

With the Bhāṣya (Commentary) of Vyāsa (œthe arrangerœ) and the modern commentary of Swami Hariharānanda Ćraāṭya

SYLLABUS HERE

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1 - 4pm, best by appointment

1. The brief Yoga Sāstra (only 195 śāstras) of Patañjali (c 100 BCE-100 CE) is a vastly influential and fundamental text of yoga. What was Patañjali up to? What are the YS for? What do the YS tell us about the meaning and purpose of yoga now?
2. The Sāstra is the focus of the course, along with its very valuable primary commentary, Vyāsa's Bhāṣya, which is most easily and economically accessed in Ganganatha Jha's revised 1934 edition. This course acts as if the YS and Bhāṣya are distinct texts with different authors, but this does not mean that Patañjali and Vyāsa are so different as to be contradictory to one another.
3. The Sāstra is the focus of the course! Over the semester, we will study the nature, scope, and purpose of YS. This is therefore not a course on the practice of yoga, or yoga in general, or yoga as most people popularly think of it. It is about a text, the YS. Those interested in the "later life" of yoga, and yoga as not traceable to the YS, are welcome to notice the connections and differences among various conceptualizations of yoga but, in this course, also to keep their focus on the YS. Those who practice yoga are encouraged to make connections, of course, with their practice, and to ponder how the YS arose from practice and have affected practice. But the wisdom of practice needs in this course to be kept distinct from the quite possibly different wisdom arising from the YS, which is interested in analyzing states of consciousness in relation to exercises and varied bodily states.
4. There are many commentaries to consult but we will use in particular, in addition to the Vyāsa commentary, just one other, the Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali, by the modern teacher, Swami Hariharānanda Bhāṣya (1869-1947), in the translation from the Bengali by P. N. Mukerji. Hariharānanda was a renunciant, mystic, wanderer, who settled down in Triveni, near the Hoogly river north of Kolkata, and taught and wrote many books, including this commentary on the YS (the Mukerji tr. also includes a translation of Vyāsa). This commentary, of a philosophical bent, is also highly intellectual/spiritual, and is a splendid instance of a contemplative commentator whose teaching still speaks to modern concerns.
5. You are welcome to consult any and all translations of the YS (see bibliography below), but we will largely rely on my own translation, which seeks to adhere as closely as possible to the words of the YS. Edwin Bryant's massive The Yoga Sāstra of Patañjali offers a fine introduction to the YS and, for every śāstra, insights and comments Bryant has gleaned from a range of commentaries. If Vyāsa and Hariharānanda help us to focus and go deep, Bryant gives us a sense of the breadth of meanings found in the YS over the centuries. Bryant will be available in the library, and as an ebook at Canvas for this course. You may wish to buy a copy.
6. Some basic questions have to do with the text itself: Is the YS an original text, or a 3 synthesis of many sources? Do the YS have a single unitary philosophy of yoga and its practice? If not, are its various levels and approaches compatible with one another, and to what extent is there a single coherent technical vocabulary? What is the rationale for its present form as 195 śāstras organized in four books (pāda), and how specific is the topic of each book? This course has the modest goal of reading the YS as we have it, neither looking to every possible interpretation nor denying the value of such interpretations. See the Bibliography below for some of the best literature on the YS.
7. We are of course then primarily interested in the philosophy of the YS, its view of the human condition and the best "ending" to human experience, the YS's way of structuring of the mind and of human knowing, attitude toward the body, and its view on the endpoint of yoga practice. Granting that the YS is not a direct guide to yogic practice, we are interested in what it does tell us about

8. This course does not have a fixed comparative component, but the professor will introduce comparative insights on several occasions, with recommended readings to be noted. As the occasion arises, we will consider the YS in relation to yoga more broadly conceived within Hinduism and to some extent yoga within Buddhism; briefly too, yoga and Islam; and so too, the uses of yoga in the Christian context, in books and experiments from the early 20th century on.
9. The course is comparative too in that an understanding of the YS affords us a place from which to notice, measure, assess the myriad ways yoga has been talked about, practiced over the centuries. This does not mean that current practice is to be judged by how close it is to the YS, but only that differences must be noted.
10. On a still broader scale, we are interested in the YS, and yoga more generally, as a religious system. It can be argued that the YS is compatible with many religions, smoothly supplemental to religions' doctrines and other practices. Yet too the YS may be conceived of as mapping a religion unto itself that in fact slowly but surely replaces other religions, not through doctrinal impositions, but through practices that make the rest superfluous.
11. Listening to the Yoga S'tras chanted is encouraged. See Canvas for links to some recitations.

This course is a seminar in the sense that it is reading-heavy, and lecture-minimal. All students in the seminar, auditors included, are expected to do the reading and be active participants in class. The course covers most but not all of the YS (e.g., only some attention will be paid to the difficult fourth book, given the limits of time); we are committed to reading closely and well, and therefore selectively, even if we cannot get through the whole of YS. This syllabus offers a plan for reading, but we may adjust the schedule, speeding up or (more likely) 4 slowing down as needed.

- Regular class attendance, preparation for class, and active participation
- Weekly written responses to the reading (1-2 pages) submitted electronically every Tuesday, preferably the class time or if not, definitely by the end of the day
- Mid-term paper (approx. 3000 words) due March 22
- End term paper (approx. 3000 words) due May 10. Papers must be related to course themes and to the texts of the SÅ«tras and commentaries, but the actual theme is chosen by the student in consultation with the professor.

- My own ever-provisional translation of the YS alone, given to students who register or officially audit the course.
- Ganganatha Jha. The Yoga Sāstra of Patañjali with the Bhāṣya of Vyāsa. It is essential to use the 1934 revised edition, not the original Available as a pdf on Canvas or directly from Hollis. His translation of the YS and Bhāṣya can be compared with mine of the YS and Mukerji's of Hariharānanda, YS and Bhāṣya.
- Hariharānanda Āraṇya, Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali. Sāstra and Bhāṣya State University of New York Press 1983. This book includes a translation of the YS and the Bhāṣya, and also Hariharānanda's own notes on the sutras and on Vyasa, translated from the Bengali. This is a modern commentary with traditional foundations, grounded too in 6 his practice. It is available by purchase through online booksellers, and you may be able to find it online. Relevant sections will, early in the course at least, be available on Canvas. But please get your own copy. (Paperback)
 - If you have more time and money: Hariharānanda Āraṇya. Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali with Bhāṣya 2000; same as the required text, but with the addition of a translation of his Sanskrit-language commentary, the Bhāṣya, and a few more explanatory essays. (Hardcover)
- Overall week to week context: Edwin Bryant. The Yoga Sāstra of Patañjali (North Point Press, 2009) To be purchased by students, or it may also be found online; the e-book is inexpensive.

- For general context, David G. White, *The Yoga S tras of Pata jali: A Biography*. Princeton University Press, 2014. Gives an overview of the place of the YS in Indian intellectual history.
- On the history of the YS and how the text has been received in the West by scholars, Phillip A. Maas. "  A Concise Historiography of Classical Yoga Philosophy," in *Periodization And Historiography Of*

Indian Philosophy, edited by Eli Franco. Vienna: Sammlung De Nobili (2013)

- On HariharĀnanda, Knut A. Jacobsen, Yoga in Modern Hinduism: HariharĀnanda Āśāñya and Śāñkhyayoga (Routledge, 2018)