GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM
THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA: HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

BLHV 263-01                               Three Credits                               Fall Semester, 2015

Classes meet Thursdays, September 3 – December 3  5:20 – 7:50 pm
640 Mass Ave Campus          Room C 215

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Office hours: by appointment Thursdays before class at the Mass Ave / Chinatown Campus. Other times by appointment. Use e-mail to make appointment or to contact us. I will respond to all e-mails within one business day.

The course offers an introduction to and an overview of two of the world’s oldest living major religious traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism. Both faiths had their origins on the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism’s roots are to be found among the beliefs and practices of the indigenous peoples of the Indus River valley which are believed to have blended and merged with the beliefs and practices of Aryan tribes migrating into the regions from central Asia during the second Millennium B.C.E. Buddhism arose out of the experiences and teachings of one Siddhartha Gautama, a prince from a Nepalese kingdom, who live c. 563-483 B.C.E. The course focuses on the ancient histories of the two religions and on the development of their doctrines and practices, especially as these are reflected in their sacred scriptures. The latter part of the course will also touch upon modern expressions and practices of the two religions, and their spread and influence outside India, especially in the Western World.

There are no prerequisites for this course, and no prior knowledge of Hinduism or Buddhism is assumed.

Course Objectives:

At the completion of this course students will:

1. Have explored the characteristics and features that typically constitute a religion, and illustrate in a written paper how these characteristics apply or do not apply to diverse religious traditions, including the ancient and modern forms of Hinduism and Buddhism.

2. Have acquired a basic understanding of the natures of Hinduism and Buddhism as religions, and in class discussions and written assignments reflect a comprehension of the religions’ significant doctrinal, ethical values, rituals, and practices.

3. Through attentive reading of selected texts from Hindu and Buddhist sacred scriptures, along with the assigned textbook readings students will begin to grasp the connections between religious scriptures and religious beliefs and practices in the two religions, and reflect these associations in class discussions and written papers.

4. Have become familiar with the diversity in contemporary Hinduisms and Buddhism, and in class discussions and written papers reflect an understandings of what remains
common to the traditions of both religions, and the backgrounds and significances of the alternate approaches as they have evolved over time and in different locations.

5. Students will have arranged for and visited a Hindu or Buddhist temple for a tour, orientation, service, or other activity and reflected on their experience as related to the course materials in a short essay.

6. In keeping with the major goals of the Liberal Studies program, students will be able to address the relevance of the values found in the Hindu and in the Buddhist traditions in in-class discussions about relationships between the human and the divine, the individual and society, and identity and difference, especially as these relate to gender roles, to authority [how it is construed, exercised, and challenged] and to ethics and justice.

**Textbooks [Required]:**


[In the Norton Anthology we will be reading from the “Introduction” by Jack Miles (pp. 1-51), *Hinduism*, by Wendy Doniger (pp. 53-722), and *Buddhism*, by Donald S. Lopez, Jr (pp. 725-1463), all in the first of the two volumes. The texts by Doniger and Lopez are available independently in paperback format. Students will find that purchasing the two volume hardcover anthology, which includes additional sections related to *Daoism, Judaism, Christianity*, and *Islam* is less expensive than the two independent paper editions of the required texts.]

In addition to readings from the textbook, other material is posted on Blackboard as reading assignments for individual classes, indicated below.

**Class Requirements:**

1. Weekly submissions and class participation: 20% of final grade
2. First essay “What Constitutes a Religion?” 15%
3. Temple Visit essay 15%
4. Essay on a Hindu epic 25%
5. Essay on a topic from Buddhism 25%

**Attendance** is essential. This is a 3 credit course that meets once a week. Missing a single class is the equivalent of missing more three classes in a more traditional class. In accord with BALS policy students with two or more absences, excused or unexcused, may receive a failing grade for the course. On the occasion of a second absence the student’s name will be forwarded to Dean Kiernan.

