

Hinduism Here

Religion W4215
Barnard College, Columbia University
Wednesdays 4:10-6:00, 80 Claremont, Room 201
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Office hours: Thursdays 4-6 and by appointment

Course Description: This course explores the diversity of “lived Hinduism” in the greater New York area—its historical, theological, social, and ritual dimensions. Individual field projects focus on worshipping communities, yoga centers, and other Hindu-related social forms such as community associations, retreat centers, or parades and processions.

Course Rationale: It is often argued that in the last half century, Hindus living outside of India have come to exert an influence on Hinduism generally that is far more creative and influential than their sheer numbers would predict. This course enables students to investigate that phenomenon while simultaneously getting a sense of how disparate—yet interconnected—are the environments where such rethinking and “repracticing” take place in the greater New York area. The question of whether this is “re”—anything arises: Is American Hinduism increasingly its own home-grown thing? The course provides a framework in which students work individually to investigate and document some aspect of “Hinduism Here” by means of interviews, participant observation, life histories, and/or archival research. In the latter part of the course, students generate corporate reading assignments appropriate to their individual projects, and present those projects to the class as a whole.

Course Requirements:

(a) *Reading and class participation.* Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and to participate vigorously in class discussion on the basis of a thoughtful reading of the assigned materials.

(b) *Weekly reading responses.* Short weekly postings in response to our common readings must be made to Courseworks in weeks 2-10. These are due at 5:00 p.m. each Tuesday on the discussion board as MSWord attachments—a maximum of 400 words. Please double-space. One weekly posting may be omitted without a penalty.

(c) *Seminar projects.* Starting early in the course, students spend significant time and effort relating their readings to the study of one particular site, which serves as the basis of the seminar paper each will produce (ca. 15 pages). Writing relevant to these individual seminar projects will be presented in the following stages:

- 1- Field notes, project proposal, bibliography (September 27)
- 2- “First run” paper on your site, 5 pp. (October 18)
- 3- Draft seminar paper (due at midnight on the Friday before your class presentation: 11/8, 11/15, and 11/29)
- 4- Website profile (November 27)
- 5- Final seminar paper (December 9).

The Website profile and the seminar paper are separate documents—the one publicly accessible and the other confidential within the class. The two may, however, be related. Some students may decide that, after an introduction, the Website profile will form an early part of the seminar paper, which then goes on in a more strictly analytic vein and with enrichment provided by what has been learned in interviews and by other means. Other students may decide that the Web profile and the internal seminar paper are best conceived of as distinct entities. The Web profile will address a template of questions we will develop as a class early in the term. Of course, this need not mean that one size fits all.

Evaluation system:

Reading responses and class participation	40%
“First run” analytical paper 10/18	15%
Website profile 11/27	15%
Final seminar paper 12/9	30%

Late work:

Except in case of serious medical or family emergencies, late work will be downgraded one-half letter grade per day.

Course Readings:

(1) *Books.* The following books are required for the course, and are available for purchase at BookCulture (536 W. 112th Street). Copies are also available on reserve at the Barnard College Library.

Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Prema A. Kurien, *A Place at the Multicultural Table* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

Stefanie Syman, *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010).

Steven Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Lola Williamson, *Transcendent in America: Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as New Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

(2) *Other required reading.* Available online or as e-reserves or in “files & resources” on Courseworks. These are indicated on the course syllabus with an asterisk (*).

(3) *Additional resources.* Readings that may be helpful but are not required are listed with other readings for the weeks to which they most closely pertain. Many are also available on Courseworks. They are indicated with a double asterisk (**).

Selected Digital Resources:

<http://religion.barnard.edu/hinduism-here>

<http://www.nycreligion.info>

<http://www.archive-it.org/collections/1945>

www.pluralism.org

www.asiasource.org/news

www.indiaabroad.com

www.hinduismtoday.com

www.samachar.com

www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/southasia/cuvl

Course Syllabus

Week 1: September 4. **Introduction to the course** and to a series of sites on which individual class projects might focus.

