below

### Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student's action are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by me as the instructor. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a **XXF grade** in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years. If you are unfamiliar with the **Honor Code** or what **plagiarism** is, please click on the links.

### Learning Format: In-Person Class that Meets Face-to-Face

Our class will **meet in-person** twice a week in **MYBK 322**, and it is imperative that you read the required texts for each lesson, so that you will be prepared to engage in the discussion. Before the **drop/add deadline** on **8/29**, students should decide whether the course plan described here matches their own circumstance. If in-person classes are suspended due to extreme weather or the pandemic, I will announce on OAKS and by your CofC email a detailed plan for a change of modality to ensure continuity of learning. Students must have access to a computer equipped with a camera, microphone, and internet access.

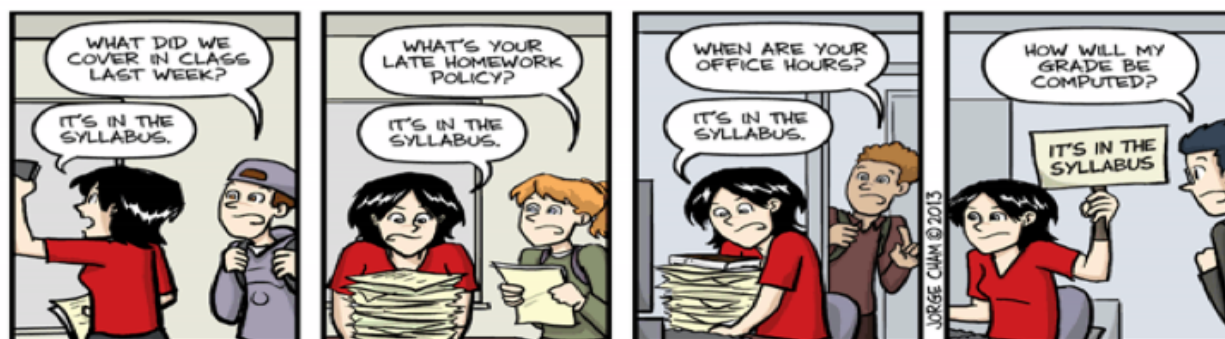
### Course Resources

I encourage you to utilize the academic support services offered by the **Center for Student Learning** and the **Writing Lab** for assistance in study strategies and essay writing consultation. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information on the Center for Student Learning call **843.953.5635**. Here is a link for help on writing an essay for **Religious Studies**.

**Universal Learning and SNAP program:** I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our practices, and our interactions be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen carefully are crucial to universal learning. Any student eligible for or needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be made. For more information on the SNAP program, see: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu> or **843.953.1431**

### Religious Observances and Accommodation

The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. Religious observances will be accommodated. If you need to be absent for any given class for a specific observance, please submit requests in writing to me by the end of the second week of class so we can agree upon accommodations.



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

[WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM](http://WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM)



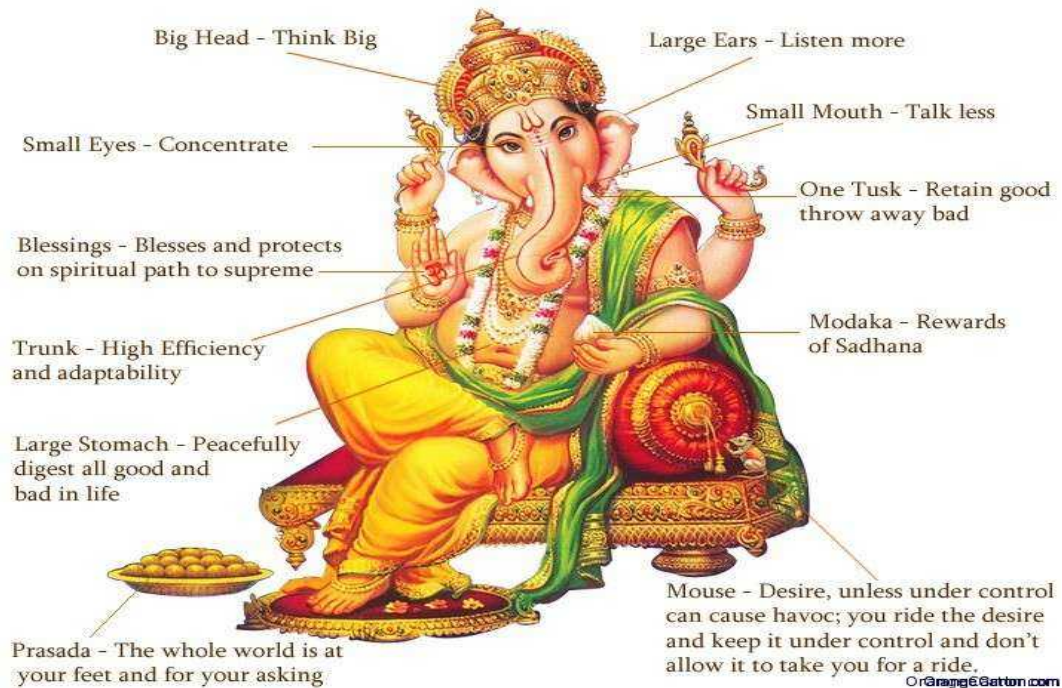
## Lecture Topic, Reading and Homework Assignments, and Discussion Topics