Classes will begin and end on time. Students are expected to be present for the entire class. Arriving late is disruptive to the instructor and the class. Repeated late arrival will be counted as
an absence. If you know or anticipate that you are likely to be late for class or to need to leave early on a regular basis for any reason do not take this class at this time.

**Effort.** This is a content intensive course. Students should expect to spend on average 300 minutes [5 hours] each week in reading, preparing assignments, and writing essays and papers for this course. Keeping up with the readings and written assignments is essential. There are no tests and no final exam for this course. Evaluation of student performance is based on attendance, preparation reflected in active class participation, and timely submission of four assigned papers.

**Weekly submissions:** Beginning with week 3 (September 17), for each class students are to prepare in writing two questions or insights drawn from the assigned readings. For each question or insight the student is to indicate in two to three sentences the source and the reasons that motivated the question or insight. Students will be called upon in class to share their questions and insights and to lead short discussions related to what they present. The assignments are to be turned in at the end of each class.

**First essay:** “What Constitutes a Religion?” A five page essay [1800 – 2000 words] based upon the sources assigned for week 2, due at on Turnitin prior to the beginning of the second class (September 10). The readings and the assignment will be e-mailed to students one week before the start of class. Essays will be graded and returned to students within three days to fulfill the requirement of a graded assignment within the first two weeks of class.

**Temple visit essay:** A three page [1000 – 1200 words] essay in which the student describes and reflects upon a visit to a Washington area Hindu or Buddhist temple. There are multiple Hindu and Buddhist temples in the Washington, DC area. Many are open to visitors, offer tours, and / or information sessions and activities. Students are expected to search out, schedule, and take part in one such activity which is to be the basis for their essay. Can be submitted at any time, but due by the beginning of class, week 14 (December 3).

**Hindu epic essay:** A ten page [3600 – 4000 words] essay based upon the assigned readings from one of the great epics [the Mahabharata of Vyasa, the Bhagavad Gita, or the Ramayana of Valmiki, in The Norton Anthology] in which the student illustrates how the narrative works to embody and inculcate Hinduism’s fundamental teachings and principals. Due by the beginning of class, week 7 (October 15).

**Buddhism essay:** A ten page [3600 – 4000 words] essay on a specific topic related to Buddhism, to be selected by the student, but approved by the instructor. Proposed topic and outline due at the beginning of class for week 11. Essay due at noon, Friday, December 18.

Papers will be accepted late (but by no more than a week) only for exceptional reasons and with prior permission of the faculty member. Late papers may bring a lower grade at the discretion of the faculty.

Papers and essays submitted for this course must consistently use the Modern Language Association [MLA] system of bibliographic references to indicate the sources for all quotations,
and to indicate the sources for all concepts and ideas that were acquired in researching and preparing the essay or paper. If you have questions about MLA style and formatting, make an appointment with the Librarian in the Mass Ave Resource Center on C2. For additional help consult the OWL at Perdue University site:

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

All papers will be graded on Turnitin within two weeks of receipt. [See scoring for essays above].

**Georgetown Honor System:** All students are expected to follow Georgetown’s honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: *Honor Council Pamphlet, “What Is Plagiarism?” “Sanctioning Guidelines,” and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”* Please also note the honor code guidelines with respect to the use of library materials.

Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

> In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor system: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student may receive a grade of “F” for the course.

**Turnitin:** Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers will be submitted to submission for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**Grading:**

The final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- 93-100 % = A
- 90 - 92 % = A-
- 87 - 89 % = B+
- 83 - 86 % = B
- 80 - 82 % = B-
- 77 - 79 % = C+
- 73 - 76 % = C
- 70 - 72 % = C-
- 67 - 69 % = D+
- 60 - 66 % = D
- Below 60 % = F

**Incomplete grades must be requested of the Associate Dean BEFORE the last regular class (December 3, 2015).** Should you have an exceptional situation that you believe requires that you
request an incomplete, you must discuss the matter with Dean Kiernan and with me, prepare the request form for my signature, and deliver the form to Dean Kiernan prior to the deadline. An incomplete may bring a lower grade at the discretion of the faculty member.