* Courtney Bender et al., “Field Research: The Basics”

Class Trip:

Sunday, September 8. **On the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi** we will gather at the Sri Maha Vallabha Ganapati Devasthanam (the Hindu Temple Society of North America) and visit several temples in the immediate Flushing area. Please bring a note pad or some other means of taking notes. The Courseworks assignment due September 10 will consist of field notes on the inauguration of Sri Maha Vallabha Ganapati’s journey through the streets of Flushing, rather than a response to our common reading, as will normal thereafter. Please also be sure to bring your jottings to class on September 11.

Week 2: September 11. **Hinduism in America: Overview; Field Work – I**

* Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 80-141.

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 1-38. The remaining chapters of this book are a helpful resources throughout the course.

Complete the Human Subjects Research training program available at <https://www.rascal.columbia.edu>. Select Training Center > Course Listings > TC0087 > Take Course > <http://www.citiprogram.org>. This on-line course is intended to take one hour to complete and, once done, provides you the certification necessary to proceed with our course.

** <http://www.pluralism.org>

Week 3: September 18. **“Popular” Hinduism in America; Field Work – II.** Decide on course project.

Prema A. Kurien, *A Place at the Multicultural Table* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), chapters 3-5 (on “Popular Hinduism”), pp. 40-116.

Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, pp. 39-65.

* Sunil Bhatia, *American Karma: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Indian Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), chapter 2 (“Qualitative Inquiry and Psychology: Doing Ethnography in Transnational Cultures”), pp. 42-73.

** Hanna Kim, “The BAPS Swaminarayan Temple Organization and its Publics,” in Zavos et al., eds., *Public Hinduisms* (New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), pp. 417–439.

** Harold Coward, John R. Hinnells, and Raymond Brady Williams, ed., *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

** Raymond B. Williams, *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan: New Threads in an American Tapestry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

** Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach, and Steven Vertovec, eds., *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

** T. S. Rukmani, ed., *Hindu Diaspora: Global Perspectives* (Montreal: Concordia University, Chair in Hindu Studies, 1999).

Week 4: September 25. "Official" Hinduism in America

Kurien, *A Place at the Multicultural Table*, parts II and III, pp. 119-248.

* Shana Sippy, "Will the Real Mango Please Stand Up? Reflections on Defending Dharma and Historicizing Hinduism," in Zavos et al., eds., *Public Hinduisms*, pp. 22-44.

** John Zavos et al., *Public Hinduisms*, posted on Courseworks: Files & Resources.

Friday, September 27. Field notes, project proposal, and bibliography are due in digital form on Courseworks and as hard-copy in Milbank 219 by 5:00 p.m. To be specific, these comprise (1) a copy of your field jottings to date, for which there is no page limit; (2) a short statement in which you forecast the shape of your seminar paper for the course; and (3) a draft bibliography of works you have read or intend to consult.

Week 5: October 2. Five Case Studies

* Vasudha Narayanan, "Hinduism in Pittsburgh: Creating the South Indian 'Hindu' Experience in the United States," in John Stratton Hawley and Vasudha Narayanan, eds., *The Life of Hinduism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 113-114.

231-248; originally published in Raymond B. Williams, ed., *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmission of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Publications, 1992), pp. 147-176.

* Joanne Punzo Waghorne, “The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World: The Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington, D.C.,” in Robert A. Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 105-130.

* Karline McLain, “Praying for Peace and Amity: The Shri Shirdi Sai Heritage Foundation Trust,” in Zavos et al., eds., *Public Hinduisms*, pp. 190-209.

* Corinne G. Dempsey, “Women, Ritual, and the Ironies of Power at a North American Goddess Temple,” in Linda Penkower and Tracy Pintchman, eds., *Hindu Ritual at the Margins: Transformations, Innovations, Reconsiderations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, forthcoming).

* Lindsey Harlan, “Reversing the Gaze in America: Parody in Divali Performance at Connecticut College,” in Knut A. Jacobsen and P. Pratap Kumar, eds., *South Asians in the Diaspora* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), pp. 161-179.

