**Modern Hinduism**

**Spring 2023**

**Time: 10-10:50 (Section 001)/1-1:50 (Section 002)**

**Location: Wren 301**

**Instructor:** Akshay Gupta

**Office #:** Wren 305

**Office Telephone #:** 828-243-1979

**e-Mail:** akshayg95@yahoo.com

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2-3pm and by appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The main purpose of this course is to study Hinduism in the modern period. We will examine various topics and concepts, such as Hindu scriptural texts, gurus, the self, karma, colonialism, Hinduism in America, women, caste, Hindu nationalism, the environment, and more. By the end of this course, you should be able to discuss various Hindu concepts and societal issues and critically reason about them.

This is a COLL 300 course in which students will engage the world in a self-reflective, cross-cultural way and be introduced to people and ideas outside their sphere of direct experience.

This is also a COLL 200 course based in the Cultures, Societies, & Individuals (CSI) domain, exploring the Hindu tradition in terms of larger developments, structures, and interactions in modern Indian society. Students will investigate, theorize, and explain the way Hinduism is inextricably bound up with (reflecting, sustaining, contesting, and co-producing) a variety of major Indian social and political forces.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Long, Jeffrey. 2020. *Hinduism in America: A Convergence of Worlds*. New York: Bloomsbury

Knott, Kim. 2016. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction* *2nd Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

There will be other readings for this course; however, you can access these for free.

At one point in the course you will be assigned a documentary on Netflix to watch. If you do not have a Netflix account and are unable to use a friend’s, you will need to buy a Netflix subscription during this part of the course.

A cheap Kindle version of Long’s book is here: [https://www.amazon.com/Hinduism-America-Convergence-Jeffery-Long-ebook-dp-B08CDF2KGX/dp/B08CDF2KGX/ref=mt\_other?\_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=](https://www.amazon.com/Hinduism-America-Convergence-Jeffery-Long-ebook-dp-B08CDF2KGX/dp/B08CDF2KGX/ref%3Dmt_other?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=).

A cheap Kindle version of Knott’s book is here: [https://www.amazon.com/Hinduism-Very-Short-Introduction-Introductions-ebook-dp-B005OQH13E/dp/B005OQH13E/ref=mt\_other?\_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=](https://www.amazon.com/Hinduism-Very-Short-Introduction-Introductions-ebook-dp-B005OQH13E/dp/B005OQH13E/ref%3Dmt_other?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

There are a total of 1000 points possible in this course, allocated in the following way:

Attendance and Participation (200 points)

Regular attendance in class is mandatory. You get two “free” unexcused absences. However, every absence thereafter will deduct 10 points from your attendance grade. These absences may be excused if there are good reasons for doing so (sickness, travelling for sports, doctor appointment, etc.). There are a total of 100 points you can acquire via attendance.

In addition, students are expected to actively participate in class by asking questions, participating in discussions, making insightful comments, etc. There are a total of 100 points you can acquire via participation. It should be emphasized that simply showing up to class will not suffice to get the full 100 points.

Reflection Papers (125 x 2 = 250 points)

There will be two reflection papers in the semester. Each one of these papers will count for 125 points. You will reflect on the readings that we have covered since the last reflection paper (or since the start of the course in the case of the first reflection paper). You can reflect on any topic or topics of your choosing. Papers that get the full 125 points will demonstrate attentiveness to the class readings and lectures, critically analyze the course material, and show that you thought deeply about it. Topics might include: reflections on certain Hindu teachings, such as karma, yoga, or the self, reflections on how Hinduism compares or differs from other religious traditions, reflections on how you conceive Hinduism, reflections on how Hinduism has developed in America, and so on. You can be creative with this! Each reflection paper should be 3-4 pages doubled spaced, in Times New Roman font. You will upload these reflection papers on Blackboard.

Lecture Presentation/Group Leader (100 points)

Each student in the class, as a member of a group (of 6-7 students), will be required to run one of our classes this semester. Your group will be expected to present (lecture on) specific assigned readings for that class day and summarize and break down key points in the readings (~25-30 minutes). For the remainder of the class, your group should facilitate group discussions on the course material.