**Withdrawing from the course:** A student may withdraw from the course at any time up until November 5, 2015 (the date published in the University Calendar); however, the student is responsible for filling out the appropriate forms, obtaining the necessary signatures, and properly submitting the paperwork in time to meet the deadline. If the paperwork is not completed, the student automatically receives a grade of “F”.

**Veterans and active duty military personnel** are welcome. Those with special circumstances requiring accommodation (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) should discuss these in advance if possible with the professor. Every effort will be made to work with such students consistent with the integrity of the academic process.

**Disabilities Notice:** If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu.

**Accommodating Students’ Religious Observances:** Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

**Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity:** During inclement weather and other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university’s Web site or call (202)687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings. The university has the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

**Important Dates:**

Thursday, September 3 – First Class

Thursday, September 10 – First paper [What Constitutes a Religion] due on Turnitin by 5:00 pm. This is in fulfilment of the SCS policy that there be a graded assignment from each student within the first two weeks of class.
Thursday, September 17 – First of the required weekly questions & suggestions due in class.
6:00 pm.

Wednesday October 15 – Hindu Epic Essay due on Turnitin at midnight.

Monday, November 3 – Last day to withdraw from the course.

Friday, December 18 – Your final paper on a topic in Buddhism is due on Turnitin at noon.

Class Schedule and Assignments
(Note: This Schedule may be subject to modification)

WEEK ONE: Thursday, September 3. The Religions of India
Student preparation:
Flood, “Introduction”, pp 1-4 in Introduction to Hinduism
Harvey, “Introduction”, pp 1-7 in Introduction to Buddhism
Write: - Prepare and submit a two page, typed, double spaced self-introduction, telling something about your background, your ambitions and goals, your expectations from this course, and something about how familiar you are with scholarly study of religion. You are free to share your religious persuasion(s) or lack thereof should you choose.

Class: Introduction to course, and review of the syllabus
Introduction to the academic study of religion
Introduction to the traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism

WEEK TWO: Thursday September 10. What Constitutes a Religion?
Student preparation:
http://www.mmiweb.org.uk/hull/site/site/pot_sessions/smart_dimensions.html

Write first essay “What Constitutes a Religion?” [Due on Turnitin prior to class]

Class: - The question, “What is a religion?” will form the basis for our meeting, which will be a more formal, student-driven, class discussion based upon the insights students gained reading for, and writing their first paper.

WEEK THREE: Thursday, September 17. Theories regarding Hindu origins and early history
Student preparation:
“Points of Departure”, pp 5 – 22 in Flood, Hinduism
“Ancient Origins”, pp 23-50 in Flood, Hinduism
Prepare and write weekly submission
Class: Introduction to the Hindu Scriptures, especially the Rig Veda

WEEK FOUR: Thursday, September 29. Dharma as “the central ideology of orthopraxy Hinduism”
Student preparation:
Read: Selections from the Rig Veda, pp 89-102 in The Norton Anthology.
“Dharma”, pp 51-74, in Flood, Hinduism
Doniger, “Renunciation in the Upanishads” and selections from the Upanishads and from the yoga-sutra of Patanjali pp 115-135 in The Norton Anthology.
“Yoga and renunciation” pp 75-102, in Flood, Hinduism

Class:
Defining and understanding the self
The beyond within
The Upanishads and Patanjnal’s yoga-sutra
The stages and stations in life

WEEK FIVE: Thursday, October 1: Divine Heros: The Great Epics as Conduits of Hindu Faith and Practice
Student preparation:
Read: Doniger, “The Age of Ferment” and selections from the Mahabharata of Vyasa, the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana of Valmiki, and the Shastras, pp 137-230 in The Norton Anthology.
“Narrative traditions and early Vaiṣṇavism”, pp 103-127, in Flood, Hinduism