The following dates provide the topic of the day, the required reading, and when assignments are due. Selections from books like *Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* or *Climbing Chamundi Hill* list the chapters or page numbers; selections from the E-Readings (ER) on OAKS are numbered sequentially. For a complete list of the sources of the assigned E-Readings found on OAKS (ER#1-30), see below pp. 11-12.

### I. Ways of Studying Hinduism and Vedic Religion: Mind Shattering Experiences

**Gargi**, Hinduism's earliest female philosopher, probes deeply into the nature of reality. The great sage Yajñavalkya admonishes her: *Don't ask too many questions, Gargi, or your head will shatter apart!* In this course, asking questions—of the readings, the professor, one another, and oneself—is encouraged as part of the learning process; a shattered head is a necessary risk, as Gargi knows. Just remember that all answers are bound to be imperfect and subject to revision as you acquire new knowledge and perspectives on Hinduism. *So be prepared to feel confused sometimes*; studying Hinduism can both expand and shatter your mind!

- 8/23 Course Organization and Introducing Hinduism in the *Life of Pi*  
(Review Syllabus, *Life of Pi* document on “Screening Belief”) Watch clips from *Life of Pi*
- 8/25 Who Speaks for Hinduism? Insiders vs. Outsiders and the Problem of “Hinduism”  
(ER#1-3: The Scholar & the Devotee; The Term *Hinduism*; Introduction: Varanasi) **RC#1 due**  
**Discussion topics:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of understanding Hinduism as an “outsider” scholar vs. an “insider” devotee? If “Hinduism” is a word coined by the British, how did this new *-ism* distort how westerners have understood it as a religion? How does paying attention to all “five strands” of Hinduism (in ER#2) help correct distorted western views?
- 8/30 How is Hinduism like an Elephant? An Insider Explains “Why I am a Hindu”  
(ER#4A and #4B: The Blind Men & the Elephant; Why I Am a Hindu) **RC#2 due in class**  
**Discussion topics:** In ER#4A the blind men & elephant parable is retold three times but each time new or different meanings are revealed. What are the parable's meanings? If the elephant is a metaphor for “Hinduism,” what does this assume about its nature as a religion? Why might the “insider” view of Hinduism (in ER#4B) appeal to people today who call themselves “spiritual but not religious,” but not to Indian nationalists who call themselves “true Hindus” (*Hindutva*)?



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9/1 Vedic Sacrificial Ritual: Magic, Religion, or Science?  
(ER#5-6: Sacred Knowledge & Indian Origins; Vedic Rituals) watch clips from *Altar of Fire*  
**Discussion topics:** Why do we try to understand religion by turning to its origins? What kinds of patterns emerge from the hidden connections in Vedic ritual? Do these correspondences seem “magical” (that is, primitive) or “religious” (i.e. supernatural) or “scientific” (i.e. naturalistic) to you?

9/6 The Creation of the Hindu Universe: Cosmic Order, Hierarchy, and Caste  
(ER#7-8: The Creative Power of the Sacrifice; Creation in Rig Veda) **RC#3 due**  
**Discussion topics:** Why are creation & destruction linked in the story of Purusha’s sacrifice? How does this sacrifice create patterns of resemblance and principles of order in the cosmos? Consider the hierarchical structure of the “castes” (*varna*) as an expression of cosmic order—what are the social ramifications for understanding caste hierarchy as completely natural?



9/8 Getting Inside the Head of a Hindu Sage: What does the Sage See?  
(ER#9-10: Other Scholar’s Myths; Renunciation in the *Upanishads*)  
**Essay #1:** ER#9 presents a Hindu myth about a hunter and a sage, and Doniger suggests that the sage can be interpreted as a metaphor for academic scholars of religion. *What does she mean when she writes: “The hunting sage is my idea of the right sort of historian of religion?” Should scholars use both their “heads” and their “hearts” in order to both think and feel with the myths of others? Why does she criticize scholars who study others’ myths in order to promote them as “true stories?”*