Class Trip:

Sunday, October 6. **Several temples in Jamaica and Richmond Hills**, Queens, and a glimpse of the fabled Liberty Avenue—all epicenters of Caribbean Hindu life in New York City.

Week 6. October 9.

Caribbean Hinduism

Steven Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns* (London: Routledge, 2000), chapter 1-3 and 7-8, pp. 1-86, 141-164.

* J. S. Hawley, “Global Hinduism in Gotham,” in Tony Carnes and Fenggang Yang, eds., *Asian American Religions: Borders and Boundaries* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), pp. 112-137.

* Michele M. Verma, “Indo-Caribbean Hindu Practice in Queens: Ethnomethods of Constituting Place, Practice, and Subjects,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College, 2008, chapters 2-3, pp. 80-141.

Week 7. October 16.

Making Memory

Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), entire.

** Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 10-32.

** Maurice Halbwachs, “Religious Collective Memory,” which is part I, chapter 6 of Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, tr. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 84-119.

Friday, October 18. A five-page, double-spaced descriptive and analytical paper on project sites is due on Courseworks by midnight. This will form the basis for the relatively brief website profile you will be developing (due before Thanksgiving) and for the term paper due at the end of the semester.

Week 8, October 23. The Other American Hinduism

Lola Williamson, *Transcendent in America: Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as New Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), Parts I and III, pp. 3-51, 135-233, and one only of the three chapters in Part II, to be distributed such that we have shared expertise on all three.

** Karen Pechilis, ed., *The Graceful Guru: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

** Thomas A. Foersthoefel and Cynthia Ann Humes, eds., *Gurus in America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005).

Week 9. October 30. **Yoga Here**

Stefanie Syman, *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), chapters 5-6, 8-20, 13, pp. 80-142, 160-232, 268-292.

** Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

** Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* (London: Continuum, 2004).

** Deborah S. Bernstein and Bob Weisenberg, eds., *Yoga in America: Passion, Diversity, and Enlightenment in the Words of Some of Yoga's Most Ardent Teachers* (n.p.: Lulu.com Publishing, 2009).

Week 10, November 6. Hinduism in the Classroom

“Defamation/Anti/Defamation: Hindus in Dialogue with the Western Academy,” <http://religion.barnard.edu/defamation-anti-defamation>. These are the edited proceedings of a panel held at the American Academy of Religion in Denver in fall, 2001.

* Rajiv Malhotra, "The Position of Hinduism in America's Higher Education," www.infinityfoundation.com/ECITHinduismframe.htm, downloaded December 4, 2000.

* Rajiv Malhotra, "RISA Lila – 1: Wendy's Child Syndrome," www.sulekha.com/column.asp?cid=239156, version of September 6, 2002.

* J. S. Hawley, "The Damage of Separation: Krishna's Loves and Kali's Child," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72:2 (2004), pp. 369-393.

* Krishnan Ramaswamy, Antonio de Nicolas, and Aditi Banerjee, eds., *Invading the Sacred* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2007), chapter 22, “Character Assassination,” pp., 303-324.

* Paul Courtright, "Studying Religion in an Age of Terror," unpublished paper.

Week 11. November 13. Site Projects – I

This is the first of three weeks in which students will present their work. Draft versions of the project reports will provide the main reading for each of these weeks, posted to Courseworks by midnight on the Friday prior to the seminar. These will be supplemented by additional short readings that presenters may wish to assign as background relevant to their presentations. Students not making presentations will be responsible for editorial evaluations of the papers presented in any given week—probably two students commenting on a given paper.

Week 12. November 20. Site Projects – II

Week 13. November 27. **No class**, but the final version of your site profile, posted to the class website, is due by midnight. Probable length: 750 words.

Week 14. December 4. Site Projects – III

Monday, December 9. The final version of your seminar paper is due electronically in Courseworks and as hard copy in Milbank 219.

The Sites

The following “sites” are among the many that could become the focus of your field studies in the course of the term. New Jersey and the suburbs are also fair game.

