


RELS 118.01 Modern History of Asian Religions: Hinduism in India & Buddhism in Tibet
ECTR 219 @ 3:25-4:40 pm on Monday/Wednesday **Fall 2023**

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the modern history of two Asian religions, Hinduism & Buddhism, and how they have shaped and are shaped by social, political, and economic factors in their global context. We will first survey forms of social organization (the caste system, the roles of women, monastic life, the institution of the Dalai Lama), and the practices and beliefs of Hindus & Buddhists, including their origin myths, ethical norms, and quest for liberation. Then we will focus on how British and Chinese colonialism shaped Indian Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism and examine the religious and political reforms of Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama, two revolutionary leaders of the last century. The non-violent ideals of Gandhi and the Dalai Lama present us with an alternative to our modern consumer-oriented technological culture, where people seek what they are programmed to seek. This course will help you become more critical of how the news and other social media represent other religions and their role in different societies, rather than be passive consumers of social media. You will learn to really “*Think Different*,” as the Apple ™ advertising campaign once put it (see p. 9 below).

We will read primary sources that include the sacred texts of Hindu and Buddhist traditions and excerpts from the autobiographies of Gandhi and the Dalai Lama; we will also read secondary sources that set the historical stage and introduce us to theoretical tools for analyzing primary sources. One of the fun things in this course is that we get to do some “traveling” to India and Tibet through documentary and feature films. You should consider these films as “texts,” for their content will be covered on exams.

Course Goals

- to gain religious literacy in the Asian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism.
- to understand the consequences of colonialism and the social hierarchies that are justified by religion and discover creative methods of non-violent resistance to social discrimination.
- to improve ability to write and think analytically and comparatively about broad themes and historical moments, as well as specific texts and historical figures.
- to make what is strange seem familiar and what is familiar seem strange.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course *may satisfy* * the **Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) Global Requirement** with two SLO:

- 1) *Students will identify and analyze how social hierarchies manifest in relation to legacies of colonialism in historical and current global contexts.*
- 2) *Students will identify and evaluate legal, political, economic, institutional, and/or personal solutions or forms of resistance to racial inequities and discrimination.*

The first REI SLO will be assessed on the “**Letter Home assignment**” (5% of grade), and the second SLO will be assessed on the **2nd paper** (10% of grade) that identifies and evaluates the methods of non-violent resistance to the caste system that we’ve studied. [* Petition needed for REI credit in fall 2023]

This course also satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes in History**:

- 1) *Students demonstrate knowledge of history and awareness of the historical experience.*
- 2) *Students situate primary historical records in their context and use sources to construct historical arguments.*

These two History SLO will be assessed on the **3rd paper**, a four- to five-page essay that examines historical events in the Dalai Lama’s life that are presented differently in his autobiography, in historical sources, and in the film *Kundun* (15% of grade)

There are **2 Required Texts** available at the CofC Barnes & Noble Bookstore:

- 1) M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* Dover Ed. 1983.
- 2) Tenzin Gyatso, *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama*, Harper Publications, 1990.

There are also required **E-Readings** online **ER#1-28**: historical sources, selections from scriptures, and secondary scholarship in pdf available on [OAKS](#) under **RELS 118**, which registered students can access after they login to [MyPortal](#). **Please print out each article** and bring it to class in a binder. Computers, tablets, or other technology are **not allowed** for use in class unless authorized.

Course Requirements and Resources

There is no course prerequisite for this class, or any knowledge presumed about Asian religions, but it does require the desire to read challenging reading material and to engage in conversation about these readings. The following points identify these expectations more explicitly.

- **Completion of required reading assignments prior to lecture**

It is strongly recommended that you read the **entire** assignment **before** we discuss the topic in class.

This will help you understand the lectures and participate actively in class discussion, and you can then go back and study specific readings in more detail and review your class notes before a quiz or exam.

When there is an assignment from an E-Reading on OAKS you should **bring it to class with you**.

