McMaster University - Department of Religious Studies
Religious Studies/Arts&Science 3L03E – The Indian Religious Tradition

Fall 2014

Lectures: Wednesdays 19:00-21:00 in CNH B107

Tutorials: T01 - Wednesdays 18:00-19:00 in TSH 122
T02 - Wednesdays 18:00-19:00 in KTH B101
T03 - Wednesdays 21:00-22:00 in BSB B138
T04 - Wednesdays 21:00-22:00 in BSB B139

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Office: UH B120                      Office: UH B123
Office Hours: Wednesdays 17:00-18:00 Office Hours: Wednesdays 17:00-18:00
Email: emmscd@mcmaster.ca            Email: sengum@mcmaster.ca

Course Description

• Religious Studies/Arts&Science 3L03 is a half-year course in which students read widely from the major religious traditions of Classical India.
• We read literature from Hindu, Buddhist and Jain texts covering a time span of about 3500 years (c1500 BCE to contemporary times).
• Students are introduced to the historical, religious and linguistic contexts of the texts they are reading.
• In this iteration of the course, we will focus on the themes of asceticism and renunciation in Indian literature. We will focus on these theme by asking one basic question: Is it better to remain engaged in the world—to involve one’s self with family and society; or, is it better to renounce the world—to leave everything behind in pursuit of spiritual liberation? In order to answer this primary question, it is also necessary to ask two related questions. How do the traditions we are studying understand renunciation? That is, what does it mean to renounce the world? And, what, if any, are the differences between renunciation and asceticism?

Course Objectives – Upon completion of this course:

• Students will become familiar with the important themes of asceticism and renunciation in the classical religions of South Asia.
• Students will become familiar with the various ways in which asceticism and renunciation are treated by different traditions at different times.
• Students will become familiar with some of the important ways in which the terms are understood by different traditions at different times.

Avenue to Learn and Turnitin.com

• In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn (A2L). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for McMaster email accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss these with the course instructor.
• In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity
• Please check the A2L page for this course regularly – especially when you are preparing your readings for class. I will use A2L to provide reminders and to focus your attention on particular aspects of the readings.

Required Texts (Available at the Campus Store)

• Religious Studies/Arts&Science 3L03 Custom Courseware ($60.95)

Evaluation

• 1 Midterm Test (15%) – Students will write one in-class test designed to measure acquisition and understanding of course content.
• Final Exam (25%) – At the end of the term, students will write an exam during the regular examination period. Like the midterm test, the exam is intended to measure acquisition and understanding of course content.
• Asceticism/Renunciation Reflection Paper (10%) – Students will submit a 750-1000 word reflection paper on the topic of asceticism and/or renunciation. Ideally, this reflection paper will be based on the students’ own experiences. Further instructions can be found on pages 8-9 of this syllabus.
• Discussion Board Posts (10%) – Students will respond to selected readings before those readings are discussed in class. You are required to post five times during
the term. Each of your posts will be graded. You are allowed to post more than 5 times, but the mark cannot exceed 10/10. Further instructions can be found on page 9 of this syllabus.

- **Essay/Project (30%)** – Each student will hand in a 1750-2250 word formal essay (about 6-8 double-spaced pages in 12-point font) on a topic of the student’s choice. Further instructions, including suggested topics can be found on pages 10-11 of this syllabus.

- **Attendance, preparation and participation (10%)** – Regular preparation, attendance and participation are essential for the acquisition of any new knowledge. The teaching assistants will determine this portion of your mark at their discretion. They may require additional activities (e.g., tutorial presentations, brief reports, leading discussion, etc.) as part of this mark.

### Late Submission/Missed Tests

- Essays and reflection papers handed in late will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day unless acceptable documentation is provided.
- A midterm test missed as the result of a documented absence may be written at a later date.
- An exam missed as the result of a documented absence must be written during the deferred exam period.

