

Yoga: From Vedic Origins to Western Transplantation

Spring 2018.

01:840:321:01 (Cross-listed with 16:840:521:01).

Tues/Thurs 4th period, 1.10-2.30 PM Hardenberg Hall-A7, CA

Instructor: Edwin Bryant; Tel: x 23289; E-mail: <edbryant@rci.rutgers.edu>.

Office Hours: Tue 11.30-12.30 PM, Loree 108, Douglass Campus.

Course Description.

This course will undertake a close reading of yoga as presented in the traditional Hindu sourcebook on the subject, the 3rd century *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, where it is defined as “the stilling of all states of mind” (i.e. meditative practices). The *Yoga Sūtras* is the classical text on meditative practice accepted as authoritative by all the orthodox Hindu schools, and our reading of it will be informed by the primary commentaries that have elaborated on the source text over the centuries prior to the colonial period. The course will subsequently trace the development of representations of yoga from these pre-modern expressions, through its appropriation and reconfiguring by Hindu figureheads, and into its modern Western transplanted form as primarily postural exercise. Students will thus gain exposure to some of the ways in which an ancient classical tradition is appropriated, transplanted, reconfigured and commodified in modernity.

Students will read the primary source text the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* for the first month with a view to obtaining a grounding in the pre-modern metaphysics and practices of yoga. The remaining two months of the course will chart the development of notions associated with yoga culminating in some of its present western transplanted forms.

Course objectives.

The course has two main objectives. The first is to expose students to the classical Hindu source on contemplative practices. The second is intended to equip students with an exposure to how religious phenomenon are significantly adapted and transformed by social, cultural and political circumstances.

Course Requirements.

Students will be expected to submit an 8-10 page paper, due the last day of class, which will afford them an opportunity to undertake a focused written research project. Additionally, the students will be assessed by class participation and two quizzes. Students will be assessed and graded as follows: class attendance and participation (10%); mid-term quiz (25%); final quiz, (25%); research paper (40%). A paper-writing guide is provided all students containing comprehensive instructions on research paper writing.

Required Reading

1) *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* with Insights from the Traditional Commentators. by Edwin Bryant Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2010.

This book exposes the student to classical Hindu yoga, the goal of which is an experience of content-less consciousness, along with its accompanying practices and metaphysical

presuppositions, drawing on the main pre-modern commentaries over this period. We will spend 5 weeks on this book.

2) Singleton, Mark. *Yoga Body: The History of Modern Posture Practice*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

This book highlights the lack of any evidence in traditional Indian sources for the health and fitness orientated practices that are associated with yoga today. The book argues that popular modern yoga has more to do with such activities as British gymnastics and body-building than any ancient Indian yoga tradition, and examines how yoga became the hugely popular phenomenon it is today. We will spend 2 weeks on this book

3) White, David Gordan, *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali: a Biography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

This book traces the trajectory of the Yoga Sutras first in Indian intellectual history from its earliest literary origins through the period of its main pre-modern commentators; it's appropriation from early modern times to the present, by Orientalists and Hindu apologists; and finally its transplantation onto Western shores as a canonical text. We will spend 2 weeks on this book.

4) Desikacar, T.K.V. & Cravens, R.H. *Health Healing and Beyond: Yoga and the living Tradition of T.Krishnamacharya*. New York: North Point Press, 2011.

This is a biography of the most influential figurehead underpinning modern postural yoga, T.Krishnamacharya, but his son. We will spend 1 week on this book.

5) I have left the last two weeks without assigned readings, which will be added later in the semester depending on the interests of the class.

Tue, Jan 16th & Thur, Jan 18st

Focus: Introduction to the course. Discussion in class examining the earliest pre-Patañjalian expressions on *yoga* prior to the common era, and proceeding to the metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and soteriological backdrop of the mainstream practices.

Reading: *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, chapter I.1-16: the definition and goal of classical Yoga

Tue, Jan 23th & Thur, Jan 25th

Reading: *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, chapter 1.

The conventional states of mind; *samādhi*:

The six progressive stages of the stilled mind; the seventh *samādhi* state beyond mind. *Īśvara*: the theistic element in the *sūtras*.

Tue Jan 30th - Thur Feb 1st

Reading: *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, chapter I continued. Chapter 2.

The *kleśas*: suffering, *karma* and reincarnation

Tue Feb 6th - Thur Feb 8th

Reading: *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, chapter II continued.
The eight limbs of *yoga*

Tue Feb 13th - Thur Feb 15th

Reading: *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, chapter III.
The mystic powers

Tue Feb 20th

Reading: *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, chapter IV.
Yoga's response to the Buddhist challenge

Thur Feb 22nd Focus: Quiz I.

Tue Feb 27th - Thur March 1st

Reading: Singleton, chapters 1-4.
Colonials, 'jogis,' fakirs, and the social marginalization of the *yogī*; the International Physical Culture Movement.

Tue March 6th - Thur March 8th

Reading: Singleton, chapter 5-9.
Countering colonial stereotypes: degeneracy, physical health and Hindu nationalism. Harmonial gymnastics and 19th century esoteric dance. The asana 'revival.'

Spring break

Tue, March 20th - Thur, March 22nd

Readings: White, chapters 1-6

Tue, March 27th - Thur, March 29th

Readings: White, chapter 7 -13

Tue, April 3rd - Thur, April 5th

Readings: The life of Krishnamacarya

Tue April 10th - Thur April 12th

Readings: To be determined

Tue April 17th **Quiz II.**

Thur April 19th - Tue April 24th

Readings: To be determined.

Thur April 26th

FINAL Paper due. Class presentations on the students' papers.