

Rel. 340: Topics in Asian Religions

Religion, Community, and Conflict in South Asia

Prof. Timothy Lubin
Department of Religion
Washington and Lee University

How do religious ideas and practices define social groups and communities? How can religious identity become the basis for a nationalist movement? What is the relationship between religion and social conflict? This course explores these questions by examining the religious dimensions of South Asia past and present, based on a survey of examples from India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Course Requirements:

Students should carefully read and reflect on the assignments for each class, and be prepared to talk about them. Formal work for the course will be: a 5-page take-home midterm essay question (25%); a 15-page term paper (50%); and two presentations in class (one of which will concern the topic of the term paper) (together, 25%). Participation in class discussions can raise (and lack thereof may lower) the final grade. The aim is for the students to develop good analytical and expressive skills while exploring the subject.

Books for Purchase

Octavio Paz, *In Light of India*

Vasudha Dalmia and H. von Stietencron, eds., *Representing Hinduism*

Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*

Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*

Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?*

Course Reader

Schedule of Readings:

Week I: Overview

Octavio Paz, *In Light of India*, pp. 3-133.

Week II: Visions of the "Noble" Society"

Gombrich, pp. 1-81.

CR: RV 10.90, BAU 1.4, Laws of Manu 2

Marriott, "Caste" (in *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*)

Gita Dharampal-Frick, "Shifting Categories in the Discourse on Caste" in RH, 82-100

Week III: Good King, God-King

Gombrich, pp. 81-136.

CR: Edicts of Ashoka; Manu; Ramayana

Week IV: Us and Them

RN, chs. 1, 2

N. K. Wagle, "Hindu-Muslim Interactions in Medieval Maharashtra" in HR.

Robert E. Frykenberg, "The Emergence of Modern 'Hinduism' as a Concept and as an Institution," in HR

Richard Burghart, "The Category 'Hindu' in the Political Discourse of Nepal" in RH.

Week V: Revival and Reform Movements

Vasudha Dalmia, "The Only Real Religion of the Hindus" in HR, pp. 176-210.

Anncharlott Eschmann, "Religion, Reaction and Change: The Role of Sects in Hinduism," in HR.

Anncharlott Eschmann, "Mahima Dharma: An Autochthonous Hindu Reform Movement," ch XX in CJ, 375-410.

Week VI: Religious Status and the Law

Dieter Conrad, "The Personal Law Question and Hindu Nationalism" in RH.

Marc Galanter, "Hinduism, Secularism, and the Indian Judiciary," ch. 10 in Law and Society in Modern India.

Sudhir Chandra, "Whose Laws?--Notes on a Nineteenth Century Hindu Case of Conjugal Rights" in RH.

Jürgen Lütt, "From Krishnalila to Ramarajya: A Court Case and Its Consequences for the Reformulation of Hinduism" in

RH, 142-153.

Week VII: Ritual

RN, chs. 3-4

Richard Cashman, The Myth of the Lokamanya, pp. 1-16, 75-97.

Week VIII: The Uses of History

RN, ch. 5

Partha Chatterjee, "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism" in RH, pp. 103-128.

G. Pandey, "The Appeal of Hindu History" in RH, pp. 369-388.

Week IX: Language and the Media

RN, ch. 6

Christopher R. King, "Forging a New Linguistic Identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868-1914," ch. 6 in *Culture*

and Power in Banaras, ed. Sandria Freitag (U. Calif. Press, 1989), pp. 179-202.

Angelika Malinar, "The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata TV Serial" in RH, 442-467.

Monika Horstmann, "Towards a Universal Dharma: Kalyan and the Tracts of the Gita Press" in RH, 294-305.

Week X: The Monks' History of Ceylon

Gombrich, chs. 6-8.

Week XI: Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka

Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?*

Week XII: Wrapping Up

student presentations.