### Student Accessibility Services

- Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone (905)525-9140 x28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

### University/Faculty/Department Statements:

1. **Course Modification Warning**
   - The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

2. **Statement on Academic Integrity**
   - You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.
• Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.
• It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity
• The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2. Improper collaboration in group work. 3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

3. The McMaster Student Absence Form
• The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) (http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report MEDICAL absences that last up to 5 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work (that is less than 30% of the course grade). Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of ONE Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent for more than 5 days, exceed one request per term, are absent for a reason other than medical, or have missed work worth 30% or more of the final grade, you MUST visit your Faculty Office. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.
• For Arts&Science students: If you are absent for more than 5 days, have missed academic work worth 30% or more, or exceed one request per term, you must see Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program office (C-105). You will be required to provide supporting documentation.

4. Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy
• Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

5. Department of Religious Studies Assignment Submission Policy
• Staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will neither date-stamp nor receive papers and other assignments.
## Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic and Reading</th>
<th>Assessment Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept. 10</td>
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<td>Course Introduction and Orientation: Introduction to the Course Questions and to the Academic Study of Religion</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 17 <strong>Tutorials start this week</strong></td>
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<td>The Idea of Asceticism and Renunciation; Introduction to Vedic religion and the Vedic worldview</td>
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<td>Read:</td>
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<td>• from Wendy Doniger, <em>The Rig Veda</em> (CP, pp. 1-14)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>Discussion Post 1</td>
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<td>The Renunciation Debate in late Vedic and early Classical sources; One Orthodox Response: Varṇa-āśrama-dharma</td>
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<td>Read:</td>
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<td>• Patrick Olivelle, “Ascetic Withdrawal or Social Engagement” in Donald Lopez, Ed. <em>Religions of India in Practice</em> (CP, pp. 15-22)</td>
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<td>• from Patrick Olivelle, <em>Manu’s Code of Law</em>, (CP, pp. 23-48)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Discussion Post 2</td>
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<td>The Power of Asceticism and the Erotic Ascetic; A Second Orthodox Response: the Synthesis of the Bhagavadgītā</td>
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<td>Read:</td>
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<td>• from J. A. B. van Buitenen, <em>The Mahābhārata</em> (CP, pp. 49-51)</td>
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<td>• from M. R. Kale, <em>The Kumārashāṃbha</em> (CP, pp. 53-75)</td>
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<td>• from <em>The Bhagavadgītā</em>, chapters 2-6 <a href="http://www.gita4free.com/english_completegita2.html">http://www.gita4free.com/english_completegita2.html</a></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
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<td>Modern Narratives of Hindu Renunciation</td>
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<td>Video during class time. No reading assigned.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>Discussion Post 3</td>
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<td>Introduction to Buddhism: The Paradigmatic Life of the Buddha; The Buddha makes his Case for the Homeless life</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading/Assignment</td>
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| Oct. 22    | Buddhist Narratives of Renunciation: Jātaka Tales and the Story of Śroṇa Koṭikarna | Read: from Peter Khoroche, *Once the Buddha was a Monkey* (CP, pp. 129-147)  
               from Joseph LaRose, “The Story of Śroṇa Koṭikarna” (download pdf file from A2L) |
               from Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Therīgāthā”  
               from Rhys-Davids, “Psalms of the Sisters”  
               from William Dalrymple, “The Monk’s Tale” (CP, pp. 181-195) |
               from Friedhelm Hardy, “The Story of King Yaśodhara” (CP, pp. 225-235)  
               from Phyllis Granoff, “Abhayasīha” (CP, pp. 237-242)  
               from Phyllis Granoff, “Durgilā” (CP, pp. 243-250) |
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| 12 Nov. 19 | Jain Stories of Renunciation – Obstructions to Proper Practice; Jain Stories of Renunciation – Family Ties | Read:  
- Phyllis Granoff, “The Glorious Jīvadeva” (CP, pp. 251-254)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Amarasīha” (CP, pp. 255-258)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Lobhadeva” (CP, pp. 259-265)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “The Prince Who Loved Sweetmeats” (CP, pp. 267-269)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Rudradatta’s Beloved” (CP, pp. 271-273)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “The Monk Sukośala” (CP, pp. 275-279)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Sundarī” (CP, pp. 281-283)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Maheśvaradatta” (CP, pp. 285-286)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Kuberadatta and Kuberadattā” (CP, pp. 287-289)  
- Phyllis Granoff, “Mohadatta” (CP, pp. 291-299) | Discussion Post 7 |
| 13 Nov. 26 | Ascetic Practices and their Benefits; Modern Narratives of Jain Renunciation | Read:  
- from Hermann Jacobi, “The Ācārāṅga Sūtra” (CP, pp. 301-307)  
- from Joseph LaRose, “The Aupapātika Sūtra” (download pdf file from A2L)  
| 14 Dec. 3 | Last class – Catch Up, Review and Exam Preparation | | |
Asceticism/Renunciation Reflection Paper

