

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN PREMODERN SOUTH ASIA

ANS 384 / R S 383, Spring 2011, M 3–6pm, CAL 21

Instructor: Dr. Oliver Freiberger

Office hours: TTh 1:30–3pm · Office: WCH 5.110 · E-mail: ofreiberger@mail.utexas.edu

This graduate seminar examines the construction of religious identity in premodern South Asia. We will discuss how individuals and communities defined their identities as ‘Buddhists’, ‘Brahmins’, ‘Jains’, ‘Muslims’, etc. (or particular variants of such traditions) in certain moments in history. Key questions are: How do the actors cope with the existence of truth-claims and religious practices different from their own? How do they draw boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’? What rhetorical methods do they employ in defining insider-outsider relations (rational arguments, polemics, negotiations, etc.)? Are categories such as ‘missionary activity’, ‘religious market’ or ‘conversion’ useful for the analysis of South Asian religions? What types of motivation (religious, economical, political, etc.) for drawing boundaries exist in one particular situation? How does a person’s (or group’s) religious identity relate to their other identities (class, gender, ethnic, linguistic, etc.)?

Readings

Course packet

Grading

Attendance and participation: 30%; presentation 20%; research essay: 50%.

Scholastic dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. “Scholastic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

Students with disabilities

The Faculty Council's Educational Policy Committee states, "Providing a quality educational experience for all students includes adapting the instructional environment to accommodate the educational needs of students with information about Services for Students with Disabilities through the course syllabus." At the beginning of the semester, students should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office (phone 471-6259), which will prepare an appropriate letter to the instructor to guide you. See also the SSD website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (01/24): Introduction

Week 2 (01/31): Preliminary Reflections on Method and Theory

Week 3 (02/07): Buddhism and Brahmanism I: Rhetoric

Week 4 (02/14): Buddhism and Brahmanism II: Language

Week 5 (02/21): Buddhism and Brahmanism III: Literature

Week 6 (02/28): Hindu and Buddhist Tantras and Deities

Week 7 (03/07): Jainism I

— SPRING BREAK —

Week 8 (03/21): Jainism II

Week 9 (03/28): Śaivas and Jains in Medieval South India

Week 10 (04/04): The Sant Movement

Week 11 (04/11): Defining Hinduism

Week 12 (04/18): Hinduism, Islam, and Regional Identity

Week 13 (04/25): Identifying Islam in South Asia

Week 14 (05/02): Concluding Discussion