To get the full 100 points, you should show that you did your part to contribute to the lecture, and you should effectively facilitate a group discussion.

Dialogue Reflection Papers (50 x 3 = 150 points)

During the semester, there will be three dialogue reflection papers on structured dialogues. Detailed instructions will be provided for each paper. Each paper will be worth 50 points. You will upload these papers on Blackboard.

Final Paper (300 points)

The final paper counts for 300 points. The paper should be 9-12 pages, double spaced, in Times New Roman font. The paper can be on any topic related to modern Hinduism. To receive the full 300 points, you should not write a paper that merely describes or summarizes the readings thus far. The best papers will engage critically with the course readings and other sources related to the course material. For example, you might try to address questions such as: how is caste similar to or different from race? Is the term Hinduism a useful category or not? How effective are Hindu responses to environmental degradation? Reading and referencing sources that we have not covered in classes is a plus; however, it is possible to get the full points by focusing primarily on assigned readings if one’s analysis is insightful and demonstrates careful attention to the readings.

**TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

The usage of cell phones is not permitted. Laptops are permitted provided that you use them for taking notes or to access electronic books. If your laptop use becomes distracting to the class you will no longer be permitted to use them.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

It is the policy of The College of William & Mary to accommodate students with disabilities and qualifying diagnosed conditions in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2509 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more info, please see [www.wm.edu/sas](http://www.wm.edu/sas).

**RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS**

It is my policy to make accommodations (i.e. exemptions from late penalties on assignments, exemptions from deductions on one’s attendance/participation grade) for religious observances, as long as such practices are in accordance with state and federal regulations and consistent with safety regulations of the university. If you need accommodations, please inform me of them by the drop/add period.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The Honor Code is, as always, in effect in this course. The current version of the Honor Code is available at www.wm.edu/honor. At all times, the written work you submit must be solely your own, with all sources properly cited. Instances of plagiarism will face severe punishment, including possible expulsion from the College. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents any information, ideas, or phrasing of another as if they were his or her own and does not give appropriate credit to the original source.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Unless your circumstances prevent you from turning in assignments on time, there will be a penalty for late assignments. This penalty will be 5% a day, so if you turn in a late assignment 3 days late, the highest grade you can receive for this assignment is an 85%.

**THE WRITING RESOURCES CENTER**

Located on the first floor of Swem Library, this is a free service provided to W&M students. Trained consultants offer individual assistance with writing, presentation, and other communication assignments at any stage, from generating ideas to polishing a final product, and across disciplines. To make an appointment, visit the WRC webpage [www.wm.edu/wrc](http://www.wm.edu/wrc)

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT**

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something is said in class (by anyone) that makes you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

**RESPECTFUL DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE**

In our class discussions, we will explore some challenging issues and increase our understandings of different perspectives. Our conversations may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. Always, we will need respect for others.

**WILLIAM & MARY LAND AND SLAVERY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

William & Mary acknowledges the Indigenous peoples who are the original inhabitants of the lands our campus is on today – the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patawomeck, Upper Mattaponi, and Rappahannock tribes – and pay our respect to their tribal members past and present. William & Mary acknowledges that it owned and exploited slave labor from its founding to the Civil War; and that it had failed to take a stand against segregation during the Jim Crow Era. For more information, see W&M’s Decolonizing Humanities Project, [www.wm.edu/sites/dhp/](http://www.wm.edu/sites/dhp/)

**THE CAMPUS FOOD PANTRY**

Located at the lower level entrance of the Wesley House located off the left side parking lot at the back of house, this confidential program aims to provide W&M students, staff, and faculty with food insecurities and their dependent family members access to nonperishable and hygiene products when school is in session. If you need any accommodations to access the pantry, please call Wesley at 757-229-6832 prior to visiting the pantry, so they can provide accommodations. Campus Food Pantry webpage: <http://wmwesley.org/campus-food-pantry>