750-1000 words, 10% of final grade
Due: Wednesday, October 8 at 23:59 in the appropriate dropbox on A2L as PDF file

Purpose: To reflect critically on aspects of asceticism and renunciation by drawing on your own experience or by reflecting on Gandhi’s “experiments with truth.” Be sure to include some consideration of religion (even if only on moral values) when writing up your reflection essay.

Formal Requirements: double spaced, numbered pages, 12 point font; word count at end of document; do not include a title page (title, name and student number on upper right of first page), in-text citations of all non-original material, bibliography at end of document

Choose one of the following options:

1. Experiment for one week with some kind of ascetic or renunciatory behaviour. For example, choose a vegetarian diet, or if a vegetarian already, become a vegan (see vegan.org). Or, abstain completely from the use of certain language in your daily discourse. Choose a suitable day or days and undertake a vow of silence (includes instant messaging). Try going to bed at 9pm and waking up at 4am for a week. Use your imagination! There are any number of relatively simple behaviour changes you can undertake. You should feel free to modify any of the above or come up with your own. There is no need to get approval from either your TA or me.

**Please refrain from undertaking any behaviour that may be detrimental to your health and/or well-being!**

You should take the next few days to decide what you would like to do. Once you have made your decision, make a promise – look at yourself in the mirror, or find a friend/parent/roommate, and make your decision formal, or even public, in some way. You may want to keep a journal of your experiment(s). This can be a record of a single day or it may consist of entries from several days. When you are done, write about the experience (use your journal entries in your paper if you want to). Was it difficult? In what ways? How did others react to your behaviour? You may want to undertake the same behaviour change with a friend. If you do form a “community of renouncers,” do you think that being part of a community made a difference? If you were not able to keep your vow, why? What do you think would have made it easier to undertake/complete?

When you write up your reflection paper, you should consider some of the ideas that are expressed in the Kallistos Ware reading from September 17. His paper introduces some of the basic ideas about asceticism and renunciation that we will return to throughout the course. This paper should be the only work you cite.
2. Consider Gandhi’s rationales for asceticism and the practices he undertook in light of the presentation of asceticism in the Kallistos Ware reading. Although written to be part of a cross-cultural examination of asceticism, the Ware reading is clearly written from a Western and Christian perspective. Do you think this bias makes this reading inapplicable to Eastern, non-Christian asceticism? What sorts of comments you think that Ware might have about Gandhi’s practices? And what might Gandhi say about Ware’s presentation of asceticism? You may want to consider whether there the two presentations of asceticism share any features. Are they working towards the same goals? Do they use the same methods? If not, how do they differ? For this option, these two readings should be the only ones you cite.

**Discussion Board Posts**

150-200 words each (minimum 5 submissions), 10% of final grade

Due: There are opportunities to post to the discussion board in Weeks 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Please do not attach documents – enter your posts directly onto the discussion board.

Purpose: To have students prepare for class by reading and reflecting on some of the assigned material. Ideally, this exercise will help you focus your interests and lead to a viable essay topic.

In your posts, you should aim to demonstrate some sort of engagement with the readings. For example, you might write about something new you learned in lecture that is reflected in the primary sources; you might write about something that you thought you knew that changed as a result of your reading; you might write about an idea that you find interesting that you think bears further investigation. The engagement that you demonstrate can take many forms and the above suggestions are not meant to be exhaustive.