- **Participation in class discussions and regular attendance (10%)**

Whatever you get out of this course is directly related to how much you put into it. Asking questions, raising concerns and offering your own ideas during class discussions are a valuable part of this course.

Please come to class with ideas and questions that can help our class engage in meaningful discussion.

Attendance records will be kept for each class. There will be **3** allowed absences; **4** or more absences will negatively affect your grade. After **8 absences**, you 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.

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

There will be weekly homework assignments (**15%**). Every class marked **RC# due**, you will bring to class a thoughtful reflection related to the assigned reading for that class written on a 3x5 or 5x7 card.

Your reflections should raise issues of interpretation, make connections to earlier readings, or express concerns arising from the reading that are important to you. You don't need to summarize the reading, but

instead you should engage it critically. Grades for RC are: **+ = 100; √+ = 90; √ = 80; - = 70**

- **Three Papers (30%)**

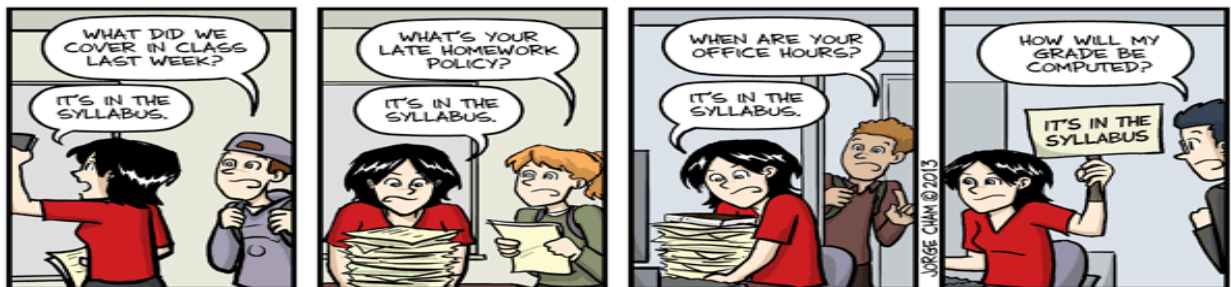
The three papers will be: 1) a "Letter Home" that analyzes and explains the Hindu caste system to a family member, worth **5%** due on **9/13**; 2) a second paper that identifies and evaluates legal, political, economic, institutional, and personal solutions to casteism, worth **10%** due on **10/13**; and 3) a 4-5 page historical analysis of events in the Dalai Lama's life that compares how they are represented differently in autobiography and the epic biographical film *Kundun* (**15%** due on **11/19**). These essays will require you to analyze the texts we've read closely, formulate an argument, and express it concisely. The essays are due in class on the day when we will discuss the assigned topic, so **late essays are not accepted**.

- **Two Quizzes (5% each, 10%), a Midterm Exam on 10/11 (15%) and Final Exam on 12/6 (20%)**

Quizzes and exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and identification and explanation of scriptural passages. Review sheets will be provided before each quiz or exam. If you miss an exam and provide a documented excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they are harder than the original tests.

An unexcused missed exam counts as a **0**.

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



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.
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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 virtual spaces, 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, see the Center for Disability Services at <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu> or 843.953.1431

- **Continuity of Learning—Dealing with Hurricanes and Pandemics**

This course is a **100% in-person class**. Our class will meet twice a week in **ECTR 219**. Attendance is required, and roll will be taken each day. However, it is quite possible that our class will be interrupted by the inclement weather and then we will pivot to online course delivery. In fact, it is very likely that hurricanes will force us to cancel and/or make up one or more class days this semester. Please purchase your books ASAP, so you have them. If classes are canceled and rescheduled, pay close attention to your CofC email. If classes are suspended due to extreme weather, I will announce on OAKS and by your CofC email a detailed plan for a change of modality to ensure continuity of learning.