**II. The Classical Hindu Worldview: Karma & Rebirth; Dreams, Illusions, and Reality**  
“It’s an illusionary world; it exists only in *maya* (“illusion”). That is why you are not seeing it. You are spiritually so superior that your vision passes right through that world. Perhaps,” she suggested, “you should try to remember how such a world might have appeared to you in the past.” She was right—it worked. I could now see her world, as though in a dream. “The Girl in the Stone” from *Climbing Chamundi Hill: 1001 Steps with a Storyteller and a Reluctant Pilgrim*

9/13 Stories about Life & Death, Karma & Rebirth  
(*Climbing Chamundi Hill: vii-57*) Clips from *Shortcut to Nirvana* (2004) **RC#4 due**  
**Discussion topics:** How would you describe the relationship between the American biologist and the Hindu storyteller as they discuss the stories he tells? What do these stories and their metaphors teach us about karma and samsara? Why and how is Vedic sacrificial ritual criticized in some stories?

9/15 Exploring Illusion & Reality with a Hindu Storyteller  
(*Climbing Chamundi Hill: 57-109*). Clips from *Shortcut to Nirvana* shown in class  
**Discussion topics:** Are the stories told by the Indian guide “religious” or “secular” stories? Do any of these stories evoke feelings of *déjà vu* in you? How might a Hindu explain this common experience of *déjà vu*? What does it mean to have a “rigid sense of self?” Do the stories represent women as “types” who become sensuous “obstacles” to enlightenment or are they male “projections” of familiar experiences?

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9/20 Yoga as Philosophy and Practice: Pain and Asceticism  
(Read ER#11: The Yoga Sutra; *Climbing Chamundi Hill*: 131-146; 157-172; 182-196) **RC#5 due**  
**Discussion topics:** What is the relationship of spirit and matter, or mind and body, in *The Yoga Sutra*? How does close examination of the mind-body relationship reveal why people construct false identities and enslave themselves to a world of pain? Is the pain felt in the American's feet or his back real or imagined?

9/22 Spiraling Stories about Shiva, Samsara and Moksha  
(Read *Climbing Chamundi Hill*: 197-246)  
**Essay #2:** The stories told in *Climbing Chamundi Hill* seem to spiral in cycles, both structurally with stories inside stories, and thematically with twin themes of karma & yoga, death & rebirth, asceticism & eroticism, samsara & moksha. *Explore how this spiraling structure blurs the boundary between fiction and reality, between storyteller and character, and between subjectivity and reality. What profound religious insights does the American "pilgrim" learn about such cycles and his own life from the stories told to him?*

### III. The Synthesis of Traditions: Devotion and Worship

"Keep your mind on me, be my devotee, sacrificing, bow to me—you will come to me, I promise, for you are dear to me. Relinquishing all sacred duties to me, make me your only refuge; do not grieve for I shall free you from all evils." Krishna imploring Arjuna to worship Him in the *Bhagavad Gita* chapter 18: 65-66

9/27 The Three Paths of Action, Knowledge, and Devotion in the *Bhagavad Gita*  
(ER#12: Obligation, Liberation, and Devotion) **RC#6 due** clip of Tulsi Gabbard on the Gita  
**Discussion topics:** What is Arjuna's ethical dilemma at the outset of the *Gita*? Do you find Krishna's arguments that urge Arjuna to fight compelling? How does the Gita resolve the tension found in earlier forms of Hinduism between the worldly pursuit of Dharma and the transcendental pursuit of Moksha? How might a CofC student apply the "Yoga of Action" (*karma yoga*) to RELS classes like this one?



9/29 Seeing the Gods: Darshan  
(ER#13: Seeing the Sacred)  
**Discussion topics:** What did you find most surprising in this chapter on how Hindus "see" the sacred? What are some of the cultural and religious obstacles that have kept so many western "outsiders" from seeing like a Hindu and understanding Hindu devotion to their gods? Explain in your own words the main differences between the west's "monotheism of consciousness" and Hindu "polycentrism" and "pluralism."

10/4 Crafting Images of the Gods and the Sensuous Experience of Devotion  
(ER#14-15: The Maker of Idols; The Experience: Approaching God) **RC#7 due**  
**Discussion topics:** ER#14 begins by quoting an artist, who makes bronze statues of the Hindu gods: "The gods created man, but here we are so blessed that we—simple men as we are—help to create the gods." Is the artist's construction of divine images inspired by his own unique personality and creativity? Why do Hindus bathe, dress, feed, and put to sleep at night their images of the gods? What spiritual needs are met through a form of worship that engages all the senses?