**ENGLISH (AS A SECOND) LANGUAGE STATEMENT**

W&M welcomes students from around the country and the world, and their unique perspectives enrich our learning community. To support students whose primary language is not English, there are a number of services available on campus. See the ESL Campus Resources webpage: https://www.wm.edu/offices/revescenter/geo/global\_programs\_oncampus/english\_language/ESL\_Campus\_Resources/Index.php#WM

**MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL BEING**

William & Mary recognizes that students have many different responsibilities and can face challenges that make learning difficult. There are many resources available at W&M to help students. Asking for help is a sign of courage and strength. Please reach out to me if you or someone you know are facing problems inside or outside the classroom, and I will do my best to guide you to appropriate resources on campus. Those resources include:

* For psychological/emotional stress: the W&M Counseling Center (757-221-362), 240 Gooch Dr. 2nd floor, https://www.wm.edu/offices/wellness/counselingcenter/. Services are free & confidential.
* For physical/medical concerns: W&M Health Center (757-221-4386), 240 Gooch Dr, https://www.wm.edu/offices/wellness/healthcenter/
* For other additional support or resources, please contact the Dean of Students by submitting a care report (757- 221-2510) or by email at deanofstudents@wm.edu

**COMMUNICATION**

Throughout this course, I expect you to keep lines of communication open with me. You can always come and talk to me. Should stresses in your personal life make it difficult for you to meet the course’s obligations, please communicate with me so that we can try to make reasonable arrangements to accommodate the circumstances you are facing.

**COVID-19 RELATED MATTERS**

Due to the continuing pandemic, flexibility may be required this semester in our modes of learning. Should you need to miss class for Covid-19 -related reasons (positive test, symptoms, etc.), communicate with me immediately letting me know about the absence. In other matters, we will make contingency plans when the need arises.

**GRADING**

**Letter Grades (In Points)**

930-1000 = A

900-929 = A-

870-899 = B+

830-869 = B

800-829 = B-

770-799 = C+

730-769 = C

700-729 = C-

670-699 = D+

630-669 = D

600-629 = D-

Below 600 = F

**LAST DAY TO ADD/DROP:** February 3rd.

**LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW:** March 27th.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**January 25: Introduction**

Readings: Course Syllabus

**January 27: Revelation and the Transmission of Knowledge Part 1**

Readings: Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction – “Defining Hinduism” section from chapter 9 (only read this section from the chapter); and chapter 2 (read entire chapter).

**January 30: Revelation and the Transmission of Knowledge Part 2**

Readings: The Guru-Shishya Paramapara: A Paradigm of Religio-Cultural Continuity (read everything)

Elevated Gurus Concrete Traditions and the Problems of Western Devotees, pages 219-221 (stop on the last full paragraph before page 222).

Long, *Hinduism in America*, pages 139-142 (the section “The Guru Phenomenon: Critical Reflections”)

**February 1: Understanding the Self**

Readings: Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction – All sections from chapter 3 except the last section, “*Karma*, *yoga*, and the self”

Modern Hindu Thought – Brahman: Nirguṇa and Saguṇa; Trimūrti; Jīva; Saṁsāra (read everything from these sections)

**February 3: Karma and Yoga**

Readings: Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction – the last section of chapter 3, “*Karma*, *yoga*, and the self”

Modern Hindu Thought – Karma; Karma-Yoga (these are two separate chapters)

**LAST DAY TO ADD/DROP (WITHDRAWAL PERIOD BEGINS ON MARCH 27TH)**

**February 6: The Epic Tradition**

Readings: Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction – chapter 4 (read entire chapter)

Modern Hindu Thought – Visṇu (read entire chapter)

**February 8: *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavad Gītā* Part 1**

Readings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yh4OxzEFFzA>

**February 10: *Bhagavad Gītā* Part 2**

Readings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G28qHASOtE8> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UovzO-TkTCU>

**February 13: The Divine Presence**

Readings: Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction – only the sections “Statues, Idols, or Icons?” and “Responses to the Divine Presence” in chapter 5

Darshan (by Diana Eck) – pages 4-8, pages 63-75. A free link is here: <https://books.google.com/books/about/Dar%C5%9Ban.html?id=jEzh2QSNdlEC&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

