

Fall 2012

Dr. Afsar Mohammad

South Asian Saints and Yogis

Office: HRH 3:102

Global Cultures Flag Course

Class Meets: Tue and Thurs: 11 to 12:15 p.m.

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Office hours: Tues and Thurs 1 to 2.p.m / by appointment

Course Description



Focusing on the idea of religious and cultural diversity, this course introduces to various holy figures and sainthood practices in South Asia as they are understood in modern times. Our emphasis will be on the intersections of classical and modern realms of these sainthood practices. We also try to understand their role in the everyday life in contemporary South Asia. At the turn of modern times, several saints and yogis began to appear on the South Asian landscape and public sphere. In dialogue with modernity, these saints - from various backgrounds such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity - made a profound impact on the emerging modern discourses and increasingly technological life-styles. Focusing on their life stories, teachings and cultic practices, this course explores their role in the making of modern South Asia at various

intersections of history, religion, literature and philosophy. In this course, we will read the works of these saints and very few carefully selected secondary materials that put their practices and teachings in a perspective. We will watch and analyze two documentaries made on these saints. We explore two major questions: 1. what role these “classical” models of holy persons are playing in a fast-changing and constantly shifting modern world? 2. If each religion has a discrete sainthood tradition, what are the specific religious/philosophical/everyday aspects that connect these saints of diversified worlds?

All the readings are in English. No previous background of South Asian languages is required.

Global Cultures Flag

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

Required Texts

1. Kirin Narayan, *My Family and Other Saints*, University of Chicago Press, ISBN-13: 978-8172237196
2. John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, Oxford University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0195694208
3. Lobsang P.Lhalungpa (tr) *The Life of Mila Repa*, Penguin , ISBN-13: 978-0140193503
4. Christian Lee Noevetzke, *Religion and Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India*, Columbia University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0231141840
5. Karen Penchilis (ed), *The Graceful Gurus: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States*, Oxford University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0195145380
6. Carla Bellamy, *The Powerful Ephemeral: Everyday Healing in an Ambiguously Islamic Place*, University of California Press, ISBN-13: 978-0520262812

Grading Policy and Requirements:

1. Class Participation and Discussions: 25%
2. Weekly Response , Informal and formal (250 words) -15 %
3. Class Presentation, followed by Questions and Answers -15%
4. Analysis Paper with peer-review, revised draft (1000 Words)15%
5. Final paper (3000 Words) 30% - submit outlines three weeks before the deadline

Deadlines: Late papers lose 3 points per day, unless they carry a well-crafted excuse. Papers will be accepted up to 5:00 PM on the due date in my office.

Class Participation and Discussions: Students are expected to participate in class discussions actively. I might ask the students to raise an important question from the readings, or ask them to open a discussion based on any idea from the reading.

Weekly Responses: Weekly responses are informal writing assignments – a reflection on the readings. Students are encouraged to use these responses as initial thoughts for their analysis and final papers. I will carefully read your weekly responses and look for your afterthoughts on the readings.

Presentation: Class presentation for 10 minutes, followed by 5 minutes Questions and Answers. Presentations are usually arguments developed on the readings. Summaries are not allowed. The purpose of these presentations is to develop an argument and pursue the argument with a consistency and clear evidence from the readings. Students are encouraged to bring personal narratives with their reflections on the readings.

Important Note: Students are expected to present a brief outline **five** days before the presentation and, I will meet the presenter to share my thoughts and suggestions to improvise the presentation.

Analysis Paper: Focusing on the concepts and themes of the course, students have to select one key concept or central theme and write an analysis paper. Students have to use several readings, class lectures and discussions to develop the analysis paper. Peer- review is the crucial part of this exercise. These papers will be reviewed by one or two classmates and students have to incorporate their comments before submitting the final analysis paper.