10/6 **Midterm Exam** (No reading, review Midterm Exam Review Sheet)



IV. **Retelling the *Ramayana* and Its Impact on Modern India**

“Imagine a story that is the *Odyssey*, Aesop’s fables, *Romeo and Juliet*, the Bible, and *Star Wars* all at the same time. Imagine a story that combines adventure and aphorism, romance and religion, fantasy and philosophy. Imagine a story that makes young children marvel, burly men weep, and old women dream. Such a story exists in India, and it is called the *Ramayana*.... How relevant is this ancient epic now? A two-year serialization of the *Ramayana* was the most widely viewed television program in Indian history. But the story’s importance goes beyond mere popularity. The issues that dominate this Sanskrit saga are the same issues that dominate modern India.” Jonah Blank in his “Preface” to *Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God*



10/11 Introducing the *Ramayana* and Ayodhya: Myth-Making in Modern India  
(*Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* chapter 1: Beginnings; ER#16: Militant Hinduism) **RC#8 due**

**Discussion topics:** How is the controversy over Rama’s birthplace used to create Hindu identity? Does this Hindutva identity seem new and modern or ancient and anti-modern to you? When “tolerance” is invoked by nationalists as a distinctly Hindu virtue, does this reinforce “Hindu exceptionalism?” Can you imagine any reasonable resolution to Hindu-Muslim conflict in Ayodhya, or does the “illogical” quality of religion that Blank underscores make any resolution to the conflict seem impossible?

10/13 Fate, Duty and Kingship  
(*Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* chapter 2: pp. 25-33, 42-50; chapter 3: Kings)

**Discussion topics:** Is the idea of “fate” or “destiny,” or the practices of palm readers and astrologers, compatible with the Hindu doctrine of karma? How is the traditional model of kingship reinforced by the religious and ethical values of Dharma and Artha, caste roles and filial piety? How do you respond to the unflattering comparison of America’s democracy with India’s democracy?

10/18 Caste Hierarchy, Purity and Pollution Taboos  
(*Arrow of Blue-Skinned God* chapter 5: Caste; ER#17: “The Inner Experience of Caste”) **RC#9**

**Discussion topics:** Has the caste system promoted stability, pluralism, and diversity-in-unity in India? Does the Indian government’s affirmative action program for “scheduled castes” promote or undermine India’s unity and the quest for equality? According to ER#17, what is the social and psychological explanation for how the caste system and judgments about what is “polluted” become ingrained in children?

10/20 Debating Reality and Illusion, Good & Evil in the *Ramayana*  
(*Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* chapters 6-7: Illusion, Evil)

**Essay topic #3a:** Respond to the following statement: “How could Rama, the very personification of good, commit an act of evil? How could Ravana, the Lord of the Demons, behave like a true gentleman? These are questions that Indians debate every day, at the dinner table, at the temple, at the tea hut near the village well. Truck-driver philosophers and seamstress theologians come up with many explanations, but never with an answer. There is no answer. Good and evil are not the separate entities we would like to believe.” Explain how Blank reaches this conclusion. Do you agree? Is the relativist view that Blank presents here compatible with Hindu Dharma?

V. **Questioning Race and Gender Roles in Hinduism, and Cultural Appropriation**

“Growing up I had a rather ambivalent relationship toward the *Ramayana* and the prescriptions it offered for idealized female behavior... It was with some reluctance, then, that I was forced to engage with some of the *Ramayana*'s complexities at the insistence of my five-year-old daughter who had been introduced to the online version of *Sita Sings the Blues* by a family friend.... She began asking questions such as, “Why was Ram mean to Sita when they came back from the forest?” and “Why didn't he think she was pure?” Confronted with my daughter's questions, I began paying closer attention to Paley's film and grew to appreciate the critical insights it offered into several of the *Ramayana*'s central themes.” Sharmila Lodhia, “Deconstructing Sita's Blues: Questions of Mis/representation and Feminist Critique in Paley's *Ramayana*”

10/25 The Role of Race in the *Ramayana* and in Hindu Comic Books

(*Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* chapter 8: Race; chapter 10: pp. 263-270; ER#18: The Dark Side of the Comics that Redefined Hinduism) Clip from *Of Gods and Men* (2015) **RC#10 due**

**Discussion topics:** Blank writes: “India is more of a conglomeration than a country, a hodgepodge of hundreds of cultures, languages, and peoples held together only by an idea. I'm not sure just what that idea is.” What are some values and practices that bind Indians together to form “Hinduism” and “Indian-ness?” What racial stereotypes are present in the *Ramayana* and in the Hindu comic books described in ER#18?