You may comment on any one of the readings for the weeks noted above, or you may comment on more than one.

I would advise you to strenuously avoid summarizing the reading. Please assume that your reader is familiar with the events of the story. You may use brief quotations or refer to certain events in the reading, but do so only to further the comments that you make.
Essay/Project

1750-2250 words, 30% of final grade
Due: Wednesday, November 26 at 23:59 in the appropriate dropbox on A2L as PDF file

Purpose: To have students carry out research on a particular topic related to the course content; to have students articulate that research in a coherent argument.

Formal Requirements: double spaced, numbered pages, 12 point font; word count at end of document; do not include a title page (title, name and student number on upper right of first page), in-text citations of all non-original material, bibliography at end of document

Your topic should be related to the central questions of the course. Furthermore, it should be focused on one or more of the religious traditions of South Asia. If you are unsure of how to formulate your topic, or if you are unsure of the viability of your topic, please see either your teaching assistant or me.

Your essay should have a title that accurately describes the topic you have chosen. Your opening paragraph should introduce the topic and outline your argument (including your thesis statement). Logically organized body paragraphs, in which you provide and discuss evidence in support of your argument, should follow. Your essay should end with a concluding paragraph that recapitulates the argument of your paper.

There should be a bibliography that lists all the works you cite in your essay. You must cite any quotations taken from primary and secondary sources. As well, any idea that is not your own, e.g., an idea that you paraphrase in your own words, must be properly cited. **If you are in any way unsure of how or when to cite sources, please consult either your teaching assistant or me.**

Suggested Essay Topics

You are free to formulate your own essay topic. If you choose to formulate your own essay topic, please avoid vague and/or overly broad topics. Limit your topic to something that can be reasonably covered in 1750-2250 words. You should avoid phrases like “Buddhists say . . .” Which Buddhists? At what time? Where? The following topics are only suggestions. Each topic has been broadly constructed. You will need to focus more narrowly on a sub-topic within the larger suggested topic. Each topic will require further reading and research beyond what is described in the topic.

1. Read J. E. Llewellyn’s “The Autobiography of a Female Renouncer,” pages 462-472 in Religions of India in Practice (on reserve at Mills). Consider the issue of female renunciation within the religious traditions of South Asia. You may choose to focus on one tradition only, or you may choose to compare this issue across more than one tradition. Do the traditions treat women’s renunciation similarly or not? What are the reasons for this?
2. Read “The Story of Śroṇa Koṭikarna” (download PDF from A2L). How are renunciation and asceticism depicted in this Buddhist text? What are the rewards? Why are the various characters in their current circumstances? How do the fates of the various characters affect Śroṇa Koṭikarna?

3. Read “Cullavagga VII,” pages 253–290 in The Book of the Discipline (on reserve at Mills). This text purports to describe schism in the early Buddhist community. One of the reasons for the schism is the role of asceticism and ascetic practices. Consider the place of asceticism and ascetic practices in different Buddhist traditions. You may want to consider the work of Gregory Schopen when you construct your argument.

4. Read the “Second Lecture, called The Destruction of Karman,” pages 249–261 of Jaina Sutras, volume 2 (on reserve at Mills). Why is this text so concerned with the concept of karma?

Some general questions:

Is there some sort of essential relationship between South Asian religions and asceticism/renunciation? How do Medieval religious traditions such as Islam and Sikhism regard asceticism and renunciation?

If so, how far does this relationship extend? Does it begin or stop at certain points in history? Does it extend to all South Asian religions?

If there is, is this relationship a part of religion in general (the world’s major religions)?

Is there something essentially religious about renunciation/asceticism? For example, what differentiates religious fasting from going on a diet? Is yoga done for its health benefits the same as yoga done to prepare the body for meditation? If a researcher concludes that mindfulness-based stress reduction is ineffective, what are the implications for Buddhist meditation?

More to come....