HINDU MYTHOLOGY – OF GODS, SAGES & COWHERD MAIDENS

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ABOUT THIS COURSE
This course examines Classical Myth in the Hindu Traditions, or the narrations about the Gods, Goddesses, Sages, Kings and Queens of Indian, which form the basis for Hindu religious practice, theology and self-identity. H. Rodrigues writes: “While the term ‘myth’ is commonly used to mean a false belief, religious studies scholars use it to refer to narratives that are believed to be true by adherents of a particular tradition” (Introduction to the Study of Religion). The Greek word mythos meant “authoritative speech,” “story” or “plot,” but today scholars mean it as “a traditional story with collective importance.” Ancient and contemporary Hindus take myths seriously; this course provides an overview of the central divine characters, stories, and imagery found in Hindu sacred literature. We will examine the manner in which mythology teaches central Hindu philosophical, cosmological and theological concepts. Known for its richness, spirituality and imaginative beauty, we will examine how divine myth, yoga practice and theology are intertwined in some of humanity’s oldest reflections on absolute reality.

TEXTBOOKS
(1) KLAUS KLOSTERMAIER, A Survey of Hinduism (SUNY).
(4) Optional – WENDY DONIGER, Hindu Myths (Penguin). Held on Reserve at Library.
(5) SELECTED READINGS, online at “Reserve Desk” off the Mitchell Library Website; call 325-7668 if you have trouble finding the readings.
   i. Bryant, “Introduction”
   ii. Gāneri, “Introduction,” and “Hidden in the Cave: The Upanishadic Self”
   iii. Edelmann, “The Bhāgavata Purāṇa’s Cosmological Project”

EVALUATION
(1) Class Participation and Class Attendance (20%).
(2) Midterm Exam (20%): Requiring short answers and short essays.
(3) Final Exam (20%): Cumulative exam, requiring short answers and essays.
(4) Short Paper (15%): An examination of a reading or lecture, 4-5 pages long.
(5) Research Paper (25%): A 7-9 page paper on a topic from the readings and a short classroom presentation of it.
(6) Extra Credit for a paper about any Philosophy & Religion Club events.
TENTATIVE WEEKLY SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: Introduction to Course

Week 2: Introducing Terms & Texts – What does “myth” mean in “Hindu” contexts?
   M: What is “Hinduism” and How to Study it?
      □ Klostermaier, Introduction
      □ Kinsley, Introduction

   W: “Myth” in Hindu contexts
      □ Bryant, “Līlā” and “Yogamāyā,” pp.xxii-xxix
      □ Schweig, Devotional Love as ‘Rāsa,’ pp. 97-100

Week 3: Myth and Truth
   M: No Class
   W: The Sage as Dragon Slayer
      □ Ganeri, Introduction, and Hidden in the Cave: The Upanishadic Self
      □ Doniger, Indra Slays Vṛtra, pp.74-90
      □ http://www.vanisource.org/wiki/SB_6, Bhāgavata 6.9-13

Week 4: Some Images of the Cast of Characters & Literature Survey
   M: Iconography of the Gods and Sages
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 3: The Veda

   W: Literature Survey: Purāṇas, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana and Bhagavad Gītā
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 4: Itiḥāsa Purāṇa

Week 5: Mythologies of How it All Began, Where it is All Going
   M: Vedic Cosmogonies
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 6: The World of the Hindu, Vedic Creation Myths
      □ Doniger, pp. 32-35

   W: Purānic Cosmogonies
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 6: The World of the Hindu, pp. 90-100
      □ Edelmann, The Bhāgavata Purāṇa's Cosmological Project

Week 6: God & Goddess – A Guide for the Perplexed
   M: Brahman and Īśvara
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 7: The Many Gods and The One God

   W: The Devī in Hinduism
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 17: Devī: The Divine Mother
      □ Kinsley, Ch 1: Goddesses in Vedic Literature

Week 7: Pārvatī and Śiva
   M: Śiva
      □ Klostermaier, Ch 16: Śiva
      □ Doniger, pp. 116-137
W: Being the Wife of an Erotic-Ascetic
  ⇒ Kinsley, Ch 3: Pārvatī

**Week 8: Pārvatī and Śiva**
M: Kālī
  ⇒ Kingsley, Ch 8: Kālī
  ⇨ Paper Presentations

W: Mid-Term Exam

**Week 9: Knowledge and Devotion**
M: The World and Getting Out
  ⇒ Klostermaier, Ch 13: Karma, Vidyā, Moksha

W: Love of God
  ⇒ Klostermaier, Ch 14: The Path of Loving Devotion

**Week 10: Vishnu and Lakshmī**
M: Śrī-Lakshmī
  ⇒ Kinsley, Ch 2: Śrī-Lakshmī

W: Vishnu
  ⇒ Klostermaier, Ch 15: Vishnu and His Devotees
  ⇒ Doniger, pp.175-197

**Week 11: Spring Break**

**Week 12: Sītā, Rāma and Hanumān**
M: Rāma and his wonderful Monkey Friend
  ⇒ Klostermaier, Ch 4: Itihāsa Purāṇa

W: Rāma's Ideal Wife
  ⇒ Kinsley, Ch 5: Sītā
  ⇨ First Paper Due

**Week 13: Rādhā and Krishna**
M: Early History of Rādhā and Krishna
  ⇒ Bryant, Early evidence of Krishna as divine being
  ⇒ Kingsley, Ch 6: Rādhā

W: Myth as Drama
  ⇒ Schweig, Introduction

**Week 14: The Dance of Divine Love**
M: Introduction to the Rāsa-Līlā
  ⇒ Schweig, Ch 1: Background of the Text
W: Dimensions of the Rāsa-Lilā
   ≡ Schweig, Ch 2: Aspects of the Story

**Week 15: The Rāsa-Lilā and a Sacred Ecology**
M: The Rāsa-Lilā
   ≡ Schweig, Part I Poems from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
   ≫ Research Papers Due

W: Constructing a Sacred Ecology
   ≡ Kingsley, Ch 12

**Week 16: Review**
M: TBA
  W: In-Class Review