- **Code of Conduct—the renunciation of technology as an “experiment in truth”**

This class will be modelled on an ashram designed by Gandhi, a radical reformer of education who was skeptical about technology, even before texts were consumed on computers, tablets, or cell phones. So, following Gandhi’s lead and as an “Experiment in Truth,” leave your computers, tablets, and cell phones at home and bring the assigned reading printed on pages that you can annotate in class with pen or pencil. You should also bring a notebook to class in which you can take notes on the lectures but also jot down your thoughts and responses to our class discussion. You are also encouraged to reduce your use of social media as part of this “experiment in Truth.”

How should we behave in class?

Be patient and forgiving. Go easy on each other. We all make mistakes. We’re all learning together.

Be professional & help each other. If a peer raises a question and you know the answer, help them!

Be kind. Treat each other with the full respect and dignity each of you deserve.

Be ethical. Racist, sexist, homophobic, or any language or behavior that dehumanizes or degrades others will not be tolerated. Period.

Cite your sources. When you are building off or borrowing from others’ ideas, give them the credit they deserve, whether it’s from a classmate or an assigned reading.

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy and Academic Integrity**

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the University’s academic regulations. The use of Automated Writing Tools, including ChatGPT and similar artificial intelligence tools (GAI), is strictly prohibited in this course and will be considered plagiarism and a violation of Academic Integrity as outlined in the CofC Honor Code. Where I detect possible use of such tools, I will contact you and arrange to meet so you can explain your research and writing process behind the work. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are also violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a **XF 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. Learn more about the **Honor Code & Code of Conduct** here: <https://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/policies-and-procedures/honor-code-and-code-of-conduct.php>

Lecture Topics and Reading Schedule

The following abbreviations will be used in listing the required reading: selections from the electronic readings (ER) on OAKS are numbered sequentially. For a complete list of the sources on OAKS for the assigned electronic readings (ER#1-28), see below p. 7.

Introduction: What is “Religion?” How do we study it in a secular setting?

- 8/23 Organization of this Course and Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion
(Review this syllabus)
- 8/28 Introducing Religion: Who are the Nacirema?
(ER#1-2: Thinking about Being a Student of Religion; Body Rituals of the Nacirema) **RC#1 due**
- 8/30 The Social Construction of Reality & the Role of Religion: *The Truman Show* as Myth
(ER#3-4: Preface, How Society Works: Classification; The Meaning of *The Truman Show*)
Clips from the film *The Truman Show* (1998) **RC#2 due**

The Hindu Social World: Caste and Gender Hierarchies

- 9/4 The Order of the Hindu Universe: Dharma and Caste
(ER#5-7: Introduction: Varanasi; How Religion Works: Legitimation; Hindu Scripture Excerpts
on Creation of Caste System, Four Castes, Stages of Life for a Twice-Born Man)
- 9/6 Caste as Hierarchical Institution and Experience: Purity & Pollution
(ER#8: Hierarchical Man & The Inner Experience of Caste) **RC#3 Due**
- 9/11 The Position of Hindu Women in a Patriarchal Society: The Lives of Wives and Widows
(ER#9-10: Indian Women: Traditional and Modern; *Laws of Manu* on the Life of Women)
RC#4 due Documentary *Saheri’s Choice*
- 9/13 The Parallels Between Caste in India and Race in America
(ER#11: An American Untouchable)
Letter Home assignment due

Hindus Under British Colonial Rule and Hindu Reformers

- 9/18 How did British Relationships with Hindus Change During the Colonial Period?
(ER#12: Caste, Class, and Conversion under the British Raj)
- 9/20 The Controversies over Suttee and Hindu Reformers
(ER#13: Suttee and Reform in the Twilight of the British Raj) **RC#5 due**
- 9/25 Gandhi’s First “Experiments with Truth”
(Gandhi’s *Autobiography*, pp. vii-27; 453-4) **In-class Quiz**
- 9/27 Gandhi’s Reformed Hinduism: Chastity, Caste Reform, and Non-Violence
(Gandhi’s *Autobiography*, pp. 59-61; 179-185; 235-245; 295-303; 354-358) **RC#6 due**
Documentary: *Gandhi, Pilgrim of Peace*
- 10/2 Gandhi’s Birthday! (for reading assignment, see next page)

