

PHILOSOPHIES OF INDIA:
LIBERATING KNOWLEDGE

Philosophy/Religion PR214
Spring 2013

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Skidmore College

This intermediate level course, cross-listed in both philosophy and religion, introduces the major classical religious philosophies of India. We begin with the original Vedic sources: the early Vedas, the Upanisads, and the Bhagavad-Gita. We study the six orthodox (Vedic) philosophical views (*darsanas*): Nyaya-Vaisesika, Sankhya-Yoga, and Mimamsa-Vedanta. We focus on two of the 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 Dhammapada, tr. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya (Berkeley Parallax Press, 1995).
3. -----, The Upanisads, tr. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 or 2008).
4. Byrom, Thomas, The Heart of Awareness: A Translation of the Ashtavakra Gita (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1990 or 2001).
5. Deutsch, Eliot, Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973).
6. Hiriyanna, M., The Essentials of Indian Philosophy (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 1995). [photocopy from Skidmore bookstore]
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). [Pages are given below for both editions.]
8. Santideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, tr. Vesna A. Wallace & B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1997).

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.)

Learning Goals:

- (1) Study the major traditions of Indian philosophy in their historical and conceptual development and diversity.
- (2) Focus on Vedic traditions and consider non-Vedic traditions.
- (3) Place Indian philosophy in its religious and cultural context.
- (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) Hone subtle reading, writing, and analytical skills, including critical evaluation, by discussing readings and writing essays about them.
- (7) Cultivate productive working relationships with me and others in the course to explore difficult issues in an honest and respectful way.
- (8) Explore your own philosophical views in relation to Indian philosophical ideas in order to develop your own philosophy of life.

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

- 22: Koller, Diversity, Change & Continuity (Ch. 1).
- 24: Radhakrishnan/Moore, General Introduction (handout); DF1.1
Kinsley, Historical Outline (handout);
Koller, Indus & Vedic Beginnings (Ch. 2);
Koller, Creation & Celebration in the Vedas (Ch. 3). DF1.2
- 29: Hiriyanna, Vedic Religion and Philosophy (Ch. I/One); DF1.3
Koller, Liberating Knowledge: The Upanisads (Ch. 5; 2nd Ed: Ch. 4).
- 31: Upanisads:
Katha, all (pp. 231-247)
Kena, all (pp. 226-230) [Koller 95-96; 2nd Ed: 67-68] DF1.4
Taittiriya, Ch.2 (pp. 184-189) [Koller 101-2, 177; 2nd Ed: 73-73, 170]
Prasna, all (pp. 278-287) [Koller 91-93; 2nd Ed: 64-66] DF1.5
Mandukya, all (pp. 288-290) P1.7
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] DF1.6
Isa, all (pp. 248-251) DF1.7
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].
- 5: Koller, Yoga (Ch. 8). DF1.8
- 7: Koller, Self & Society: Norms of Life (Ch. 4; 2nd Ed: Ch. 5); DF1.9
Kinsley, Central Hindu Beliefs & Concluding Analysis (handout).
- 12: Koller, The Bhagavad Gita (Ch. 9); DF1.10
The Bhagavad-Gita (Ch. 1-6).
- 14: The Bhagavad-Gita (Ch. 7-18); DF1.11
Koller, Devotional Hinduism: God as Joy, Love, Beauty (Ch. 10).
- 19: Koller, Devotional Hinduism: Kali & Shiva (Ch. 11);

Hiriyanna, Transition to the Systems (Ch. II/Two).

THE SIX ORTHODOX (VEDIC) DARSANAS

- 21: Mohanty, Indian Philosophy: A Historical Overview (handout);
Hamilton, Chronology (handout);
Hiriyanna, Nyaya-Vaisesika (Ch. IV/Four). DF1.12
- 25(Monday): Essay #1 due at 10:00 a.m. sharp in Ladd 217.
- 26: Koller, re-read Yoga, only pp. 178-180 (2nd Ed: 171-173);
Hiriyanna, Sankhya-Yoga (Ch. V/Five). DF1.13
- 28: Hiriyanna, Purva-mimamsa (Ch. VI/Six).
- 5: Hiriyanna, Vedanta: Absolutistic (Ch. VII/Seven). DF1.14
- 7: Hiriyanna, Vedanta: Theistic (Ch. VIII/Eight).
- 12 Spring
- 14 break DF2.1
- 19: Koller, Systematic Philosophy: Bondage, Liberation & Causality (Ch.12). DF2.2
- 21: Koller, Systematic Philosophy: Knowledge & Reality (Ch. 13).
- 26: Deutsch, Introduction (pp. 3-7);
Brahman (Ch. 1); DF2.3
Levels of Being (Ch.2);
Brahman & the World (Ch. 3); DF2.4
The Self (Ch. 4). DF2.5
- 28: Deutsch, Karma (Ch. 5);
Aspects of Advaitic Epistemology (Ch. 6);
Advaitic Ethics (Ch. 7);
Moksa & Jnana-Yoga (Ch. 8); DF2.6
The Heart of Awareness (pp. 1-77). DF2.7
- 2: Sankara, from A Thousand Teachings (handout). DF2.8
- 4: Ramanuja, from A Summary of Vedic Teachings (handout). DF2.9
- 9: Guest: Dr. John Koller.

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

- 11: Hiriyanna, Materialism (only pp. 57-59 in Ch.III/Three);
King, Indian Materialism: A Counter-Example (handout). DF2.10
- 16: Koller, The Jaina Way (Ch. 6); DF2.11
Hiriyanna, Jainism (only pp. 59-70 in Ch. III/Three).
- 18: Koller, The Way of the Buddha (Ch. 7). DF2.12
- 23: Hiriyanna, Buddhism (only pp. 70-83 in Ch. III/Three);
-----, The Dhammapada. DF2.13
- 25: Santideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life. DF2.14
- 30: Koller, Renaissance in India (Ch. 16).

2 (Thursday): Essay #2 due at 10:00 a.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.

(a) 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.) 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.) Please be sure that your cell phone and other electronics are turned off. Laptop use is not permitted unless you have special permission.

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. Philosophy 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 about 2 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 2 1/2 hours, read it again -- use the full 2 1/2 hours of preparation to take notes or outline or highlight/underline the readings so you come to class well prepared to discuss the ideas.

(b) Study guides: Written assignments on the readings will be assigned for many classes. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Late ones will not be accepted or will receive only partial credit.

(c) Discussion focus: Twice during the semester you will team up with someone else in class to focus our discussion on a particular passage and issues that you have selected from the reading. You must meet face-to-face with your partner at least once outside of class to discuss what to focus on. These classes are marked DF.

The combination of class attendance, participation in discussion, study guides, and the discussion focus will count 20% of your final course grade.

2. **Two essays (80%):** Two essays (due on February 25 and May 2) will each count 40% of your final course grade. Each should be about 9 pages long. I will provide 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. I will discuss issues about documentation and plagiarism when I give you the essay topics. 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.

