

## **Media and Religion in India**

**[SARS 208 RELS-268 RELS-568 SARS-508]**

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-3pm, Spring 2004

Williams Hall Room 205

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**Course Synopsis:** In this course we'll explore how cultural life and ideals are expressed through various media. Our aim is to acquire a familiarity with a variety of media forms—including traditional architecture, devotional poetry-music, visual-sensorial worship, modern film, recorded music, clothing, and live performance. We will situate these media within important cultural fields such as religion, primarily, but also politics, popular culture, and global culture, exploring past and present expressions. Though much of our study will immerse us in India's past, our endeavor is to understand contemporary India and its culture through selected media.

**Requirements:** You're required to attend all classes and screenings, read all outside materials carefully and thoughtfully, and engage with the subject matter in class and in your writing. This means that during class you're expected to participate enthusiastically and outside of class to complete your readings conscientiously. Each week you'll be asked to compose a **short reaction** paper (2 pages max.) that can be sent via email attachment. In addition, for one class in the semester, you'll give an **informal presentation** on the reading and **lead discussion** for the remainder of the class. At the end of the term, you'll write a **twelve to fifteen (12-15) page critical review paper** on a subject of your choice, which should be printed and submitted; **no electronic submissions of final paper.**

**Screenings:** During the latter half of the semester, in lieu of reading, we'll screen a film together. In addition, the videos are available at Rosengarten reserve. During weeks when we watch a film, our class will meet only once, rather than twice. If you can't attend the class screening, it is your responsibility to see the film before the next class.

**Grading:** Twenty percent (20%) of your grade will depend on your attendance and the quality of your classroom participation; thirty percent (30%) will be based on the quality of your weekly reaction papers; twenty (20%) percent will depend on your day of presentation and leading discussion; and thirty percent (30%) will hinge on your final critical review paper.

## Materials:

These **books** will be available for purchase at House of Our Own Bookstore:

*Amar Chitra Katha: The Ramayan Series* (Also available online at:  
[http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual\\_gallery/exhibitions/](http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual_gallery/exhibitions/))

Babb, L. and Susan Wadley, eds. 1995. *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Chatterjee, Gayatri. 2001. *Mother India*. London: British Film Institute Press.

Hawley, J. S. and Mark Juergensmeyer. 1988. *Songs of the Saints of India*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kumar, Sunil. 2003. *The Present in Delhi's Pasts*. Delhi: Three Essays.

Rudolph, S. H. and Lloyd I. 1983. *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tarlo, Emma. 1996. *Clothing Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Optional:** Dehejia, Vidya. 1997. *Indian Art*. London: Phaidon Press. [Optional because it is expensive.]

Copies of each book will be on reserve at the library.

**Articles** will be available in a printed bulk pack at the Wharton business school's copy shop. The number of pages to be read is given in brackets alongside the weekly course themes.

Please bring reading materials to class on the day we discuss them.

Note that readings from the course pack are marked by a "**P**" and those from the books above by a "**B**".

# Syllabus

## THE REIGN OF THE RAMAYANA

### Week 1: The Postmodern *Ramayana*.

- I. [1/13] Lecture: Introduction to the course and its aims.

No Reading

- II. [1/15] In Class screening of episodes from the TV *Ramayan*.

Reading: **B** “Introduction” by Lawrence Babb in *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia* [1-20]

### Week 2: Was the Revolution Televised?: The TV *Ramayan*.

- I. [1/20] Lecture: The Ideas of Media and Religion.

Reading: **B** “All in the (Raghu) Family,” by Phil Lutgendorf in *Media and the Transformation* [217-249].

- II. [1/22] Discussion.

Reading: **B** *Amar Chitra Katha: Ramayana* series (also available online at: [http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual\\_gallery/exhibitions/](http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual_gallery/exhibitions/)).

### Week 3: Comic History: The *Amar Chitra Katha*.

- I. [1/27] Lecture: The *Ramayana* as Historical, Political, and Cultural Media.

Reading: **B** “The World of *Amar Chitra Katha*,” by Fran Pritchett in *Media and the Transformation...* [76-106].

- I. [1/29] Discussion.

