



Religion 231

Yogis, Monks, and Mystics in India

Winter 2017

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The Central Questions

Indian yogis, monks, ascetics, and mystics pursue extraordinary paths that invert the normal aims and values of society. This course surveys the teachings on spiritual training and self-cultivation developed in India, their conceptual basis, the range of techniques used, and their philosophical development in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. What was their purpose? How are they supposed to work? For whom were they designed? What roles do yogis and ascetics play in religious life? What is their ethical status in the world? What role have women had in such pursuits, and how does gender figure in these thought systems? What do these traditions imply about the nature of the human being and the highest Good? How is divinity conceived in contrast with the merely human? The course further provides a framework for comparison with other, non-Indian religious traditions.

Requirements

Students' grades will be based on:

- (i) Participation in class, including weekly questions and comments on the readings (20%);
- (ii) a midterm essay in response to a prompt (20%);
- (iii) final in-class test (covering week 6–12) (20%);
- (iv) a circa-3500-word research paper.

Books for Purchase

Johannes Bronkhorst, *Two Traditions of Meditation*

Patrick Olivelle, trans., *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads*

Barbara Stoler Miller, trans., *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*

Padmanabh Jaini, *Gender and Salvation*

John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 2nd ed.

Schedule of Topics and Readings (tentative)

Week 1: The Search for Reality and Self in the Early Upanishads

- 1/10 Introduction: The Human Predicament and Therapies for Desire
in class: the hymn of the *muni*: *Ṛgveda* 10.136.
- 1/12 Wilhelm Halbfass, “The Therapeutic Paradigm and the Search for Identity in Indian Philosophy,” in *Tradition and Reflection* (SUNY Press, 1991); Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, pp. xxiii-lviii (see also p. xiv).

Week 2: Meditation as a Means to Self-Knowledge: Early Modes

- 1/17 Johannes Bronkhorst, *Two Traditions of Meditation*, 2nd ed. (1993), pp. 4–42.
- 1/19 Johannes Bronkhorst, *Two Traditions of Meditation*, 2nd ed. (1993), pp. 43–42.

Week 3: Buddhist Discipline: The Monk’s Code as Spiritual Training

- 1/24 Selections from the *Vinaya*, including the *Prātimokṣa*;
Buddhist mental training II (*vipaśyanā*): Conze, pp. 110–139.
- 1/26 Buddhist mental training II (*samādhi*): Conze, pp. 62–109 (selections).

Week 4: Jaina Monkhood: The Attainment of “Isolation” / Can Women Be Liberated?

- 1/31 P. Dundas, “The Formmakers” and “The Ascetic,” *The Jains* (pp. 11–39, 129–160).
- 2/2 Jaini, *Gender and Salvation*, Introduction and selections from the translations.

Week 5: Pāśupata: Salvation Through Degradation

- 2/7 D. H. H. Ingalls, “Cynics and Pāśupatas: The Seeking of Dishonor.”
- 2/9 Minoru Hara, trans., “Nakulīśa-Pāśupata-Darśanam,” a chapter of Mādhava’s “Encyclopedia of All Doctrines” (*Sarva-Darśana-Saṃgraha*).
- STATEMENT OF PAPER TOPIC & INITIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Week 6: Patañjali’s Classical Yoga

- 2/14 Patañjali’s “Rules of Yoga” (*Yoga-Sūtra*).
- 2/16 Patañjali’s “Rules of Yoga” (*Yoga-Sūtra*), continued.
FRIDAY by 5 pm: MIDTERM ESSAY DUE

Feb. 21, 23: Washington Holiday (No Classes)

Week 7: Hindu Renouncers, Classical and Modern

2/28 *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads*.

3/2 *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads* (cont'd).

Week 8: The Nath Yogis and Early Haṭha-Yoga

3/7 James Mallinson, "Yoga and Yogis" and "Dattātreya's Discourse on Yoga."

3/9 Introduction (pp. 3-53) and "Gopi Chand's Birth Story" (part of a Rajasthani folk epic), from *A Carnival of Parting*, by Ann Grodzins Gold.

Week 9: Islamic Mystics in Dialogue with Yogis

3/14 Excerpts from *Stages of the Sufi Pir*.

3/16 Shafique Virani, "Symphony of Gnosis" and "Colloquy of an Ismaili Sage and a Yogi"; Carl Ernst, "Conversations of Sufi Saints"

FIRST DRAFT OF PAPER DUE FRIDAY BY 7 pm

Week 10: Bhaktas, Sants, Sikhs: Transcending the Old Categories

3/21 Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India*, intro. and chs. 1–3.

3/23 Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India*, chs. 4–6.

Week 11: Hindu Ascetics Today

3-28 David M. Miller & D. C. Wertz, *Hindu Monastic Life*, pp. 1–17, 21–60.

3-30 Lynn Teskey Denton, "Varieties of Female Asceticism," *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*; and
J. E. Llewellyn, "The Autobiography of a Female Renouncer," ch. 31 in *Religions of India in Practice*.

Week 12: Yogis, Monks, and Mystics Spoofed in a Drama

4/4 *Matta-Vilāsa* ("The Drunks' Delights"), a satire on ascetics.

4/6 In-class test and wrap-up.

FRIDAY by 7 pm: RESEARCH PAPER DUE