The Self and the World in Indian Story

Aim of the course

Good citizen or renouncer? Shall we participate in the life of the world, invest ourselves in work, family, community and nation? Or leave it all behind to pursue liberation and personal realization in solitude? All South Asian religions are defined by their response to this basic tension between embracing and renouncing the world. RELS 3101 reflects on this fundamental religious and social dynamic in Hinduism, Indian Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism through a close reading of diverse Indian story literature both ancient and modern: biography, hagiography, autobiography, fiction, folk tales, myth, poetry and other kinds of narrative text, both ancient and modern. Students will encounter a range of religious attitudes towards engaged worldly life, the family, asceticism and monasticism, and reflect at length upon the theme of embracing and rejecting "the world." We will also see that gender and social constructions of masculinity and femininity play an enormous role in these narratives. Our goal will be to understand these constructions, their nuances, and learn to appreciate how men and women in South Asia have configured themselves as individuals, family members, and citizens along the complex spectrum of this-worldly and other-worldly values. Some background in Indian religions is preferable, but not obligatory. With the exception of the introductory day’s material, all course readings consist of primary sources narrative in translation.

Prerequisite

Any 2000-level RELS course or permission of the instructor
Required Readings

available at Dal bookstore:

available on Brightspace:
- all other readings are available on Brightspace. Students are asked to PRINT these readings and bring them to class.

Evaluation

- two short reading reports 30%
- reading assignment: Tagore's *The Home and the World* 25%
- take-home exam essay: Murthy’s *Samskara* 30%
- informed participation 15%

Evaluation Details

Two Short Reading Reports (2 x 15%)

Twice during the period of Sept. 15th - Nov. 3rd inclusive students will submit a short reading report based on that day's assigned material. They may choose any two of these eight days they wish, but: (a) any given report is due in class, at the start of that day's meeting; (b) emailed reports will not be accepted (the purpose of these reports is to strengthen group conversation and discussion of material -- absentee reports are therefore self-defeating and will not be accepted); (c) by Nov. 3rd, two different reports must have been received -- no reports will be accepted on the Nov. 17th - Dec. 1st material (and you will have other work to do during that period!). Reports will be min. 1200 words each, double-spaced, typed & printed in 12pt font. Each report is worth 15% and will be graded according to the following criteria:

10%: report content: Identify three dominant themes that cut across today's readings. Is there a dominant motif you find exemplified in the different stories? One dominant theme and two subsidiary ones? Without summarizing the stories (assume your reader is closely familiar with them), refer briefly to examples from the material to illustrate. Try to articulate the religious, social or gender dynamics that link together the material and drive the main characters and events. If there is only one reading that day (Oct. 20th & Nov. 3rd), treat the single story this way. Finally (unless you are writing on the Sept. 15th readings), refer back to earlier class readings for comparison (either similarities or contrasts).
What is going on in today's stories that we have seen before? Is there an inversion, a variation on some dynamic of earlier course material?

5%: discussion questions: Articulate two conversation-starting discussion questions for the class based on today's material. HINT: yes/no and basic information questions are not good conversation starters!

Reading Assignment on Tagore's *The Home and the World* (25%)

The reading assignment is based on students' close reading of Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* which can be purchased at the Dal bookstore. This assignment is scheduled over the fall study break (Nov 6-10): assignment parameters released Nov. 3, and assignment due in class Nov. 17th (min. 2500 words, formal academic prose, double-spaced, numbered pages, 12pt font). Students will reflect on the novel within the framework of the content and themes of the class to date. Late penalties are 1.5 points per day from the assignment value of 25.

Take-Home Exam on Murthy's *Samskara* (30%)

The take-home exam is based on students' close reading of U.R. Anantha Murthy’s small novel *Samskara* which can be purchased at the Dal bookstore. Exam questions will be released on Dec. 1st and will ask students to reflect on the story within the framework of the content and themes of the class (i.e. earlier course readings and discussions will be important in your response). Min. 3000 words, formal academic prose, double-spaced, numbered pages, 12pt font. Late penalties are 1.5 points per day from the assignment value of 30.