**February 15: Kīrtan/Bhajan**

Readings: Kīrtan and Bhajan (Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism) (read everything)

**February 17: Introduction to Hinduism and Modernity**

Readings: Modern Hindu Thought – Historical Context (read everything)

Oxford Handbook of Hinduism: Modern Hinduism – Early Modern Hinduism (read everything) Link - <https://wm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991033697059603196&context=L&vid=01COWM_INST:01COWM_WM_NEWUI&lang=en&search_scope=WMCWFlocal&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=LibraryCatalog&query=any,contains,oxford%20history%20of%20hinduism>

**REFLECTION PAPER # 1 DUE**

**February 20: Bhāgavata Purāṇa**

Readings: Bhāgavatapurāṇa (Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism) (read everything)

**February 22: Islam in India (Student-led class #1)**

Readings:Excerpts from *Sources of Indian Tradition*

**February 24: Colonialism/Hinduism**

Readings:Orientalism (Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism) (read everything)

Long, *Hinduism in America*, pages 61-65 (Read the first section "The Colonial Context, Its Contradictions, and Hindu Responses")

**February 27: Orientalist Constructions of Hinduism**

Readings: The Modern Myth of Hinduism – pages 98-111 (from the section “The myth of homogeneity and the modern myth of ‘Hinduism’” and stopping right before “The relevance of feminism to the Orientalist debate”)

**March 1: Hindu Responses to the British**

Readings: Eternal Dharma (read entire chapter)

**March 3: Hinduism in America (Student-led class #2)**

Readings: The Construction of Hinduism in America (read entire article)

Long, *Hinduism in America*: pages 92-94 (Read section "Swami Vivekananda in America" but stop after reading the first paragraph after Vivekananda's address)

**March 6: Counterculture in America (Student-led class #3)**

Readings: Long, *Hinduism in America*: chapter 4, read entire chapter except for the section “The Guru Phenomenon: Critical Reflections” (pages 139-142).

**March 8: America: Land of Temples (Student-led class #4)**

Readings: Readings: Long, *Hinduism in America*: chapter 5 – read through page 165, stopping before “Hinduism in Canada”

**March 10: Non-Indian Practitioners, Yoga, Vegetarianism, and Religious Pluralism**

Readings: Long, *Hinduism in America*: chapter 6 (read entire chapter)

**March 11-19: No Class**

**March 20: Hindu and Indian Influence on American Pop Culture**

Readings: Long, *Hinduism in America*: chapter 7 (read entire chapter)

**March 22: Hinduism and Women**

Readings: Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction – chapter 7. Read from the beginning and stop before the section “Ambedkar: what path freedom?”

“Silencing “India’s Daughter”: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/sons-and-daughters>

“India’s #MeToo Movement, One Year On”: <https://wamu.org/story/19/07/29/indias-metoo-movement-one-year-on/>

**REFLECTION PAPER #2 DUE**

**March 24: Hinduism and Caste**

Readings: Modern Hindu Thought – “Varṇa” – only read sections I, II, and III (pages 126-137/PDF pages 1-6).

**March 27: Caste in the Modern Day**

Readings: Caste is Not Past: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/16/opinion/sunday/caste-is-not-past.html>

Hindu Sect Accused of Using Forced Labor: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/10/nyregion/baps-hindu-forced-labor.html>

**LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM THE COURSE AND LAST DAY FOR SOCIAL CLASS JUNIORS AND SENIORS TO ELECT PASS/FAIL**

**March 29: Dialogue #1: Social Identity**

Readings: Complete assignment before class.