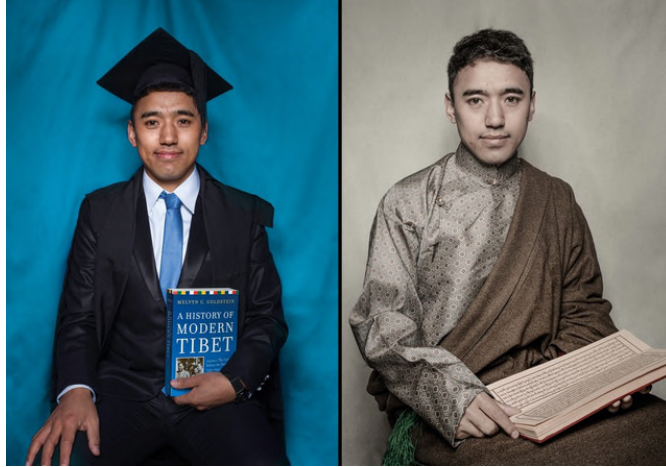


Gandhi and His Spinning Wheel photo by Margaret Bourke-White

- 10/2 Gandhi's Principles of Non-Violent Resistance and Universal Welfare
(ER #14: M.K. Gandhi: India's 'Great Soul')
Clips from *Gandhi* (1982, Ben Kingsley as Gandhi)
- 10/4 Ambedkar's Reforms for Dalits and Conversion to Buddhism
(ER#15-16: Caste Abolition Ancestors: Ambedkar; Ambedkar's Speech at Mahad) **RC#7 due**
- 10/9 A Dalit American Activist Meditates on Surviving the Trauma of Caste and Healing
(ER#17: Excerpts from *The Trauma of Caste*) **2nd paper due in class**
- 10/11 **Midterm Exam in class**
(Study Midterm Review Sheet)
- 10/16 **Fall Break!**
- Buddhist Beginnings in India: Life and Teachings of the Buddha**
- 10/18 The Story of the Buddha: Birth to Enlightenment
(ER#18: The Early Life of the Buddha) **RC#8 due**
- 10/23 The Mission of the Buddha: Teachings and the Monastic Community
(ER#19: Karma & Rebirth; Ethics) **RC#9 due**
- Buddhism Comes to Tibet: Tibetan Innovations of the Dalai Lama and Oracle Institution**
- 10/25 Buddhist Cosmology and the Myth of Tibet's Founding Father
(ER#20-21: New Age Orientalism; Tibet: Introduction) **RC#10 due**
- 10/30 Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism and the Search for a Spiritual Monarch
(ER#22: The First Step...Coming Back)
Documentary: *The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche*
- 11/1 The Origins and History of the Dalai Lama Institution
(ER #23: Tibet's Buddhist Background...the Fourteen Dalai Lamas) **RC#11 due**

- 11/6 The Role of Oracles in Tibetan Religion and Politics
(Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*, pp. 209-220) **Quiz on Indian and Tibetan Buddhism**

Modern Tibetan History, the Chinese Occupation, and Tibetan Life in Exile



Double portrait of Darig Thogmay by Nyema Droma (2018)
Darig Thogmay is a student of Tibetan history at Oxford University