Informed Participation (15%)

This is a very small seminar-style class based on a conversational round-table format rather than formal lectures. The expectation is that every student attends class, having read that day's assigned material beforehand, and that we will examine this material through informed discussion. Depending on the difficulty of the reading, I may have more or less to say by way of guidance and clarification, but the expectation will always be that students participate. The social aspect of this class is very important, and for a small group is a great advantage in making the course fun and engaging. To this end, the attendance policy is of both "carrot" and "stick" variety, with (carrot) 15% of the final course grade determined by informed participation and (stick) repeated absences resulting in loss of grades as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no. classes missed</th>
<th>points deducted from final grade X/100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Schedule

Sept 8: introduction to the course and its themes

Sept 15: this-worldly brahminical family imperatives

Sept 22: Buddhist men's high ideals of renunciation

Sept 29: Jain men's high ideals of renunciation
  - chap. 2 “The Childhood of Vajrasvāmin” (38-48)
  - chap. 3 “The Monk Sukośāla” (49-56)
  - chap. 17 “Mohadatta” (152-168)

**Oct. 6: women's experience of renunciant life**

**Oct 13: the realities of Buddhist and Jain renunciation: not so simple?**
- Vinaya Stories: Selections from Buddhist monastic literature trans. by Gregory Schopen:
  - "Painting the Wheel of Rebirth on the Porch"
  - "The Buddha in a Former Life Performs Brahminical Funeral Rites for a Dead Uncle"
  - "Inverting the Bowl: A Monastic Ritual for Shunning Laymen and Donors"
  - "Motives for Entering the Order and Problems with Former Wives"
  - "A Monk May Share His Alms with a Nun who was his Former Wife"
  - "Some Rules on Nuns Raising their Own Children"

**Oct 20: Śiva and Umā's celibacy and sexuality: the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa**

**Oct 27: domesticity on the threshold: Tukaram and Nānak**
  - 29-43 (chap. III)
  - 95-101 (chap. VIII)
  - 145-163 (excerpt, chap. XI; chap. XII & XIII) ... cont'd --->
Nov 3: Renunciation and Politics I: Chatterji
Tagore assignment questions released today

Nov 10: Fall Study Break, no class
read Tagore's The Home and the World and prepare assignment

Nov 17: Renunciation and Politics II: Tagore and Gandhi
Tagore assignment due in class today
- The Home and the World (discussion of the novel and your treatment thereof)

Nov 24: The Ultimate Brahmin Renouncer: Śaṅkarācārya
  - canto 2: The Birth of Sankara
  - canto 4: Boyhood Days up to the Age of Eight
  - canto 5: Embracing Sannyasa
  - canto 9: Master of All Learning (excerpt)
  - canto 10: Acquisition of Knowledge of Sex-Love

Dec 1: 20th Century Short Fiction
Take-home exam questions for Murthy essay released today
- AND by now you should begin reading Murthy's Samskara!

Mon. Dec. 11th: Murthy Take Home Due!
GRADING SCHEME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Excellent: Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>Satisfactory: Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefitting from his/her university experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Marginal Pass: Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter, critical and analytical skills (except in programs where a minimum grade of ‘C’ is required).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>Inadequate: Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES, STATEMENTS, GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate

Policy Regarding Missed Work
From Dalhousie Undergraduate Calendar par. 16.8: At the discretion of the instructor, alternate arrangements for examinations, tests or the completion of assignments may be made for students who are ill, or in other exceptional circumstances. Where illness is involved, a certificate from the student’s physician will be required. This certificate should indicate the dates and duration of the illness, when possible should describe the impact it had on the student’s ability to fulfill academic requirements, and should include any other information the physician considers relevant and appropriate. To obtain a medical certificate, students who miss examinations, tests or the completion of other assignments should contact the University Health Services or their physician at the time they are ill and should submit a medical certificate to their instructor as soon thereafter as possible. Such certificates will not normally be accepted after a lapse of more than one week from the examination or assignment completion date. For exceptional circumstances other than illness, appropriate documentation, depending on the situation, will be required.

Academic Integrity
http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html
At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all of our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect (The Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all of the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity.

(Read more: )
Accessibility
The Advising and Access Services Centre is Dalhousie’s centre of expertise for student accessibility and accommodation. The advising team works with students who request accommodation as a result of: a disability, religious obligation, or any barrier related to any other characteristic protected under Human Rights legislation (NS, NB, PEI, NFLD). (read more: http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/student_services/academic-support/accessibility.html)

Student Code of Conduct
Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don’t follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner—perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can’t be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. (read more: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety‐respect/student‐rights‐and‐responsibilities/student‐life‐policies/code‐of‐student‐conduct.html)

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect
Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). (read more: http://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html)

Recognition of Mi’kmaq Territory
Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi’kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit the office in the McCain Building (room 3037) or contact the programs at elders@dal.ca or 902‐494‐6803 (leave a message).

University Policies and Programs
- Important Dates in the Academic Year (including add/drop dates)
  http://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html
- University Grading Practices: Statement of Principles and Procedures
  http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practices.html
- Scent-Free Program
  http://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/occupationsafety/scent-free.html

Learning and Support Resources
- http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/student_services/academic-support/advising.html (Halifax)
- http://www.dal.ca/about-dal/agricultural-campus/student-services.html (Truro)
- http://libraries.dal.ca