

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS**  
**PHIL 3585.001**  
**SOUTH ASIAN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION**

Spring 2009  
 M W F 12:00-12:50pm  
 GAB 317

Dr. George James  
 Office: EESAT 225E  
 Hours: M W 3:00-4:00 p.m.  
 and by appointment

Scope of the Course:

The purpose of this course is to engender an informed appreciation for the principal religious and philosophical traditions of India. Our objective is not simply the acquisition of information but an encounter with these traditions. Our goal, however, is not naive enthusiasm. Popular comparisons between "Eastern" and "Western" thought have unfortunately engendered many misconceptions concerning this subject matter. We often hear that Western religion is dualistic, while Eastern religion is "holistic," or that Western philosophy is practical and materialistic while Eastern philosophy is "spiritual." The West is said to be rationalistic, while the East is "intuitive." The problem with this kind of generalization is the assumption that all Eastern traditions represent the same single and unitary "Eastern Wisdom." People often speak of "Eastern thought" and "Eastern religion" without specifying what Eastern religion or what tradition of thought they are speaking about. Part of the purpose of this course is to recognize the great variety of philosophies and religious practices among South Asian traditions.

If Western philosophy which represents a single intellectual tradition is treated in a sequence of six courses, it follows that Indian philosophy which has six distinctive traditions of philosophy (to say nothing of its many differing religious traditions) merits a much more ambitious treatment. Unfortunately our time is limited. For this reason our effort to deal with South Asian Philosophy and Religion in a single semester will be necessarily selective. Nevertheless in order to provide opportunity for an authentic encounter with the ideas and practices we will be treating, we will undertake an examination of original texts as often as possible, and supplement these with audiovisual material that will help to provide some visual experience of the traditions we will examine.

The course is divided into three parts. The first part begins with the earliest period of Indian history, known as the Indus Valley Civilization and proceeds to the period of the religion of the Vedas. In dealing with this period we will examine selected hymns of the Rig Veda, and attempt to reconstruct the religious world view to which these documents pertain. Following this we will examine some of the most impressive intellectual and religious ideas of the Upanishads. The second part of the course is concerned with the Classical period of Indian philosophy. In this part we will briefly examine the six orthodox philosophies (*darsanas*) of India, and the views of the three principal heterodox schools, including a brief look at the principal features of early Buddhism. The final part of the course will explore the principle features of Puranic Hinduism, the influence of Islam upon Indian thought, the development of medieval devotional Hinduism, and the origin of the Sikh religion. The course will conclude with an exploration of Indian philosophy in the modern period as expressed in the thought of such figures as S. Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, and most particularly Gandhi.

### Requirements:

Your coming to terms with the material of this course will require careful attention to reading assignments, thoughtful reflection upon the material, and full participation in class discussions and presentations. Because important background material *not available from your reading* will be given in classroom lectures, regular attendance is crucial to the successful completion of the course.

To receive a grade of “A” for the course you must complete a thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, clearly written research paper, and achieve an average grade of 90% on all exams for the course. Without the research paper the highest grade you can earn is a “B.”

Research papers are intended to represent a significant research effort. They will not be the sort of assignment that can be completed overnight, or over a sleepless weekend. The topic for the paper must be chosen in consultation with your instructor. If you wish to do a paper but cannot find a topic sufficiently specific for a research paper your instructor can help. All topics must be discussed with your instructor and approved by your instructor before beginning. The topic for your paper should be chosen in the first four weeks of the course. Specific dates will be specified for the completion of the various phases of the project: preliminary reading and research, completion of a tentative outline, completion of the first draft of the paper, and submission of the final draft complete with bibliography. The topic for the paper must pertain to the subject matter of the course. **Research papers must represent your own original work. Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for the paper and the course, as well as disciplinary action by the appropriate university authorities.** As time permits, some of the papers will be presented to the class as a whole.

Besides the research paper there will be a quarter-term exam, a mid-term, and a final exam. The quarter term, and the mid-term exam will cover all material dealt with in the first half of the course. The final exam will cover material from the course in its entirety, but stress the topics covered in the last part of the course. These exams will contain both objective and subjective questions. In addition, small unannounced quizzes may be given at any time in the course of the semester. These will usually deal with the reading assignment of the week. Conscientious daily preparation for class is the best preparation for all exams.

### Grades:

Grades will be based upon the quality of class participation, the quality of the research paper, and the results of quizzes and exams. The quarter-term exam and the mid-term exam will count about equally towards the final grade for the course. Those two exams together, the research paper, and the final exam will count about equally, making up the greater part of the grade. But attendance, participation, and the results of unannounced quizzes will also count. These considerations can make the difference between letter grades when your final course grade is calculated, especially if the results of the quarter-term and mid-term, the research paper, and the final exam put you on the margin of a grade.

### Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to be in attendance in class, every class session, unless prevented by accident or serious illness. While the instructor cannot maintain records for every absence, attendance records are kept on the basis of occasional attendance checks. The result is that at the end of the semester the instructor does not have a record of absences, but an accurate

record of students whose attendance is perfect or nearly perfect. A record of perfect or near perfect attendance will be considered in the calculation of final grades, and may be crucial when the result of other material puts you on the margin of a grade category. The presumption is that if all your absences are the result of serious injury or illness they will be rare, and your record of attendance will be nearly perfect. Please do not bother me with excuses.

Policy on Absences from Exams:

If you are absent from any major exams because of accident or serious illness, arrangements for a make-up exam will be made only on receipt of a letter or other notification from the appropriate medical authority. There are no make-up exams for unannounced quizzes.

Policy on Papers Printed by Electronic Means:

Your research paper for the course must be typed and handed in on time. You are welcome to use a computer and electronic printer to produce the final copy of your paper. Nevertheless, it is your responsibility to see that the paper is submitted by the date and time required. And the paper must be submitted in hard copy. Any malfunction that may have caused a file to have been mysteriously lost by the computer is your responsibility alone.

Policy on Grades of I (Incomplete):

A grade of I will be given for the course only in the case of extenuating circumstances such as accident or serious illness that make it impossible to complete all the requirements.

Drop Policy:

A student may drop the course with a W until the last day allowed by the university to drop the course with instructor's permission. That date is March 31, 2009.

Books:

Books for this course are available at the University Store in the Student Union Building, and at Voertman's, at 1314 W. Hickory. They include:

Sarvapali Radhakrishnan, and Charles A. Moore, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*.  
 Thomas Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition*.  
 M. Hiriyanna, *Essentials of Indian Philosophy*  
 Bart Gruzalski, *On Gandhi*

Approximate Schedule of Reading Assignments:

Week of

Jan	19	Introduction: The Origins of Indian Civilization The Indus Valley Civilization Sourcebook, pp. IX-XXXI Hopkins, pp. 1-16
	26	The Religion of the Rig Veda Sourcebook, pp. 3-36 M. Hiriyanna, pp. 9-18

- Feb 2 The Philosophical Achievement of the Early Upanishads  
Sourcebook, pp. 37-100 (especially pp. 37-41; 42-50; 64-77)  
Hopkins, pp. 17-51; M. Hiriyanna pp. 18-30.
- 9 The Orthodox Systems of Indian Thought  
Samkhya and Yoga: Sourcebook, pp. 424-485, (Puligandla, pp. 145-156;)  
Hiriyana, pp. 106-128; Nyaya and Vaishesika: Sourcebook, pp. 356-452;  
(Puligandla, pp. 157-208), Hiriyana, pp. 84- 105.
- 16 Mimamsa and Vedanta, Shankara: Sourcebook, pp. 486-543; (Puligandla, pp.  
209-254), Hiriyanna, pp. 129-174.
- 23 The Heterodox Indian Philosophies  
The Carvaka School and Jainism; Sourcebook, pp. 227-271 (especially pp.  
227-234; 250-260); Hopkins, pp. 52-63; (Puligandla pp. 13-36), Hiriyanna,  
pp. 57-70.
- Mar 2 Buddhist Religion and Metaphysics, Sourcebook, pp. 272-346 (especially pp.  
292-328); (Puligandla, pp. 37-68), Hiriyanna, pp. 70-83.  
**Topic for Research Paper Due**
- 9 The Religion of the Epics: Hopkins, pp. 87-93
- 16 Spring Break
- 23 The Nature and Development of Puranic Hinduism: Hopkins, pp. 94-107
- 30 Medieval Devotional Hinduism and Later Developments in Vedanta  
Philosophy, Ramanuja: Sourcebook, pp. 543-555; (Puligandla pp. 254-267),  
Hiriyanna, 175-187. Madhva: Sourcebook, pp. 555-572; (Puligandla pp. 268-  
273), Hiriyana, pp. 187-199.
- April 6 Late Puranic Religion: Hopkins, pp. 108-130
- 13 The Origin and Political Impact of Sikhism. Guru Nanak: (Handout)  
Guru Amar Das, Guru Govind Singh
- 20 Indian Philosophy in the Modern Period  
S. Radhakrishnan: Sourcebook pp. 610-637  
Sri Aurobindo: Sourcebook, pp. 575-609; (Puligandla, pp. 291-307).
- 27 The Philosophical views of Mohandas K Gandhi  
Gruzalski On Gandhi.  
**Research paper due**

- May 4 (Pre-finals week) Final discussion and conclusions.
- 11 Final Exam Week: Final Exam Friday May 15, 2009 10:30am – 12:30pm