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SPRING 2006

Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University

Covering the Religions of India

Syllabus for first seven weeks

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Class blog of resources, constantly updated:

<http://CoveringIndiaReligions.blogspot.com/>

THE COURSE: Covering Religion aims at preparing students to work as religion writers on newspapers and magazines or for broadcast and new media outlets. In the Spring 2006 semester the class will focus on the rich diversity of religious faith found in India. Thanks to a generous grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation, the course will include a study-tour of India during spring break at no cost to students.

The first seven weeks of the course will be spent reporting on religion in the New York area. Each student is assigned a faith or a sect of a faith in which to specialize. These will include Hindu, Muslim and Christian sects as well as Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Jews and Zoroastrians. Each student will make an oral presentation about his or her assigned faith and will help shape the religious itinerary of the trip.

In past years, the class visited Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories. In each of these places, the group met with religious leaders and visited synagogues, mosques, churches and shrines.

Before and during the India trip, the class maintains a Website that includes daily updates from our travels. Each day one student is responsible for reporting on that day's activities and posting the story on the Web. In addition, two students serve as Webmasters and another coordinates photographs. Family and friends can keep abreast of the activities of the class via the Website. (The Websites from previous years can be found at www.coveringreligion.org.)

Winter Break prep work

- Books:
 - World Religions* by Warren Matthews
(Wadsworth Publishing Company, 4th edition, 2003 or 3rd edition, 1999)
Amazon: <http://snipurl.com/ki2x>
By first class, please read introduction and chapter 3, Hinduism, p. 81-126

 - Freedom at Midnight: India's Epic Struggle for Independence* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre
(Any edition)
Amazon: <http://snipurl.com/ki31>
By first class, please read first 200 pages; you are expected to finish full book.

 - Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* by Suketu Mehta
(Any edition)
www.SuketuMehta.com
You are expected to finish the book before we land in Mumbai at the end of the trip.

 - Suburban Sahibs: Three Immigrant Families and Their Passage from India to the US* by S. Mitra Kalita
www.desiwriter.com
Very good introduction to Indians in the U.S., and the cultural aspects of religion in India.
- Class blog:
 - Familiarize yourself with sites listed as resources on the blog
 - Read articles marked as must-read

Religions/practioners covered

1. Hindus - North Indian
2. Hindus - South Indian
3. Buddhists - Eastern
4. Buddhists - Western
5. Jains
6. Sikhs
7. Zoroastrians (also known as Parsis)
8. Jews - Orthodox
9. Jews - Liberal
10. Catholics
11. Indian Orthodox (a.k.a. Orthodox Syrian Church of the East)
12. Protestants
13. Shia Islam
14. Sunni Islam
15. Sufi Islam
16. Baha'i

Week One: Tuesday, Jan 24
Introduction to Religion Writing
Hinduism and its Impact on Modern India

Reports: Hindus, North Indian:
Hindus, South Indian:

Assignment: Ritual Moment (due Jan. 31)

Reading for next class: Matthews, chapter 4, Buddhism, p. 127-177.

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**Week Two, Tuesday, Jan. 31**  
Buddhism

Reports:  
Buddhists, Eastern:  
Buddhists, Western:

Guest: Hinduism, TBA

Assignment: Teaching Moment (due Feb. 7); collect Ritual Moment assignment.

Readings for next class: Matthews, chapter 5, Jainism and Sikhism, p. 178-206

Field trip: Monday, Jan. 30, Ganesh Temple in Flushing, details TBA

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Week Three, Tuesday, Feb. 7
Jainism & Sikhism

Reports:
Jains:
Sikhs:

Guest: Buddhism/Jainism/Sikhism, TBA

Assignment: Your Faith and Its Connection to Today's India (due Feb. 21); collect Teaching Moment assignment.

Readings for next class: Matthews, chapter 8, Judaism, p. 280-328.

Field trip: Monday, Feb. 6, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art, 150 W. 17th St, corner of Seventh Ave.
www.rmanyc.org

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**Week Four, Tuesday, Feb. 14**

Judaism

Reports:

Jews, Orthodox

Jews, Liberal

Readings for the next class: Matthews, chapter 9, Christianity, p. 329-384.

Field trip: Friday, Feb. 17 at 5:30 p.m. Shabbat service at Congregation Ramath Orah, 550 West 110<sup>th</sup> Street.

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Week Five, Tuesday, Feb. 21

Christianity

Reports:

Catholics:

Protestants:

Syrian Christians:

Field trip during class: Attend noon mass (details TBA)

Collect Your Faith assignment.

Readings for the next class: Matthews, chapter 10, Islam, p. 385-430.
And Mehta, introduction and first three chapters

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**Week Six, Tuesday, Feb. 28**

Islam

Reports:

Sunnis:

Shias:

Sufis:

Guest: Islam/TBA

Absorbing India as a Western Journalist

Guest: TBA

Readings for next class: Mathews, Zoroastrianism, p. 267-277, plus supplementary material, TBA

Field Trip: Friday, March 3. Malcolm Shabazz Mosque in Harlem; details TBA.

Week Seven, Monday, March 6  
Baha'i

Report: Baha'i

Zoroastrianism

Report: Zoroastrians/Parsis:

Final planning for India trip.

\* Tuesday, March 7, depart for New Delhi

\* Monday, March 20, return from Mumbai

*See separate memo for travel details within India*