

RLG358: Hindu Philosophy: Godless India

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Course Description

This course seeks to examine Indian theories of “atheism” from the pre-modern to the modern period, particularly within the context of a critique of the ubiquitous paradigm of “Indian spirituality” as constituting the essential characteristic of Indian cultural life. The course leads us through a long tradition of Indian atheistic theories even while problematizing the concept of “atheism” itself, showing that a conceptually Western term, with specific genealogies within Western intellectual traditions would have to be modified or subverted in order to understand the Indian history of “godlessness”.

Course Requirements:

Reading: A careful and critical reading of the assignments before class is crucial. You will not be able to participate in class discussions without a thorough understanding of the assigned readings. I recommend that you underline important arguments, mark passages that confuse you, and think about where (and why) you agree or disagree with the author. **Please always bring your Assigned Readings to class so you can refer to the texts in our discussions.**

Panel discussion

In addition to general in-class participation oral skills will be tested in individual panels consisting of student groups, which will be formed at the beginning of the course for each session, making sure that every student in class will take part in one panel discussion. The panellists will discuss the readings, point out what they found particularly interesting, strong or weak in a particular author or position and will have the opportunity to formulate questions which may be answered by the other panellists or course participants at large. The panellists will also each serve as main interlocutors for the instructor during in-class discussions. The panellists’ contributions too will be graded on the basis of their frequency and quality.

Attendance, Participation in Class and Panel Participation:

Participation is essential in this course. You will be expected to raise questions, to share your knowledge

with the other members of the class, and to actively participate in the class/panel discussion (see **Attendance** marks below) .

Students who miss class without my permission should expect to have their grade lowered. Absences may be excused for medical, religious, or other compelling reasons. If you must miss class e-mail me in advance, and, in case of illness, bring a doctor’s note to our next meeting. Also repeated lateness will affect your grade.

1. Your actual presence will get you half the percentage of the grading – i.e., 5%.
2. The regularity and quality of your questions in class otherwise will determine the remaining 10% of the participation grading.
3. From Session 3 onwards you are expected to participate in a panel, where you will briefly summarize one/or a section of one of the **Assigned Readings**. The topic on which you present will have to be agreed upon in class with me, prior to the actual session.

Essay Proposal:

The Essay Proposal should anticipate, in a shortened form, the topic you intend to focus on for your term paper. Therefore it should engage with **at least 2** if not more of the assigned readings and with other supplementary sources (a minimum of **3**) you intend to use for the **Final Essay**. In addition it should have the following features: The question/questions which interest you in the readings and which, therefore, becomes the focus of your topic What are the sources you are going to be looking at to answer the question/questions and why (here you would need to include a bibliography) What you hope to find out which will also address larger issues raised within the course and the discussions. It should include a potential bibliography for the Final Essay.

The Essay Proposal is to be 3-5 pages one-and-a-half line spacing, excluding Bibliography.

The Essay Proposal is due on ...

Final Essay:

The Final Essay should be seen as a research paper. This option gives you the opportunity to investigate in more depth a topic that interests you, and it allows you to demonstrate your research skills. If you have trouble coming up with a topic or developing your argument, please come and see me!

Additional guidelines for the final paper will be handed out later in the semester. The Final Essay is to be 10-15 pages one-and-a-half line spacing, excluding Bibliography.

It is due on - .

Penalty for late papers: 1% for each day the paper is late. Please note: If you hand in your paper after class on the day it is due, it will count as being one day late. Papers more than one week late will not be accepted.

Evaluation:

Attendance:	5%
Participation in Class:	10%

Panel Participation:	20%
Essay Proposal:	25%
Final Essay:	40%

A note on plagiarism: Plagiarism (i.e., the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another) will not be tolerated. Please bear in mind that the following is plagiarism and will be treated as such: material taken without citation from the web; material taken from any book or other publication without citation; any ideas that I can trace to another source that you are not citing. These are all forms of cheating and will subject you to serious consequences. Trust your own ability to think and write, and take this course as an opportunity to refine your research and writing skills. If you need help, come see me or visit www.utoronto.ca/writing. If you have any questions or doubts concerning citations and references, please talk to me before handing in your paper.

Course Readings (Subject to Modifications Prior to Start of Course)

All Assigned Readings as well as the Course Syllabus Will Be Made Available on Blackboard Prior to the First Sessions

Session One

Discussion of Syllabus and **Assigned Readings**.

Session Two: The Godless West

Assigned Readings:

Lucretius. From "De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)". Transl. by W. Hanford Brown. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 1-6.

Hume, David. The Natural History of Religion. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 26-27.

Marx, Karl. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 64-65.

Twain, Mark. Thoughts of God. From “Fables of Man”. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 116-118.

Freud, Sigmund. From “The Future of an Illusion”. Transl. and ed. by James Strachey. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 147-149.

Rushdie, Salman. “Imagine There’s No Heaven”. A Letter to the Six Billionth World Citizen. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 380-383.

Recommended:

Dawkins, Richard. Why There Is Almost Certainly No God. From “The God Delusion”. *The Portable Atheist. Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Selected and with introductions by Christopher Hitchens (ed.). Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2008, 287-310.

Session Three: The Ājīvikas

Assigned Readings:

Bhasham, A.L. [1951]2009. *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. 3-55, 224-239, 262-277.

Session Four: Cārvāka/Lokāyata: Secondary Literature

Assigned Readings:

Sastri, D.R. 1990. A Short History of Indian Materialism. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 394-431.

Frauwallner, Eric. 1990. The Materialism. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 474-487.

Tucci, G. A. 1990. A Sketch of Indian Materialism. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 384-393.

Bhattacharyya, Ananta Kumar. 1990. Cārvāka-Darśana. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 452-473.

Session Five: Cārvāka/Lokāyata: Buddhists

Assigned Readings:

Pāyāsī Suttanta and Sāmañña-phala-suttanta. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 8-72.

Session Six: “Heresy” in Indic Traditions: the Āstika and the Nāstika

Assigned Readings:

Nicholson, Andrew J. 2010. *Unifying Hinduism*. Columbia University Press. 166-184.

Session Seven : Cārvāka/Lokāyata in the Buddhist Scholastic Literature

Assigned Readings:

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 159- 222.

Session Eight: Cārvāka/Lokāyata in the Doxographical Literature

Assigned Readings:

Vācaspati Miśra, Mādhavāchārya, Haribhadra. In Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.). *Cārvāka/Lokāyata*. 240-278.

Session Nine: The Early Indian Free Thinkers

Assigned Readings:

Selections from the *Cennai Ilaukika Caṅkam*’s journal, “The Thinker”.

Session Ten: Ambedkar and Periyār

Assigned Readings:

There are several online websites such as with Ambedkar’s “The Buddha and His Dhamma”. Please read Book Three: Parts III and IV on “What is Dhamma” and “What is not Dhamma”.

On http://aibsindia.com/buddha_and_his_dhamma.pdf it is pages 215-244, 273-283.

V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai. 1998. *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millenium*. Calcutta: Samya. 302-349.

Session Eleven: Meera Nanda

Assigned Readings: (All Available on JSTOR)

Nanda, M. 2001. Breaking the Spell of Dharma: Case for Indian Enlightenment.

Economic and Political Weekly, 36:27. 2551-2566

Nanda, M. 2006. How Modern are We? Cultural Contradictions of India's Modernity.

Economic and Political Weekly, 41.6.491-496.

Nanda, Meera. 2009. Hindu Triumphalism and the Clash of Civilizations. *Economic and*

Political Weekly, 44.28.106-114.