Due: October 10th

Final Paper: Strictly formal research paper using a consistent style guide (Chicago Style Manual) and a clear thesis statement. Students are required to submit the outline four weeks before the deadline, and then set up an appointment with me to discuss the outline. Students are expected to develop an argument and I don't accept summaries of the readings in a final paper.

Due: December 10th.

Note: Revisions of papers as needed; assume that you will have to revise each paper at least once. Fixed deadlines, no extensions!

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- This course will be graded on the Plus/Minus system.

- Laptop Use Policy – Classroom Laptop use for taking notes related to this course only.
- Other Electronic Devices (Cell phone, Blackberry, I-Phone, etc.) Use Policy – All devices must be turned off during class.
- There is a class attendance policy for this course.

Attendance is vital for success in this course and I value your contribution to class discussion. As well, lectures will be vital for background on historical context and schools of thought, and flesh out ideas and concepts for discussion, all of which cannot be replaced by reading lecture outlines online.

ATTENDANCE POLICY – More than 3 absences, final class participation grade deducted half a grade (e.g. A- to B+); additional half grades deducted for each additional 2 absences.

Religious Holidays – Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

Course Calendar

August 30 th	<p>Introductions:</p> <p>Introduction to the Course themes and Key Concepts</p> <p>Introduction to: 1. Critical Thinking and Writing,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2. An idea of Ethnographic Writing</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3. Interdisciplinary Methodology</p>
September 4 th	<p>Discussing classical ideas of sainthood</p> <p>Introduction and Ravi Das (<i>Songs of the Saints of India</i>) pp. 1-32</p>
6 th	<p>Kabir</p>
11 th	<p>Nanak</p>

13 th	Surdas
18 th	Tulsidas
20 th	Topic: Women Saints: Mirabai
25 th	The Life of Gauri Ma (From <i>The Graceful Gurus</i>)
27 th	Anandmai pp. 85-115
October 2 nd	Jayasri maa pp. 119-128
4 th	Mother Meera, pp. 129-145
9 th	Ammachi pp. 204-218
11 th	Gurumayi pp. 219-238
16 th	Ramana Maharshi (Documentary)
	Reading : Ramaṇa Maharṣi: Mystic as Translator
18 th , 23 rd and 25 th	Topic: Muslim Saints Reading <i>The Powerful Ephemeral</i>
30 th	Afsar Mohammad, <i>Following the Pir</i> (on the Blackboard)
November 6 th	Reading from Karen Ruffle's book "Gender and Sainthood in Shi'i Islam" (on the Blackboard)
8 th	Topic: Saints in Public Memory Introduction from <i>Religion and Public Memory</i>
12 th	Practices of Memory from <i>Religion and Public Memory</i>
13 th	Publics of Memory from <i>Religion and Public Memory</i>
15 th	Life of Mila Repa, part 1
20 th	Life of Mila Repa, part 2
22 nd	THANKSGIVING DAY
27 th	Documentary "The Hugging Saint"
29 th :	Topic: Saints and Family stories Reading, Kirin Narayan: Refractions of the Field at Home: American Representations of Hindu Holy Men in the 19th and 20th Centuries (On the blackboard)
December 4 th	<i>My Family and Other Saints</i>

6th: **Last Class Day** REVIEWS AND REFLECTIONS

Final Paper Due: **10th December, 2012 (In my office, HRH 3:102)**

The UT Library

The UT Library offers resource help and many services. The following link is for Undergraduate Students:

Website: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/students/>

The Undergraduate Writing Center

The Undergraduate Writing Center provides individual, professional advice on all aspects of writing to UT undergraduates on a drop-in basis or by appointment. Location: Flawn Academic Center 211, 471-6222.

Writer's Advice Line: free and open to everyone.

Website: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/uwc>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

University Electronic Mail Notification Policy

(Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at

<http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

In this course e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and announcements. Note: if you are an employee of the University, your e-mail address in Blackboard is your employee address.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. See Website below for more information: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php>

