

PHILOSOPHIES OF INDIA:
LIBERATING KNOWLEDGE

Philosophy Senior Seminar, PH375
Spring 2013

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Skidmore College

This senior seminar explores the major classical philosophies of India. We begin with the original Vedic sources: the early Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad-Gita. We study the six orthodox (Vedic) philosophical views (*darsanas*): Nyaya-Vaisesika, Sankhya-Yoga, and Mimamsa-Vedanta. We focus in more detail on two sub-schools of Vedanta: non-dualism founded by Sankara and qualified non-dualism founded by Ramanuja. Finally, we briefly consider the three heterodox (non-Vedic) *darsanas* of Carvaka, Jainism, and Buddhism. Throughout these readings we discuss the themes of bondage and liberation in terms of the different modes of knowing the nature of reality and the self. We will draw comparisons to some Western philosophies.

Texts

1. -----, The Bhagavad-Gita, tr. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Bantam, 1986).
2. -----, The Upanisads, tr. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 or 2008).
3. Byrom, Thomas, The Heart of Awareness: A Translation of the Ashtavakra Gita (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1990 or 2001).
4. Deutsch, Eliot, Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973).
5. Hamilton, Sue, Indian Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
6. Hiriyanna, M., The Essentials of Indian Philosophy (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 1995).
7. Koller, John M., The Indian Way, First Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1982) or The Indian Way: An Introduction to the Philosophies and Religions of India, Second Edition (New York: Prentice Hall, 2006). [Assignments are given below for both editions.]
8. Raju, P.T., The Philosophical Traditions of India (George Allen & Unwin, 1971, or University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971, or Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1992/1998).

Recommended for purchase but copies will be on closed reserve in the library when you need it to write your final essay:

9. Raju, P.T., Structural Depths of Indian Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985).

Learning Goals:

- (1) Study the major traditions of Indian philosophy in their historical and conceptual development and diversity.
- (2) Focus on Vedic traditions with brief attention to non-Vedic traditions.
- (3) Place Indian philosophy in its broader context of Indian religion and culture.
- (4) Draw comparisons between select Indian and Western philosophical views.
- (5) Reflect on the nature of philosophical activity and its role in human life in India and the West, including your philosophy major at Skidmore.
- (6) Consider how Indian philosophy has been and is being presented in the West, especially to undergraduates, by Western and Indian scholars.
- (7) Hone subtle reading, writing, and analytical skills, including critical evaluation, by discussing readings and writing essays about them.
- (8) Practice research skills by engaging in library and on-line research that draws on scholarly sources to write your essays.
- (9) Cultivate productive working relationships with me and others in the course to explore difficult issues in an honest and respectful way.
- (10) Explore your own philosophical views in relation to Indian philosophical ideas in order to develop your own philosophy of life.

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I will be delighted to talk with you outside of class. Make an appointment to see me or drop by during my office hours.

Office hours: Monday & Wednesday: 4:30- 5:30
Tuesday & Thursday: 5:30- 6:00
Friday: 10:30-11:30
(other times by appointment)

Office: Ladd 217 Email: jsmith@skidmore.edu
Office phone: 580-5407 (please don't call me at home)

VEDIC ORIGINS: THE INDUS VALLEY, THE VEDAS, AND THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

- 23: Smith, Accents of the World's Philosophies (handout);
Radhakrishnan/Moore, General Introduction (handout);
Raju, Introduction--Nature and Development of Indian Thought (Ch. I);
Koller, Diversity, Change & Continuity (Ch. 1);
Smith, Philosophy's Western Bias (handout);
Hamilton, Reason & Belief (Ch. 1);

28. Kinsley, Historical Outline (handout);
Raju, The Vedas and Other Sources (Ch. II);
Koller, Indus & Vedic Beginnings (Ch. 2);
Koller, Creation & Celebration in the Vedas (Ch. 3);
Hamilton, Brahmanical Beginnings: Sacrifice, Cosmic Space (only pp.18-27);
Hiriyanna, Vedic Religion and Philosophy (pp. 9-18 only in Ch.1/One).

30: Hamilton, Brahmanical Beginnings: Upanisads (only pp. 28-33);
Hiriyanna on the Upanisads (only pp. 18-30 in Ch. 1/One);
Raju, The Central Ideas of the Upanishads (Ch. IV);
Koller, Liberating Knowledge: The Upanisads (Ch 4; 2nd Ed: Ch. 5).

