1. Course Name, Level, Number of Credits

Religions of South Asia, REST08013, SCQF Level 8, 20 credits

2. Course description

Religions of South Asia will provide you with an overview of the early history of religion and religions in the Indian subcontinent, with a focus on Classical Hinduism, Indian Buddhism and early Jainism. The course will be broadly historical in organisation, with links being made between the different traditions through discussion of shared concepts and beliefs, awakening you to the inter-connected nature of Indian religious traditions. This course will prepare you for honours-level study of Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism.

3. Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- outline the history and main features of religions of South Asian origin
- identify and assess points of intersection, influence and dialogue between the different traditions
- confidently analyse textual and historical sources for the study of early South Asian religions

In addition to this, students should fulfil the following generic School learning outcomes by being able to:

- identify key terms and their meanings
- demonstrate good judgement in prioritising course readings
4. Organisation of Teaching

Course Manager:
Dr Naomi Appleton, naomi.appleton@ed.ac.uk, 0131 6508976
Room: New College 2.24
Office hour: Mondays 10-11am

Timetable:
Lectures: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-9.50am, Lecture Room 1, New College
Tutorial: Fridays 9-9.50am, New College (rooms tba)

5. Content of the Course

Each week there will be three lectures and one tutorial. [NB NO tutorial in week 1.]

Lectures will be led by the CM but will include student discussion and participation. Background reading for the lectures is listed for each week, from one of the three core course textbooks listed in the Bibliography.

Tutorials will involve student presentations and discussion around set readings from primary sources. Doing the set tutorial reading is essential to full participation in the course and will serve as preparation for the exam. All tutorial readings are in the Course Reader, which can be purchased from the School office.

Week 1.
Lecture 1: Introduction, overview of course
Lecture 2: History and definitions
Lecture 3: The Vedas, Vedic gods and Vedic ritual
Background reading: Flood chapters 1 & 2

Week 2.
Lecture 1: Myths from the Rg Veda OR how to read primary sources
Lecture 2: The four goals of Brahmanical Hindus
Lecture 3: The Upanisads - rebirth and liberation
Tutorial: The Law Code of Manu, on the duties of the four classes
Background reading: Flood chapter 3

Week 3.
Lecture 1: Renunciation and ascetic practice in Brahmanical Hinduism
Lecture 2: Karma, rebirth, fatalism and materialism
Lecture 3: Recap – key themes and ideas
Tutorial: Ascetic withdrawal or social engagement?
Background reading: Flood chapter 4

Week 4.
Lecture 1: Jainism – origins, life story of Mahāvīra
Lecture 2: Jainism - the early community
Lecture 3: Jainism – scripture and authority
Tutorial: Scriptural sources on key Jain ideals
Background reading: Dundas chapters 1 & 2
Week 5.
Lecture 1: Jainism - women
Lecture 2: Jainism - karma, rebirth, liberation, asceticism
Lecture 3: Jainism – development of the lay path
Tutorial: Jain stories inspiring renunciation
Background reading: Dundas chapters 4 & 5

Week 6.
Lecture 1: Buddhism - origins and early teachings
Lecture 2: Buddhism - karma, rebirth, liberation, meditation
Lecture 3: Buddhism – scripture and authority
Tutorial: Sources on the ordination of women in Buddhism
Background reading: Berkwitz chapters 1 & 2

Week 7.
Lecture 1: Buddhism – monastic and lay paths
Lecture 2: Buddhism – the bodhisattva path in mainstream Buddhism
Lecture 3: Buddhism – the bodhisattva path in Mahāyāna Buddhism
Tutorial: The story of the Buddha’s past life as a hare
Background reading: Berkwitz chapter 3

Week 8. [SUBMIT ESSAY by 2pm Monday 3rd November 2014.]
Lecture 1: Developments in Mahāyana Buddhism
Lecture 2: Medieval Buddhist philosophy
Lecture 3: Recap – Who is a good brahmin?
Tutorial: On the qualities of a bodhisattva - extract from the Bodhicaryāvatāra
Background reading: Berkwitz chapter 4

Week 9.
Lecture 1: The Epics and Purāṇas – key themes
Lecture 1: Classical Hindu Epics – the Mahābhārata
Lecture 2: Classical Hindu Epics – the Rāmāyaṇa
Tutorial: The Bhagavad Gītā
Background reading: Flood chapter 5

Week 10.
Lecture 1: The rise in Vaiṣṇavism
Lecture 2: Śaivism and goddess worship
Lecture 3: Hindu philosophical schools
Tutorial: Viṣṇu
Background reading: Flood chapters 6 & 10.

Week 11.
Lecture 1: Connected themes: asceticism, dharma, karma, liberation
Lecture 2: Connected themes: women, community, lay-monastic divide
Lecture 3: Connected themes: history, geography, cosmology
Tutorial: Revision and exam preparation
6. Assessment

This course is assessed by examination (60%) and coursework (40%). The coursework component consists of an essay (25%), tutorial presentation (10%) and tutorial participation (5%).