10/27 Duty vs. Desire: Sita as the Ideal Hindu Wife

(*Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God* chapters 11-12: Love, Endings; ER#19: Yes to Sita, No to Ram)

**Essay topic #3b:** Blank writes: “To follow the path of Sita is to live vicariously through one's mate. The highest piety of a woman (such a view holds) is to serve her husband. .... A man gains virtue by action, a woman by helping her man to act.” *What ideals does Sita stand for? How are Blank's comments undermined by the testimony of both Indian women and men in ER#19 and by the *Ramayana*'s conclusion? How might Sita's story serve as a source of inspiration for women who seek independence rather than servile submission to their husbands?*



11/1 Sita's Story Retold in a Melancholy Mode as Feminist Critique

(ER#20: Deconstructing Sita's Blues) **RC#11 due** Film: *Sita Sings the Blues* (Nina Paley, 2008)

**Discussion topics:** After reading ER#20 and viewing the film, do you feel sympathy for its critics or sympathy for those Hindus who celebrate it as a “wonderful way to keep Hindu mythology alive?” Did you feel discomfort with any scenes that “desecrated” this story, or that “tainted” the image of Rama (as American Hindus Against Defamation have claimed)? Does the charge that Nina Paley engaged in “cultural appropriation” ring true to you?

11/3 What Happens When God Appears as a Woman? Is the Hindu Goddess a Feminist?

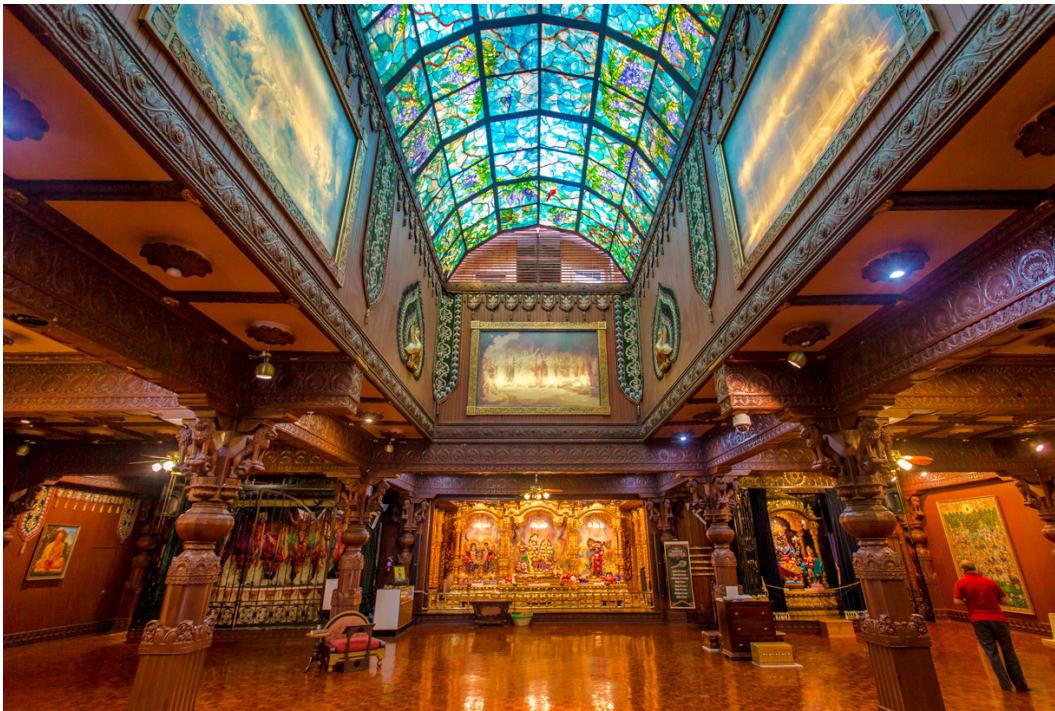
(ER#21-22: Anandamayi Ma: God Came as a Woman; Is the Hindu Goddess a Good Resource?)

**Discussion topics:** How did Hallstrom (ER#21) learn to question and transcend the categories of “woman” and “saint” in her research on Anandamayi Ma, who devotees consider to be God the Mother? Why is it so difficult to import goddess worship from another culture? Why is it important not to overlook the women in India for whom the goddess (Devi) is a living reality?