“Explaining White Privilege To A Broke White Person”: <https://medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/explaining_white_privilege_to_a_broke_white_person.pdf>

“Our Racial Interior”: <https://prospect.org/culture/racial-interior/>

“What It Means to be an ‘Untouchable’ in 2017”: <https://elle.in/elle-old-site/article/still-i-rise/>

“Caste Privilege 101: A Primer for the Privileged”: <https://theaerogram.com/caste-privilege-101-primer-privileged/>

**March 31: Caste Prejudice and Racial Prejudice**

Readings: A History of Prejudice – Introduction: pages 12-18; 21-22 (section “Internal Colonialism and Local Prejudice,” all of page 21 and half of page 22, stopping before the section “Quandaries of Development and Democracy”)

Comparing Race to Caste: <https://thewire.in/books/book-review-isabel-wilkerson-caste-racism-america>

**April 3: Hindu Proposals for Equality**

Readings: Cows, Elephants, Dogs, and Other Less Embodiments of *Ātman* (read entire chapter)

Constructing a Hindu Black Theology (read entire chapter)

**April 5: Hinduism and LGBTQIA+ Equality**

Readings: TBD

**DIALOGUE REFLECTION PAPER #1 DUE**

**April 7: History of Indian Independence (Student-led class #5)**

Readings: The Light of Asia? India in 1947 (read entire chapter)

**April 10: Partition and Hindu-Muslim Conflict (Student-led class #6)**

Readings: Legacies of the Partition for India and Pakistan

**April 12: Hindu Nationalism (Student-led class #7)**

Readings: The History of Hindu Nationalism in India (read entire chapter)

On the Difference Between Hinduism and Hindutva (read entire paper)

**April 14: Hindu-Muslim Shared Worship Sites (Student-led class # 8)**

Readings: Everybody’s Baba: Making Space for the Other (read entire chapter)

**April 17: Communicating Hinduism in a Changing Media Context**

Readings: Communicating Hinduism in a Changing Media Context (read entire article)

**April 19: Dialogue #2: How Might the Digitization of Hinduism Be Beneficial and Negative?**

Readings: Watch part of the “The Social Dilemma” on Netflix – stop watching when it begins to get into the “Extreme Center” conspiracy theory content in the plot – this is some time after Ben breaks his promise and starts using his phone again.

“Digitizing Sacred Spaces How Covid-19 Has Fueled Innovation of Hindu Ritual Websites”: <https://religionnews.com/2021/10/28/digitizing-sacred-spaces-how-covid-19-has-fueled-innovation-of-hindu-ritual-websites/> (read entire article)

“How Technology is Hijacking Your Mind – from a Magician and Google Design Ethicist”: <https://medium.com/thrive-global/how-technology-hijacks-peoples-minds-from-a-magician-and-google-s-design-ethicist-56d62ef5edf3>

**April 21: Dialogue #3: How Does Social Media Amplify Nationalism?**

Readings: Watch the rest of “The Social Dilemma” on Netflix.

“In India, Facebook Grapples With an Amplified Version of Its Problems”: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/23/technology/facebook-india-misinformation.html#:~:text=The%20Facebook%20Papers-,In%20India%2C%20Facebook%20Grapples%20With%20an%20Amplified%20Version%20of%20Its,country%2C%20the%20company's%20biggest%20market.&text=As%20a%20subscriber%2C%20you%20have,articles%20to%20give%20each%20month>.

“Modi-Era Nationalism and the Rise of Cyber Activism”: <https://www.academia.edu/12139326/Modi_era_nationalism_and_the_rise_of_cyber_activism> (read from the section “The Internet Hindus” to the end)

**April 24: Hinduism and Environmentalism in Modern India**

Readings:Hinduism and Environmentalism in Modern India (read entire chapter)

**April 26: Hindu Eco-Theology Part 1**

Readings: An Intra-Hindu Comparative Analysis of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism’s Eco-Theological Motifs (read entire article)

**DIALOGUE REFLECTION PAPER #2 DUE**

**April 28: Hindu Eco-Theology Part 2**

Readings: The Ecological Implications of Karma Theory (read entire chapter)

Attitudes to Nature in the Early Upaniṣads (read entire chapter)

**DIALOGUE REFLECTION PAPER #3 DUE**

**May 1: Constructive Conversation**

Readings: Handout on Caste Reservations

**May 3: Review**

Readings: None

**May 5: Review**

Readings: None

**FINAL PAPERS FOR SECTION 2 (1 P.M.) ARE DUE MAY 10TH**

**FINAL PAPERS FOR SECTION 1 (10 A.M.) ARE DUE MAY 16TH**