Katha, all (pp. 231-247)
 Kena, all (pp. 226-230) [Koller 95-96; 2nd Ed: 67-68]
 Taittiriya, Ch.2 (pp. 184-189) [Koller 101-2, 177; 2nd Ed: 73-74, 170]
 Prasna, all (pp. 278-287) [Koller 91-93; 2nd Ed: 64-66]
 Mandukya, all (pp. 288-290)
 Brhadaranyaka, Ch.2.4-5 (pp. 28-33) [Koller 98-100; 2nd Ed: 70-72]
 Ch.3.1-9 (pp. 34-52) [Koller 93-95; 2nd Ed: 66-68]
 Isa, all (pp. 248-251)
 Chandogya, Ch.3.14 (pp. 123-124) [Koller 95-98; 2nd Ed: 68-70]
 Ch.6.1-16 (pp. 148-156) [Koller 100-101; 2nd Ed: 72-73]
 Ch.8.7-12 (pp. 171-175) [Koller 95-98; 2nd Ed: 68-70]

- 11: Koller, *Self & Society: Norms of Life* (Ch. 5; 2nd Ed: Ch. 4);
Kinsley, *Central Hindu beliefs & Concluding Analysis* (handout);
Koller, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Ch. 9);
The Bhagavad-Gita (Ch. 1-18).
- 13: Raju, The Epics and the Ethical Codes (Ch. XIII);
Koller, *Devotional Hinduism: God as Joy, Love, Beauty* (Ch. 10);
Koller, *Devotional Hinduism: Kali & Shiva* (Ch. 11).

- 18: Reflections #1 & #2 & #3 due; read and discuss in class;
Hiriyanna, Transition to the Systems (Ch. II/Two);
Mohanty, Indian Philosophy: A Historical Overview (handout);
Hamilton, Chronology (only pp. 119-120).
- 20: Hiriyanna, Purva-mimamsa (Ch. VI/Six);
Raju, The Activist Tradition and the Mimamsa School (Ch. IV);
Hamilton, Issues & Justifications (Ch. 8);
Hamilton, Bhartrhari & Mimamsa (only pp. 118-125).
- 25: Hiriyanna, Nyaya-Vaisesika (Ch. IV/Four);
Raju, The Logical Tradition of the Nyaya (Ch. VIII);
Raju, The Pluralistic Tradition of the Vaisesika (Ch. IX);
Hamilton, Categories and Method (Ch. 8).
- 27: Raju, The Yoga Tradition of Patanjali (Ch. XI);
Koller, Yoga (Ch. 8);
Hamilton, The Witness & the Watched (Ch. 7);
Hiriyanna, Sankhya-Yoga (Ch. V/Five);

Raju, The Dualistic Tradition of Sankhya (Ch. X).

- 4: Raju, Vedanta & the Monistic Tradition of the Spirit (only pp. 175-187);
Hiriyanna, Vedanta: Absolutistic (Ch. VII/Seven); in Ch. XII);
Hamilton, Sankara's Non-dualism (only pp. 125-131).
- 6: Reflections #4 & #5 due; read and discuss in class.
- 8 (Friday): Essay #1 (print-copy, no email) due in my office by 4:00.

11/13: Spring break

VEDANTA: SANKARA AND RAMANUJA

- 18: Review Raju (pp. 175-187) & Hiriyanna (Ch. 7) on Advaita Vedanta;
Deutsch, Introduction (pp. 3-7);
Brahman (Ch. 1);
Levels of Being (Ch. 2);
Brahman & the World (Ch. 3);
The Self (Ch. 4).
- 20: Deutsch, Karma (Ch. 5);
Aspects of Advaitic Epistemology (Ch. 6);
Advaitic Ethics (Ch. 7);
Moksa & Jnana-Yoga (Ch. 8);
The Heart of Awareness (pp. 1-77).
- 25: Sankara, from A Thousand Teachings (handout).
- 27: Hamilton, Ramanuja (only pp. 131-135);
Hiriyanna, Vedanta: Theistic (Ch. VIII/Eight);
Ramanuja, from A Summary of Vedic Teachings.
- 1: Koller, Systematic Philosophy: Bondage, Liberation & Causality (Ch. 12).
- 3: Koller, Systematic Philosophy: Knowledge & Reality (Ch. 13).
- 8: Guest: Dr. John Koller.
- 10: Reflections #6 and #7 due; read and discuss in class;
Krishna, Three Myths about Indian Philosophy (handout).

HETERODOX (NON-VEDIC) DARSANAS: CARVAKA, JAINISM, BUDDHISM

- 15: Hiriyanna on Materialism (only pp. 57-59 in Ch. III/Three);
Raju, The Materialistic Tradition of the Carvakas (Ch. V);
King, Indian Materialism: A Counter-Example (handout).
- 17: Hiriyanna, Jainism (only pp. 59-70 in Ch. III/Three);
Koller, The Jaina Way (Ch. 6);
Raju, The Heterodox Tradition of Jainism (Ch. VI).
- 22: Koller, The Way of the Buddha (Ch. 7);
Raju, The Heterodox Tradition of Buddhism (Ch. VIII).
- 24: Hiriyanna, Buddhism (only pp. 70-83 in Ch. III/Three);
Hamilton, Renouncing the Household (Ch. 3); Things & Non-Things (Ch. 6).
- 29: Reflections #8 & #9 due; read and discuss in class;
Hamilton, Postscript (pp. 136-139);
Koller, Renaissance in India (Ch. 16);

Raju, The Traditions and Contemporary Trends (Ch. XIV).