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- 11/8 **No class.** Don't forget to vote!
- 11/10 Tantric Hinduism: Ferocious Goddesses and Women Empowered as Spirit Mediums and Priests (ER#23: *The Lady Twilight*) **RC#12 due** Clips from film: *The Poojari's Daughter* (2010)  
**Discussion topics:** How does the Tantric Hinduism described in ER#23 invert and subvert traditional Hindu social and religious norms? Why is female divine power (*shakti*) connected both with death and violence, but also protection, power, and devotion (*bhakti*)? What parallels can you detect between the life of renunciation and family life in the story of Manisha Ma Bhairavi (in ER#23) and the story of the female ascetic priestess and healer, Rajathiammal, featured in *The Poojari's Daughter*?
- VI. Hinduism and Hindus in the US**  
“Europe discovers. India beckons. Isn't that so? India sits atop her lily pad through centuries, lost in contemplation of the horizon. And, from time to time, India is discovered.”—Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation*. “India.” Quoted in Reetika Vazirani, “The Art of Breathing”  
“So many of us look to the wisdom of the east to solve our problems in the west.” Vikram Gandhi, *Kumar*
- 11/15 Worship of the Goddess Kali in India and in the New Age West (ER#24-25: *New Age Hinduism; A Garland of Talking Heads for the Goddess*) **RC#13 due**  
**Discussion topics:** When considering who can speak with authority about Hinduism, why is “authenticity” so problematic? Do you sympathize with the South Asian students who argue that New Age women who invoke Kali engage in a form of cultural appropriation? Within the Indian social and religious context, does Kali serve as a goddess for oppressed women or as a goddess of male fears and anxieties? Does the desire for Kali to inspire a “heterosexually coded male mysticism” (ER#25) seem plausible or not?
- 11/17 Vivekananda Introduces Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (ER#26: *Swami Vivekananda's Speeches at the World Parliament of Religions*) **Unessay due!**  
**Discussion topics:** Is belief that all religions point to the same God a necessary condition for religious harmony? Or should religious folks learn to live in harmony in spite of disagreements? What is the proper relationship of the One and the Many for Vivekananda? How hierarchical is his view of religion?



*New Vrindaban Hare Krishna Temple in West Virginia (ER#28)*

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- 11/22 Hindu Reformers in America and Sacred Sites in the States  
(ER#27-28: Hinduism in America; The Accidental Pilgrim)  
**Discussion topics:** Westernization has had a profound impact on how Hindus have transformed and reformed their religion. Do you think Western influence has been primarily positive or negative? Does the aesthetic appeal of New Vrindaban account for how “magical” and “numinous” it felt to Fuller? Does the “Disneyesque” quality of the site help you to grasp its sacred power? Does its *simulacra* quality make the foreign more familiar or does the site’s “exotic otherness” have some romantic appeal?
- 11/24 **Thanksgiving Break!**



**Kumaré Guiding a Meditation on the Visualization of Blue Light**

- 11/29 Branding Yoga and Telling the Story of Guru Kumaré  
(ER#29: Branding Yoga; watch Vikram Gandhi’s TED talk “Become a Story Now”) **RC#14 due**  
Watch in class *Kumaré: The True Story of a False Prophet* (2012), part I  
**Discussion topics:** How does the type of yoga introduced by Vikram Gandhi’s alter-ego, Kumaré, both conform to and differ from the yoga “branding” described in ER#29? Does Gandhi “make up” a new religion or does he draw upon symbols, practices, and ideas about “illusion” that are recognizably Hindu? How does the film problematize any claim about what “authentic” yoga is?
- 12/1 Yoga, Exoticism, and Race in America  
(ER#30: The Art of Breathing) **RC#15 due**  
Watch in class *Kumaré: The True Story of a False Prophet* (2012), part II  
**Discussion topics:** Vazirani (in ER#30) describes her “outsider” status as an awkward Hindu girl growing up brown in the US in the 1970s. Does her critique of American culture ring true to you, or does she perpetuate stereotypes about American culture? What stereotypes do Americans associate with India? Does Vazirani’s critique of “power yoga” resonate with Vikram Gandhi’s critique of the yoga industry?
- 12/8 **Thursday December 8 Final Exam Online at 10:30 am-12:00 noon**