6.1 Exam, 2 hours (60%)
This is divided into two parts of equal weighting:
(A) A choice of essay-type questions relating to the subjects covered during the course. Students must write ONE essay from a choice of six. Answers must make reference to at least two of the traditions studied.
(B) A selection of primary source extracts for analysis, taken from the course reader. Students must write responses to TWO extracts from a choice of six, commenting on the following three areas:
   - Context: What do you know about the context of the extract? What text is it from? Who wrote it (if the author is known)? When? Why? What characterises the text as a whole?
   - Analysis: What are the key aspects of the source? Identify any key ideas or terms or people and explain them. Why are they important and what does this text say about them?
   - Evaluation: Evaluate the significance of this source for our understanding of the religious tradition. Is it typical or exceptional? How does it fit into the overall picture of South Asian religions?

There will be lots of practice of this type of source-response question in class.

6.2 Essay of 2000 words (25%)
Essays must be submitted through LEARN by 2pm on Monday 3rd November 2014. Essays will be returned to students, with comments, by Monday 17th November. Students are welcome to come and talk with me about their essay during my office hour (or at other times by prior arrangement) and may bring a plan or draft of their essay for discussion at that meeting. Alternatively students may also email me a one-page plan of their essay at any stage during the semester and I will offer comments by email or in person, normally within one week.

Essays will be assessed according to the standard assessment criteria as found in the Undergraduate Handbook (“Red Book”).

Essay questions: [choose ONE]

1. How important is liberation from rebirth to the religious traditions of early South Asia? Discuss with reference to at least TWO of the traditions.

2. In what ways is the role of asceticism in Jain religious practice distinct from other religions of early South Asia?

3. To what extent do Buddhism and Jainism share the same understanding of how karma operates?

6.3 Tutorial presentation and blog posting (10%)
Each student will be allocated one tutorial reading on which to make a short presentation. This presentation should give brief details of the context of the source and point to a few key issues of interest within it, raising questions for group discussion. The same week they will also be asked to post some related notes on the course weblog at least 24 hours prior to the tutorial. Other students will be invited to comment on the blog posting.

*Indicative grade profiles for this element of assessment:*
A – Excellent notes, giving thorough contextualisation of source(s) and highlighting the most important aspects of it. Makes reference to readings beyond the lectures. Clear and eloquent presentation. Pertinent questions, covering all reasonable areas for discussion.
C – Adequate, but lacking in at least one of the key areas (notes, questions, presentation). Notes perhaps lacking in either context or analysis of the content, or in timeliness. Questions lacking in either coverage or quality. Presentation lacking clarity of delivery.
D – Lacking in all of the aspects (notes, questions and presentation). Barely acceptable contribution.
Fail: Student does not produce blog entry and/or does not attend tutorial.

### 6.4 Tutorial participation (5%)

Students must do the tutorial reading and attend every tutorial ready to engage in discussion. They should also read the blog posting prior to the tutorial and offer a comment on it.

In case of illness or other excusable absence the student should email their tutor.

*Indicative grade profiles for this element of the assessment:*
A – Excellent: Full attendance, pertinent blog comments and remarks, able to argue a position and/or critique those of others with skill and courtesy. Demonstrates evidence of wide reading and full engagement in the course.
B – Very good: Full or nearly full attendance, pertinent blog comments, remarks and questions. Demonstrates evidence of having thoroughly engaged with tutorial readings and lecture content.
C – Good: Reasonable attendance, some contribution to blog and discussion.
D – Satisfactory: Minimal attendance and participation.
Fail – insufficient attendance, evidence the reading has not been done, little or no contribution to discussion or blog.

### 7. Bibliography and Course Readings

#### 7.1 The Course Reader

This course expects you to become familiar with a wide range of primary sources that represent significant strands of religious thought in early South Asia. All of these readings are in a Course Reader, which you can buy from the School office for a very reasonable price.
Extracts from these readings will form 50% of the end of course exam. Most of the readings are also the focus for a tutorial (as noted below). Others will be discussed during lectures. Please bring your course reader to every tutorial.

The Course Reader contains:


11. Who is a true brahmin? Uttarādhyayana 25 and Dhammapada 26 [Lecture discussion]

12. The Bhagavad Gītā, chapter 2 [Tutorial week 9]

13. Stories of Viṣṇu – extracts from the Rāmāyaṇa and Viṣṇu Purāṇa [Tutorial week 10]

14. The Āḻvār poet-saints of Tamil Vaiṣṇavism [Lecture discussion]

7.2 Key Textbooks

Background reading for each week of lectures (listed in the course outline above) is selected from one of these three books:


7.3 Supplementary bibliography

The following is a suggestive list of resources for wider reading and essay preparation. Further materials may be found in the library or online.