3 (Friday): Essay #2 due at 4:00 p.m. sharp in Ladd 217.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation (20%): Participation in class meetings is essential to your learning in this course, and I encourage you to participate in discussion actively. It is extremely important that you keep up on the assignments because later assignments presuppose earlier ones. Also, this course emphasizes discussion as an essential component, and if you haven't read the assignment, you will not get much out of the discussion.

Attendance is required at EVERY class. Missing even one class will severely damage this component of your grade. (Illness, religious holidays, and family emergencies are legitimate exceptions.) Don't even think about missing class just after Spring break. The following guidelines express my expectations about attendance and participation:

A or A- = attend all classes and make useful contributions to discussion in nearly every class.

B+ or B = attend all classes and make regular contributions

B- = attend all classes but seldom speak.

C, D, F = one or more absences no matter how much you talk.

Please don't arrive in class late. Please do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely necessary. (Leaving class is rude and distracts me and other students. It also suggests a lack of concentration or lack of interest on your part. Plan your liquid consumption so you can make it through class comfortably.) Please be sure that your cell phone and other electronic devices are turned off. You may not use a laptop in class unless you have special permission from me in advance.

Your understanding of class discussion, and the quality of class discussion itself, depends on how well you have prepared the reading assignments, so read the assignments carefully and critically. Religion readings are difficult, so I strongly recommend underlining or highlighting passages and outlining or taking notes on the reading. Often you will need to read the assignment, or part of it, more than once. Read actively, not passively, by raising questions and criticisms about the readings.

The Skidmore College guideline is that students should study 2 hours outside of class for every hour of class time. Thus I expect you to spend at least 3 1/2 hours preparing for each of our classes, and I have assigned work based on that expectation. I suggest that you work out a study schedule that sets aside a regular period of time to prepare each class. If you finish the reading in less than 3 1/2 hours, read it again -- use the full 3/12 hours of preparation to take notes or outline or underline the readings so you come to class well prepared to discuss the ideas.

Critical issues (oral): About once every week you will team up with a colleague to raise a critical issue about that day's reading to focus our discussion. You must meet face-to-face with your partner at least once outside of class to select the passage in the reading and the issue to

bring to the class. This is not a class report but a brief, sharply focused comment on (1) a specific passage and (2) a specific issue in that passage. For example, raise questions about it or criticize it or agree with it and expand on it or compare it to other ideas.

Study guides: Written assignments on the readings will be provided occasionally. Almost all of these are optional (that is, you can earn an A grade for the course without doing any of them). However, they should be very useful for mastering the material and may be especially useful for writing your short and long essays. The study guide will be due in the class that each focuses on. Extra-credit will be given if you do a significant number of them. (A few study guides will be required.)

The combination of class attendance, participation in discussion, the oral critical issues, and the few required study guides will count 20% of your final course grade (with the optional study guides counting for extra-credit).

2. Reflection (written and oral) (20%): A two page essay on a topic in the readings will be presented in class by each of you once during the semester (on February 18 or March 6 or April 10 or April 29). At the top of the page, quote a brief passage (single-space the quote), identify an issue in it, and offer your own interpretation or criticism of it. It must be absolutely no more than two typed pages (double-spaced in normal format except single-space the quote). You must bring 10 copies (double-sided on a single sheet) to class to distribute. Each person will be given about 20 minutes during which the class will read your essay and discuss it with you. A partner will be assigned to serve as respondent to begin the discussion in class.

3. Two Essays (60%): Two essays will be due (on March 8 and May 3). The first essay (due on March 8) will count 20% of your final course grade and must be absolutely no more than 10 typed pages (double-spaced in normal format). The second essay (due on May 3) will count 40% of your final course grade and must be absolutely no more than 15 typed pages (double-spaced in normal format). The second essay must include a research component--significant use of at least one scholarly source (print or on-line) such as an article or book chapter from outside of our class. I'll provide more detailed written instructions later.

Learning disability: Please let me know right away if you have a certified learning disability.

Honor code: Skidmore has a strong Honor Code that I will strictly enforce. Read the Honor Code section in the Student Handbook about "Academic Policies," as well as the section on "Documentation and Plagiarism" in The Skidmore Guide to Writing.