Reading: **P/B** “Introduction: Mountains, Rivers, People,” “‘Seeing’ the Divine: Image and Temple,” “Sacred and ‘Profane’: The Nagara Temple,” by Vidya Dehejia in *Indian Art* [4-8; 135-152; 153-182]

## VISUAL CULTURE IN RELIGION, POLITICS, AND HISTORY

#### **Week 4: Temples and Mosques: Icons and Iconoclasm**

I. [2/3] Lecture: Place as Media

Reading: **P/B** “Linear Abstractions: Art and the Sultans of India,” and “Visions of Paradise: The Luxury of Mughal Art,” by Vidya Dehejia in *Indian Art* [247-272; 297-334]

II. [2/5] Discussion.

Reading: **B** Sunil Kumar, *The Present in Delhi's Pasts*, Chapter One [1-61].

#### **Week 5: The Past as Politics**

I. [2/10] Lecture: History, Archeology, and Ethnography

Reading: Sunil Kumar, Chapters Two-Four [62-131].

II. [2/12] Discussion.

Readings: **B** “Introduction: The Problem of What to Wear,” “Questions of Dress in a Gujarati Village,” in Emma Tarlo’s *Clothing Matters* [1-22; 129-167]

#### **Week 6: The Culture of Clothing**

I. [2/17] Lecture: The Politics of Clothing

Readings: **B** “Fashion Fables of an Urban Village,” and “Dressing for Distinction: A Historical Review,” in *Clothing Matters* [284-317; 318-336]

II. [2/19] Discussion.

Reading: **P** “Introduction,” by A. K. Ramanujan and Basavanna poems in *Speaking of Shiva*, [19-55; 61-90].

#### **CRAZY LOVE: SUFIS, BHAKTAS, AND MODERN GURUS**

#### **Week 7: Songs and Sass: Basavanna, Kabir, and Mira**

I. [2/24] The Medium of Devotional Song

Reading: **B** “Introduction,” Chapter Two and Chapter Five by J. S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer in *Songs of the Saints of India*, [3-8; 35-62; 119-142].

II. [2/26] Discussion.

Reading: **P** “Chapter Four: Muslim Life and Customs—Saints and Their Tombs—Mystical Folk Poetry,” by Annemarie Schimmel in *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* [106-149]

**Week 8:** Pir Pleasure: Sufism and Ecstatic Islam

I. [3/2] Islam, Sufism, and the Power of the Dargah

Reading: **B** “Recorded Sound and Religious Music: The Case of *Qawwali*,” by Rgula Burckhardt Qureshi in *Media and Transformation...* [139-166]

II. [3/4] Discussion.

***SPRING BREAK 3/5-3/14***

**Week 9:** The Multimedia Guru: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh/Osho

I. [3/16] In class screening: Rajneesh meditation/lecture videos.

Reading: **P** “Introduction” by Susan J. Palmer ; “Rajneesh and the Guru Tradition in India,” by Arvind Sharma; **P** “A Letter from Poona, November, 1989,” by James S. Gordon; and “Epilogue” by Palmer and Sharma in *The Rajneesh Papers: Studies in a New Religious Movement* [xi-xx; 1-16; 137-154; 155-162]

II. [3/18] Discussion.

Reading: **B** *Mother India* by Gayatri Chatterjee. [Entire.]

**HINDU MODERNITY IN FILM**

**Week 10:** The Feminine Nation: *Mother India*

I. [3/23] ***No Class***

Screen: *Mother India* (1957: 2h55m)

II. [3/25] Discussion.

Screen: *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977: 2h56m).

**Week 11:** Comedy and Community: *Amar Akbar Anthony*

I. [3/30] **No Class**

Reading: **P** “Introduction,” by Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, in *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film*. [7-41]

II. [4/1] Discussion.

Screening: *Bombay* (1995: 2h15m)

**Week 12:** Prem and Politics: *Bombay*

I. [4/6] **No Class**

Reading: **P** “*Bombay* and Its Public” by Ravi Vasudevan.

II. [4/8] Discussion.

Screening: *Gandhi* (1982: 2h22m)

**Week 13:** Karma Chameleon: *Gandhi*

I. [4/13] **No Class**

Reading: **B** *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma* by Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph [1-50].

II. [4/15] Discussion.

Screening: *Guide* (1965: 2h47m)

**Week 14:** Old Religions in a New Country

I. [4/20] **No Class**

Reading: **B** “Market Forces at Work: Religious Themes in Commercial Hindi Films,” by Steve Derne in *Media and the Transformation...*[191-216]

II. [4/22] Discussion.

**FINAL PAPERS DUE MAY 7, 4PM, IN MY MAILBOX IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH ASIA STUDIES.**