**List of Sources for Articles and Book Chapters on OAKS**

1. Kim Knott, "The Scholar and the Devotee" in *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 1-9.
2. John Hawley and Vasudha Narayan, "The Term 'Hinduism'" from their Introduction to *The Life of Hinduism* ed. by Hawley and Narayanan. UC Press, 2006, pp. 10-15.
3. David Kinsley, "Introduction: Varanasi" from *Hinduism: A Cultural Perspective*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993, pp. 2-10.
- 4a. John Godfrey Saxe, "The Blind Men and the Elephant;" Ramakrishna's retelling is from *The Gospel of Ramakrishna* translated by Swami Abhedananda. New York: Vedanta Society, 1907, pp. 26-29). Swami Vivekenanda's retelling is from *Minneapolis Journal* Monday, 27 November, 1893.
- 4b. Shashi Tharoor, "Author's Note" and "My Hinduism" from *Why I Am a Hindu*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2018, pp. xi-xiv, 2-31.
5. Ariel Glucklich, "Sacred Knowledge and Indian Origins" from *The Strides of Vishnu: Hindu Culture in Historical Perspective*. Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 25-42.
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7. Thomas J. Hopkins, "The Creative Power of the Sacrifice" in *The Hindu Religious Tradition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1971, pp. 17-35.
8. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "Creation" from *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*. New York: Penguin Books, 1981, pp. 22-33.
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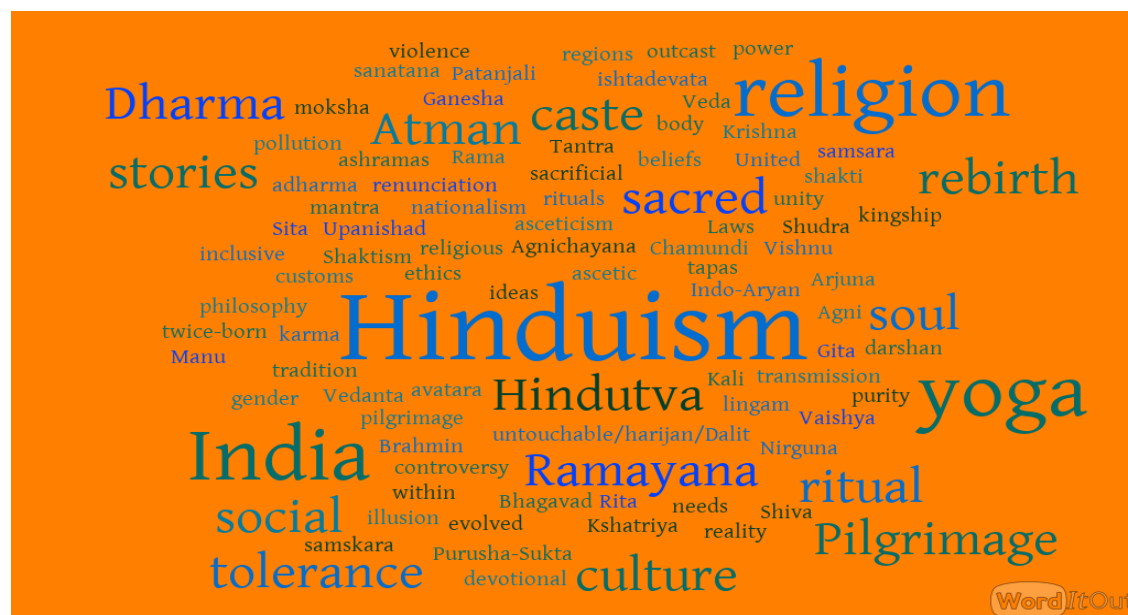
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12. Wendy Doniger, "Obligation, Liberation, and Devotion in the *Bhagavad Gita*" in *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Hinduism*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 2015, pp. 166-185.
13. Diana Eck, "Seeing the Sacred" from *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 3-31.
14. William Dalrymple, "The Maker of Idols" from *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2010, pp. 171-198.
15. Stephen P. Huyler, "The Experience: Approaching God" in *The Life of Hinduism* ed. by John Hawley and Vasudha Narayanan. UC Press, 2006, pp. 33-41.
16. John Stratton Hawley, "Militant Hinduism: Ayodhya and the Momentum of Hindu Nationalism" in *The Life of Hinduism* ed. by Hawley and Narayanan, pp. 257-265.
17. Sudhir Kakar, "The Inner Experience of Caste" from *The Indians: Portrait of a People* by Sudhir and Katharina Kakar. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007, pp. 25-40.
18. Shaan Amin, "The Dark Side of Comics That Redefined Hinduism" in *The Atlantic* (December 30, 2017).
19. Madhu Kishwar, "Yes to Sita, No to Ram: The Continuing Hold of Sita on Popular Imagination in India," from *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition*, ed. by Paula Richman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 285-308.
20. Sharmila Lodhia, "Deconstructing Sita's Blues: Questions of Misrepresentation, Cultural Property, and Feminist Critique in Nina Paley's *Ramayana*" in *Feminist Studies* 41.2 (2015), pp. 371-407.
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26. Swami Vivekananda, "Speeches at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893" from <https://belurmath.org/swami-vivekananda-speeches-at-the-parliament-of-religions-chicago-1893>
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29. Andrea R. Jain, "Branding Yoga" in *Approaching Religion* vol. 2.2 (December 2012), pp. 3-17.
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### Developing "Religious Literacy" about Hinduism

The study of an Asian religion like Hinduism is a lot like studying a foreign language: gaining "religious literacy" about Hinduism occurs after acquiring a new vocabulary as well as mastering the "grammar" of that religion (or the seven interrelated dimensions of the Hindu religion).

On the next page is a list of terms that you need to know in order to do well on the Midterm & Final. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments and write down their meanings.