- 11/8 Tibetan Buddhist Reformers and Critics of Imperialism: The 13th Dalai Lama and Gendun Chopel
(ER#24-25: 13th Dalai Lama's Last Testament; Gendun Chopel on British Imperialism) **RC#12**
RELS REELS film: *Samsara* in ECTR 116 @ 7:00pm
- 11/13 Who is the Fourteenth Dalai Lama? How was He Discovered and Enthroned?
(*Freedom in Exile*, pp. xiii-48)
- 11/15 The Chinese Invasion and Occupation of Tibet
(*Freedom in Exile*, pp. 49-81) **RC#13 due**
Film clips: *Kundun* (dir. by Martin Scorsese, 1997)
- 11/16 Guest Lecture: "How Japanese Buddhists Promised—and Failed—to Make Bad Kids Good" by
Dr. Jolyon Thomas, 4:00-5:30 pm location TBA
- 11/20 The Exodus
(*Freedom in Exile*, pp. 123-143) Film clips: *Kundun* **Paper #3 due in class**
- 11/22 **Skip School: Give Thanks, Eat Turkey**
- 11/27 The Dalai Lama's Vision of a Future Tibet
(*Freedom in Exile*, pp. 194-208; ER#26: Nobel Prize Speech) film: *Compassion in Exile*
- 11/29 Tibetan Buddhists on Fire: Self-Immolation as Political Protest in China's Tibet
(ER#27: Aflame: A Wave of Self-Immolations Sweep Tibet) **RC#14 due**
- 12/4 Virtual Tibet and the Chinese Manipulation of the Dalai Lama's Image on Social Media
(ER#20, #28: New Age Orientalism, 'Suck My Tongue' Controversy and watch YouTube clips:
"Stop Sensationalizing the Dalai Lama's Innocent Interactions") **RC#15**
Complete course evaluation
- 12/6 **Final Exam from 3:30-5:30 pm in ECTR 219**

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RELS 118 OAKS Articles: A Bibliography of Sources

Use this information when you cite these sources in any of your **essays** due in class.

1. Gary E. Kessler, "Thinking about Being a Student of Religion" from *Studying Religion*, 3rd edition. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008, pp. 1-13.
2. Horace Miner, "Body Rituals Among the Nacirema," in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, ed. by Russell McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 1999), pp. 23-27
3. Craig Martin, "Preface" and "How Society Works: Classification" from his *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. xi-xiii; 19-44.
4. Ken Sanes, "The Meaning of *The Truman Show*" 6 pp. Used with the author's permission from <http://www.transparencynow.com/truman.htm>
5. David R. Kinsley, "Introduction: Varanasi" in *Hinduism: A Cultural Perspective* 2nd Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993, pp. 2-10.
6. Craig Martin, "How Religion Works: Legitimation" from his *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 93-116.
7. "The Creation of the Caste System, The Four Castes, Stages of Life for a Twice-Born Man and The Life of Woman" from *Anthology of World Scriptures*, ed. by Robert E. Van Voorst, 3rd Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000, pp. 36-38, 40-44.
8. Sudhir Kakar and Katharina Kakar, "The Hierarchical Man" and "The Inner Experience of Caste" from *The Indians: Portrait of a People*. Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2009, pp. 7-40.
9. Sudhir Kakar and Katharina Kakar, "Indian Women: Traditional and Modern" from *The Indians: Portrait of a People*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2009, pp. 41-70.
10. *Laws of Manu* excerpt on "The Life of Women," from *Anthology of World Scriptures*, ed. by Robert E. Van Voorst, 3rd Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000, pp. 42-43.
11. Isabel Wilkerson, "An American Untouchable" and "Through the Fog of Delhi to the Parallels in India and America" in her *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House, 2020, pp. 21-35; 73-77.
12. Wendy Doniger, "Caste, Class, and Conversion Under the British Raj" in *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009, pp. 574-604.
13. Wendy Doniger, "Suttee and Reform in the Twilight of the Raj" in *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009, pp. 610-635.
14. Stephen Hay, "M. K. Gandhi: India's 'Great Soul,'" *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 2nd ed., Vol. 2. New York: Columbia U. P., 1988, pp. 247-274.
15. Thenmozhi Soundararajan, "Caste Abolition Ancestors: Ambedkar" in *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2022, pp. 167-170.
16. "Dr. Ambedkar's Speech at Mahad" translated by Rameschandra Sirkar in Wendy Doniger's *The Norton Anthology of World Religions—Hinduism*. New York: Norton & Co, 2015, pp. 597-605.
17. Thenmozhi Soundararajan, excerpts from *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2022, pp. 11-15; 129-153.
18. Zeff Bjerken, "The Early Life of the Buddha" based on various biographies of the Buddha, pp. 1-8.
19. Damien Keown, "Karma and Rebirth" and "Ethics" from his *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 32-47; 112-127.
20. Donald S. Lopez, "New Age Orientalism: The Case of Tibet" in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* Vol. III no. 3, Spring 1994, pp. 37-43.
21. Thupten Jigme Norbu and Colin Turnbull, "Introduction" and "The Legend of the Beginning" from *Tibet*, New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 7-11; 19-32.
22. Vicki Mackenzie, "The First Step" and "Coming Back" from *Reborn in the West: The Reincarnation Masters*. New York: Marlowe and Company, 1996, pp. 1-10; 88-102.
23. Glenn Mullin, "Tibet's Buddhist Background" in *Mystical Verses of a Mad Dalai Lama*, pp. 3-19.
24. "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama's *Last Testament*" in *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* ed. by Kurtis Schaeffer, Matthew Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, pp. 740-745.
25. Donald S. Lopez, "Gendün Chöpel on British Colonialism" in *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, pp.751-755.
26. Dalai Lama, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech." Oslo: University Aula, December 10, 1989, available online.
27. Jeffrey Bartholet, "Aflame: A Wave of Self-Immolations Sweep Tibet" in *The New Yorker*, published in the July 8, July 15 edition, 2013. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/08/aflame>
28. Geoffrey Goble, "The Dalai Lama's 'Suck My Tongue' Controversy Reveals Centuries-Old Christian Distortion of Tibetan Buddhism" in *Religion Dispatches*, May 31, 2023.

