

yoga traditions



बल्लभदेवः तदीयं विद्मि तन्नतु ॐ तद्गो विसृजते तन्नतु ॐ चतुर्वेदवेदवेदवेदवेद २-४:३०@लक्ष्मी ४०३

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While yoga is often practiced today at the gym for health and exercise, it has a long philosophical history in the religions of India. This course traces the intellectual traditions of yoga from early South Asian texts to its modern global and secular forms. Yoga entails training in contemplative, postural, and respiratory techniques as a means to such varied goals as knowing the true self, experiencing nirvana, meeting god, making good karma, and enhancing wellbeing. We will examine yoga philosophy in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the writings of Patanjali, and then turn to its flowering in the development of medieval and modern Hinduism as we look at tantrism, guru devotion, and bhakti religiosity. Finally, we will explore the history of its modern expressions in physical exercise, stress management, and "secular spirituality."

Course Requirements

A. Classroom Etiquette. Regular attendance, punctuality, completion of all assigned readings for each session, and participation in class discussions is expected. Laptops, phones, and the like are not to be used in class. More than one absence will result in grade reductions. Since we meet for two and half hours we'll take a short break about halfway through, so please defer any need to leave the classroom that's not an emergency until then or after class.

B. Presentations. Each class several students will open up our discussions by presenting (for about 5 minutes) their critical reflections on and questions about the readings. In our final class each student will present on their final projects. These presentations, and verbal participation in the course overall, count for 20% of the final grade.

C. Three Papers. Guidelines will be given in class. 80% of final grade.
Paper 1 (20%) Five pages, due October 8th.
Paper 2 (30%) Six pages, due November 10th
Paper 3 (30%) Seven pages, due December 18th

D. Adherence to Amherst College's "Statement of Intellectual Responsibility," which reads as follows:

Every person's education is the product of his or her own intellectual effort and participation in a process of critical exchange. Amherst cannot educate those who are unwilling to submit their own work and ideas to critical assessment. Nor can it tolerate those who interfere with the participation of others in the critical process. Therefore, the College considers it a violation of the requirements of intellectual responsibility to submit work that is not one's own or otherwise to subvert the conditions under which academic work is performed by oneself or by others.

Cases of plagiarism or cheating will meet with appropriate penalties, defined in consultation with a Dean of Students.

Readings

Four books available for purchase at Amherst Books:

Olivelle, Patrick. 1998. *Upaniṣads*. Oxford University Press.

Miller, Barbara. 1986. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. Bantam Classics

Bryant, Edwin. 2009. *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary*. North Point Press.

Swatmaram. 1987. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika, A Classical Guide for the Advanced Practice of Hatha Yoga with a Commentary by Swami Vishnu-devanada*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Other readings, marked with an asterisk in schedule below, are available on our course website:

(<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/1011F/RELI/RELI-29-1011F>)

Schedule

September 8 (no regular class – Monday schedule observed – please come to the information session at 4pm, Chapin 101.

September 15 Foundational Ideas and Practices – The Vedas

Read:

Olivelle, The Upaniṣads xiv-xv “Guide to the pronunciation of Sanskrit words”

*Mahony, William K. 1998. *The artful universe: an introduction to the Vedic religious imagination*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 41-58, 104-141

*Heesterman, Jan C. 2005. "Vedism and Brahmanism." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Lindsay Jones, ed.. 2nd ed. Vol. 14, 9552-9574. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA.

September 22 The Upaniṣads

Read:

Olivelle, The Upaniṣads xxiii-lvi, 23-26, 28-30, 34-58, 148-156, 167-176, 226-247

September 29 The Upaniṣads – Bhagavad-Gita

Read:

Olivelle, The Upaniṣads 248-277

Miller, The Bhagavad-Gita 1-18, 156-162 (key words), 19-49

October 6 The Bhagavad-Gita

Read:

Miller, The Bhagavad-Gita 51-154

October 13 Yoga Sūtras

Read:

Bryant, The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali xvii-lxvii, 1-168

October 20 Yoga Sūtras

Read:

Bryant, The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali 169-474

October 27 **Tantrism – Haṭha Yoga**

Read:

- *Smith, Brian K. 2005. "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Lindsay Jones, ed., 2nd ed. Vol. 13, 8987-8994. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - *Lorenzen, David N. 2005. "Haṭhayoga." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Lindsay Jones, ed., 2nd ed. Vol. 6. 3794-3795. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA.
- Swatmaram, Hatha Yoga Pradipika 1-88

November 3 **Haṭha Yoga**

Read:

Swatmaram, Hatha Yoga Pradipika 89-197

November 10 **Development of Modern Yoga – Brahmo Samaj and Swami Vivekananda**

Read:

- * De Michelis, Elizabeth. 2005. "Roots of Modern yoga." In *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*, 36-90. New York: Continuum.
- * De Michelis, Elizabeth. 2005. "Vivekananda and the emergence of Neo-Vedanta Occultism." In *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*, 91-126. New York: Continuum.
- *Singleton, Mark. 2010. "Popular Portrayals of the Yogin." In *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*, 55-80. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- *Vivekananda, Swami. 2003. *Raja Yoga*. Leeds: Celaphias Press. 1-86.

November 17 **Yoga, Science, Nationalism, and Wrestling**

Read:

- *Alter, Joseph S. 2004. "Swami Kuvalayananda: Science Yoga, and Global Modernity." In *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy*, 73-108. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- *Alter, Joseph S. 2005. "Modern Medical Yoga: Struggling With the Histories of Sex, Magic and Mysticism." *Asian Medicine* 1(1): 119-146.
- *Alter, Joseph S. 2000. "Surya Namaskar: Salute to Village Democracy." In *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism*, 83-112. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- *Alter, Joseph S. 1992. "The Discipline of the Wrestler's Body." In *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India*, 90-135 Berkeley: University of California Press.

November 24 (Thanksgiving Break)

December 1 **Modern Postural Yoga: Krisnamacharya and Iyengar Yogas**

Read:

- *De Michelis, Elizabeth. 2005. "Twentieth Century Developments of Modern Yoga." In *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*, 181-194. New York: Continuum.
- *Singleton, Mark. 2010. "T.Krishnamacharya and the Mysore Asana Revival." In *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*, 175-210. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- *De Michelis, Elizabeth. 2005. "The Iyengar School of Modern Postural Yoga." In *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*, 194-247. New York: Continuum.
- *Hasselle-Newcombe, Suzanne. 2005. "Spirituality and 'Mystical Religion' in Contemporary Society: A Case Study of British Practitioners of the Iyengar Method of Yoga" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20(3): 305-322.

December 8 **Transnational Yoga (Divine Life Society), Clinical Yoga, and Yoga in the News**

Read:

- *Strauss, Sarah. 2005. *Positioning Yoga: Balancing Acts Across Cultures*. New York: Berg, 36-114.
- *Salmon, Paul, Elizabeth Lush, Megan Jablonski, and Sandra E. Sephton. 2009. "Yoga and Mindfulness: Clinical Aspects of an Ancient Mind/Body Practice." *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice* 16 (1):59-72.
- *Tran, M. D., R. G. Holly, J. Lashbrook, and E. A. Amsterdam. 2001. "Effects of Hatha Yoga Practice on the Health-Related Aspects of Physical Fitness." *Preventive Cardiology* 4 (4):165-170.
- *Ross, Alyson, and Sue Thomas. 2010. "The Health Benefits of Yoga and Exercise: A Review of Comparison Studies." *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine* 16 (1):3-12.
- *"Yoga in the News": I'll email/post up to date links.

December 15 **Presentations**