### Terms used in the academic study of religion/Hinduism

Insider vs. outsider, Seven dimensions of religion, Orientalism, empathy, bracketing  
Metaphors for Hinduism: sponge, banyan tree, incurable collector, kaleidoscope; syncretism  
Orthodoxy vs. Orthopraxy, hierarchy, microcosm/macrocosm, homology, rites of passage  
Cultural relativism, mind-body dualism, déjà vu, exegesis  
Monism, “myth of monotheism,” henotheism, pantheism, polytheism, polycentric pluralism  
Visual hermeneutic, manageable model, iconography, idolatry, anthropomorphic, “gape” vs. “gaze”  
Sudhir Kakar, dirt and discrimination, psychological roots of caste, projection onto Other  
Nina Paley, patriarchal/patrilineal/patrilocal, cultural appropriation  
Sublimation, homoeroticism, psychological transference, cultural commodity  
Spiritual placebo, postural vs. soteriological yoga, capitalism & branding yoga, power yoga

### Hindu and Hinduism Terms

Indus Valley Civilization, Hindu/Hindusthan/Hinduism/Hindutva, Sanskrit, *sanatana dharma*  
Parable of elephant, Ramakrishna, Vivekenanda, composite elephant, Ganesha, *ishtadevata*  
Indo-Aryan controversy, *Rig Veda*, ritual as technology, Three-fold World, Rita, Varuna  
Agni, *Agnicayana*, Purusha/Prajapati, *bandhu*, sympathetic magic, order vs. chaos, *tapas*  
*Purusha-Sukta*, Creation Hymn, 4 Varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra; Dharma, Brahman  
*Upanishad*, guru, karma, rebirth/transmigration, samsara, Atman = Brahman, moksha, yoga, asceticism  
Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, *citta vritti nirodhah*, Samkhya, Purusha vs. Prakriti, embodied consciousness  
Asceticism, *ahimsa*, Shiva, *lingam*, auspicious vs. transgressive sacrality, the “logic of monism”  
*Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna, Krishna, *avatara*, Paths of Knowledge/Action/Devotion, Tulsi Gabbard  
Nirguna vs. saguna, *bhakti*, *darshan*, puja vs. asceticism and tortoise metaphor, *shakti*, *prasad*, *arati*  
*Laws of Manu*, Four *ashramas*, twice-born, outcast: untouchable/harijan/Dalit, purity vs. pollution, diet  
*Ramayana*, Ayodhya, Babri Masjid vs. Ram Mandir, BJP, devotion to Mother India, Hanuman  
*Homo hierarchicus*, varna, *jati*, twice-born, Untouchables/Dalits, arranged vs. love marriages  
T.V. serialization of *Ramayana*, *Amar Chitra Katha*, Vanars as monkeys, Dravidian  
Ravana as flawed hero, Sita’s *agnipariksha*, *Sita Sings the Blues*, Lava & Kusha, Mother Earth  
Anandamayi Ma, Mahadevi, *avatara*, *bhakti*, divine lila, *shakti*, *nirguna* vs. *saguna Brahman*  
Ramakrishna, Kali & Shiva, right-handed vs. left-handed Tantra, transgressive sacrality, guru  
Brahmo Samaj, Vivekenanda, scientific Hinduism, Vedanta, World Parliament of Religion  
Transnational Hinduism, Rajneesh, Transcendental Meditation, tirtha, Hare Krishna/ISKCON

## RELS 245.01 The Hindu Tradition (Fall 2022)

### About Me...

I grew up in beautiful Santa Barbara California, went to Reed College in Portland Oregon ,where I majored in religion, earned a MA degree in religious studies at UC Santa Barbara, before I moved to Ann Arbor Michigan to pursue degrees in Buddhist Studies (I have a PhD in B.S.!). Since graduating from Reed College, I have spent many years living in monasteries and traveling throughout India, especially in the Himalayan region of North India.

I joined the Department of Religious Studies at CofC in 1999, where I was hired to teach courses in Asian religions (Religion and Society in India and Tibet, Buddhist Tradition, Religions of China and Japan, Sacred Texts of the East, Advanced Topics in Tibetan Buddhism). I have also led study abroad trips to the Indian Himalayas, where I have taught courses on the impact of globalization and spiritual tourism on Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. Now I am excited about the opportunity to teach the Hindu Tradition for only the second time.

When not at work, I enjoy watching sports (especially CofC basketball games—go Cougs!), canoeing, biking, and hiking in the mountains, and going on long road trips across the US and Canada.

I believe learning about Asian religions should be “fun” and I have chosen reading material and films that I think you will find illuminating. I expect students to come prepared and make meaningful contributions to our class discussions, whether those take place in class or on Zoom. If you are experiencing challenges that make it difficult for you to do so, I encourage you to meet with me privately so that we can work together to develop a solution.



**Introducing CofC Students to the Buddhist Wheel of Life in Ladakh, North India 2016**