Class:
The *Mahabharata* of Vyasa
The *Bhagavad Gita*
The *Ramayana* of Valmiki
The Shastras

WEEK SIX: Thursday, October 8. The Divine Presence: Polytheism, Monotheism or Pantheism
Student preparation:
Doniger, “Sects and Sex in the Tantras” and selected readings from the Tantras, pp 285-294 in *The Norton Anthology*.
Doniger, “Theology and/or Philosophy in the *Vedanta*” and selected readings from the *Vedanta*, pp 295-304 in *The Norton Anthology*.

Class:
Gods and Goddesses
Tantric religion

WEEK SEVEN: Thursday, October 15. Hindu Ritual, Theology, and Philosophy
Student preparation:

Class:
Festivals, Pilgrimages
Many paths to the goal
Inclusiveness
Contemporary Issues: Dalits and women
Hinduism in the modern world

WEEK EIGHT: Thursday, October 22. Siddhartha Gautama in his Hindu and Indian Context
Student preparation:
“The Buddha and his Indian Context” and “Early Buddhist Teachings: Rebirth and Karma” pp 8-49 in Harvey, Buddhism

Class:
The “historical” Buddha
Reincarnation and Karma
Reaction and rebellion against what Hinduism had become

WEEK NINE: Thursday, October 29. Enlightenment
Student preparation:
“Early Buddhist Teachings: The Four True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled”, pp 50-87 Harvey, Buddhism

Class:
The Four Noble Truths
The Eightfold path
Building a following

WEEK TEN: Thursday, November 6: Developments following Buddha’s Death
Student preparation:
Read: “Early Developments in Buddhism”, pp 88-113 in Harvey, Buddhism
“Mahāyāna Philosophies: The Varieties of Emptyness”, pp 114-150 in Harvey, Buddhism
“Mahāyāna Holy Beings and Tantric Buddhism”, pp 151-193 in Harvey, Buddhism

Class:
Growth and Divisions
Spread outside India
Thereavāda School
The rise of Mahayana
The Bodhisattvas
The Pure Land and Zen Schools
WEEK ELEVEN: Thursday, November 12. Buddhist Devotions and Ethics
Student preparation:
Read: Lopez, “Buddhist Tantra” and selected readings, pp 1146-1171, in
*The Norton Anthology.*
“Buddhist Practice: Devotion”, “Buddhist Practice: Ethics”, and
“Buddhist Practice: The Saṅgha” pp 237-317, in Harvey,
*Buddhism*
Class: Buddhist Devotions
Images
Pilgrimages
Festivals
Buddhist Ethics
The precepts
Loving kindness and Compassion
Social Relationships
The Saṅgha (Religious Communities)
Monasticism and the code of discipline
Patterns and types of ordination
Nuns
Relations with the laity

WEEK TWELVE: November 19. Buddhist Meditation
Student preparation:
“Buddhist Practice: Meditation and Cultivation of Experience-Based Wisdom”, pp 318-375 in Harvey, *Buddhism*
Class:
Qualities to be developed by meditation
Hindrances to meditation
Stages of purification
Visualizations
Zen

WEEK THIRTEEN: November 26
Thanksgiving Day- No Class

WEEK FOURTEEN: December 3.
Student preparation:
Read: “The Modern History of Buddhism in Asia” and “Buddhism beyond
Asia” pp 376-458 in Harvey, *Buddhism*  
Evening Address” by the Dalai Lama, pp 1463-1469 in  
*The Norton Anthology*.  

Class:  
Buddhism in the modern world  
The confluence of Buddhism and Hinduism in India  
Buddhism in the West  
Wrap up of the course  

Friday, December 18 – Your final paper on a topic in Buddhism is due on Turnitin at noon.