Important Terms for the Study of Religion in Indian & Tibetan Society

The study of a modern Asian religion like Hinduism or Buddhism is a lot like studying a foreign language: gaining “religious literacy” occurs after acquiring a new vocabulary. Below is a provisional list of terms that you need to know to do well on quizzes & exams. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments and write down their definitions and meanings. You are allowed to consult handwritten notes on quizzes and exams. This list is provisional and subject to change.

Hinduism

Hindu/Hinduism, Aryan, *Vedas*, Dharma, caste (*varna* and *jati*), Four Classes, twice-born *Upanishad*, samsara, karma, reincarnation, maya, yoga, Brahman, atman, guru, moksha *Homo hierarchicus*, joint vs. nuclear family, filial devotion, nepotism, Dalit/Untouchable Purity vs. dirty, daughter discrimination, misogyny in *Laws of Manu*, arranged vs. love marriages *Kamasutra*, *jodi*, sati, funeral pyre, Four Stages of Life, Brahmacharya, sannyasin Samskara, mantra, sacrificial fire, initiation, sacred thread, shraddha rite, acharya, food taboos Gandhi, Kasturbha, karmayogin, purdah, Theosophy, Mahatma, fasting satyagraha, vows, ashram, ahimsa, spinning wheel, Harijan, home rule