Jamaica / Richmond Hill / Ozone Park

Maha Kali Mandir, Arya Samaj Mandir, Sudama Mandir, Lakshmi Narayan Mandir, Shri Devi Mandir, Shri Trimurti Bhavan, Kali Mai churches, Rajkumari Cultural Center

Flushing

Sai Baba Temple, Hindu Center, BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir

Woodside

Shree Guru Ravidas Temple, Divya Dham,

Elmhurst

Geeta Temple, Bangladesh Hindu Mandir

Manhattan

Art of Living NYC Center, Chinmaya Mission, AmmaNY (e.g., Namaste Healing Center), various yoga centers and ayurvedic practitioners

DANAM

Select Supplemental Bibliography

The debate about constructing Hinduism:

** Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron, eds., *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995).

** J. S. Hawley, “Naming Hinduism,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 15:3 (summer 1991), pp. 20-34.

** J. E. Llewellyn, ed., *Defining Hinduism: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

** David N. Lorenzen, “Who Invented Hinduism?,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:4 (1999), pp. 630-359.

** Wendy Doniger, “Hinduism by Any Other Name,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 15:3 (summer 1991), pp. 35-41.

** Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 85-130.

** Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

** Gunther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke, eds., *Hinduism Reconsidered* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989).

** Will Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism: 'Hinduism' and the Study of Indian Religions, 1600-1776* (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2003).

Hinduism and new immigrant religion in New York:

** Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

** Tony Carnes and Fenggang Yang, eds., *Asian American Religions: Borders and Boundaries* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

** Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis, eds., *New York Glory: Religions in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

** R. Scott Hanson, "City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, New York," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000.

** Daniel Jasper, "The Incorporation of Hinduism in New York," International Center for Migration, Ethnicity, and Citizenship, The New School University.

** Madhulika S. Khandelwal, "Indian Immigration in Queens, New York City: Patterns of Spatial Concentration and Distribution, 1965-1990," in Peter van der Veer, *Nation and Migration*, pp. 178-196.

** Hanna Kim, "Being Swaminarayan: The Ontology and Significance of Belief in the Construction of a Gujarati Diaspora," PhD. dissertation, Columbia University, 2001.

** Joanna Lessinger, *From the Ganges to the Hudson: Indian Immigrants in New York City* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995).

** Susan Slyomovics, "New York City's Muslim World Day Parade," in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

** Robert A. Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), especially the Introduction, pp. 1-58.

American Hinduism (beyond works cited elsewhere above)

** Corinne G. Dempsey, *The Goddess Lives in Upstate New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), entire, pp. 3-214.

** Philip Goldberg, *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation : How Indian Spirituality Changed the West.* New York: Harmony Books, 2010.

** Prema Kurien, “Becoming American by Becoming Hindu: Indian Americans Take Their Place at the Multicultural Table,” in R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, eds., *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), pp. 37-70.

** Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 1-156.

** Aparna Rayaprol, *Negotiating Identities: Women in the Indian Diaspora* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

** Sandhya Shukla, “Locations for South Asian Diasporas,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001), pp. 551-572.

** Joanne Punzo Waghorne, *Diaspora of the Gods: Modern Hindu Temples in an Urban Middle-Class World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

On ethnography

** Corinne G. Dempsey, “Reading and Writing (to) the Devi: Reflections on Unanticipated Ritualized Ethnography.” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21 (2009), pp. 28-39.

** Ron Grimes, “Fieldwork in Religious Studies: Guidelines and Forms for the Waterloo Religions Project,” unpublished paper, Wilfred Laurier University, 2002, pp. 7-10, 17-24, 43-54.

** Harry F. Wolcott, *The Art of Fieldwork* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1995), chapter 5, pp. 86-121.

** Arthur J. Magida, ed., *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People’s Religious Ceremonies* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1996).

** James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). See especially the chapter by Vincent Crapanzano, “Hermes’ Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description,” pp. 51-76.

** Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon, eds. *Women Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).