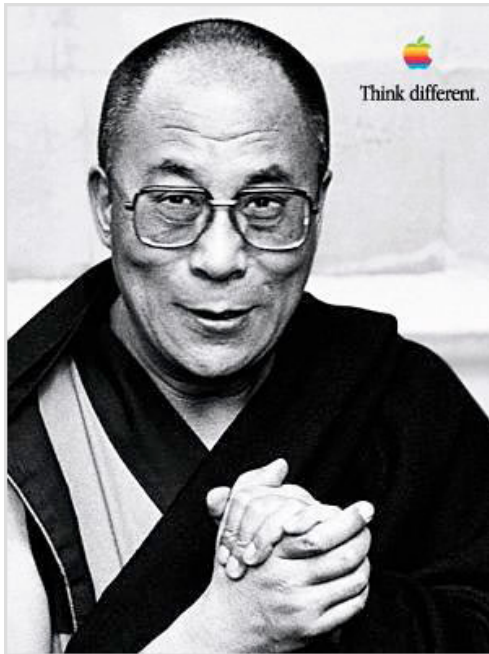
Buddhism in India and Tibet

Shakyamuni, Siddhartha, Gotama, Buddha, bodhisattva, Bodh Gaya, shramana, *Buddhacarita* Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), Middle Way, Three Marks of Existence No-self (anatman), Vinaya, Four Noble Truths, Field of Merit, ordination, hair cutting ceremony Six Rebirth Realms, hell/purgatory, Wheel of Life, Chenrezi, bodhisattva, monkey & ogress Tulku, Rinpoche, Lama, reincarnation vs rebirth, Dharamsala Dalai Lama, “god-king,” Kundun, Potala, Lhasa, the “Great Fifth,” long-life prayer, Regent Nechung oracle, spirit medium, Dorje Drakden, trance state, prophecy Norbulingka, enthronement ceremony, 17 Point Agreement, 5 Point Peace Plan Nobel Prize Acceptance speech, Zone of Ahimsa, *Compassion in Exile*

Analytic terms used in the Academic Study of Religion

Theology, Insider’s vs. Outsider’s perspectives on religion, empathy, bracketing Social construction of reality, 7 dimensions of religion, hierarchy, rite of passage, liminal state Charismatic authority, hagiography, cosmology, asceticism, cultural assimilation, modernism Spiritual materialism, sectarianism, ecumenicism, interfaith dialogue, theocracy, Orientalism





A Poem Attributed to the 6TH Dalai Lama (1683-1706):

**“The Serpent-demon behind me is fierce.
Terrifying or not—I don’t mind!
I have made up my mind to pluck
The sweet apple hanging before me!”**

Tibetan text:

*rgyab kyi klu bdud btsan po
'jigs dang mi 'jigs mi 'dug
mdun gyi ka ra ku shu
'thogs su dgos pa byas song*

**Who or what is the “Serpent-demon?”
What might the “sweet apple” represent?
Does the Garden of Eden come to mind?
How can we avoid a Christian reading?**

**Why did Apple choose the 14th Dalai Lama for their “Think Different” advertising campaign?
What images come to mind when you see this picture of the Dalai Lama? What might the multi-colored apple icon mean? Why might some Tibetans have taken offense at this advertisement?**



**Double portrait of Tsering Thundup by the photographer Nyema Droma (2018)
Featured at an exhibit “[Performing Tibetan Identities](#)” at Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford**

How do Nyema Droma’s double portraits challenge stereotypes of Tibetans as Buddhists?

About Me...

I grew up on the west coast 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 college, I have spent many years living in Buddhist monasteries and traveling throughout India, especially in the Himalayas of North India. Over the last dozen years, I have led CofC students to Northern India to study how the religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are adapting to modernity and globalization. When not at work, I enjoy watching sports (especially CofC basketball games—go Cougs!), biking, canoeing, and hiking in the mountains, and going on long road trips in the South, in the Pacific Northwest, and in western Canada.

I joined the Department of Religious Studies at CofC in 1999, when I was hired to teach courses in Asian religions (Buddhism, Religion and Society in India and Tibet, Religions of China and Japan, Hinduism, Sacred Texts of the East, Tibetan Buddhism). But I also teach thematic courses on “Religion, Art & Culture,” “Religion and Globalization,” and “Religion and Violence.”

I believe that learning about different religions should be an intellectual adventure that engages the imagination, and I have chosen reading material and films that I hope you will find fascinating. I expect students to come prepared and make meaningful contributions to our class discussions. 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