

Department of Historical Studies
University of Toronto Mississauga

RLG207H5F:
Introduction to Sikhism

Summer 2015
Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00–5:00
Instructional Centre (IB), Room 335

Instructor: Usman Hamid
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30–2:30
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the history of Sikhism from its beginnings as a devotional movement in late medieval Punjab until its transformation during the colonial period. The course begins with an examination of the political, social, and religious climate of 16th century North India—a period of intense religious fervor with the florescence of the bhakti movement, the popular practice of haṭha yoga by Nāth yogis and Sufis, the widespread proliferation of Chishtī Sufi devotionalism, and the rise of Muslim millenarian and messianic movements. It traces the development of the Sikh community under the ten Gurus, paying special attention to the formation of social and religious institutions, interactions with the Mughal state, and encounters with other religious communities of Punjab, such as Muslims, Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas, and Nāth Yogis. The course then examines the rise of the Sikh kingdom under Ranjit Singh and demonstrates how many of these institutions were shaped by royal patronage before undergoing wide reaching reform during the colonial period. It concludes with a study of Sikh nationalism in the late colonial and post-colonial periods. The course therefore contextualizes Sikhism within the broader historiography of politics and religion during the early modern and modern eras.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course students are expected to:

1. Become familiar with the major concepts and debates in the study of Sikh history
2. Gain fluency in the technical vocabulary of Sikhism.
3. Historicize the development of Sikhism within the broader religious context of early modern and colonial South Asia.
4. Trace transformative moments in the history of Sikhism.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Calculation of Grade

Weekly Quizzes	25%
Midterm	30%
Final Exam	45%

Weekly Quizzes (25%)

Students will be given a quiz each week on Portal to evaluate their understanding of the lecture materials and the readings assigned for that week. Each quiz is worth 5% of your total grade.

There will be no quiz week 4 as there is a midterm that week. Students may be asked on the quiz to identify locations on a map, answer multiple-choice questions, fill in the blanks, and answer true or false statements. **Quizzes will be made available Thursday at noon until Sunday at 11:59 pm.** Once you begin **you will have one hour to complete the quiz.** There will be no make up quizzes.

Midterm (30%)

The midterm will be held on **June 3rd in class**. The midterm will consist of two parts. Part 1 will consist of students answering 5 short answer ID questions out of a choice of 8. In part 2 students will be given two short essay questions and will have to answer one.

Final (45%)

The final exam will be held during the exam period. The format will be similar to that of the midterm.

Grading Scheme

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Grade Definition	
90–100	A+	4.0	Excellent	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85–89	A	4.0		
80–84	A-	3.7		
77–79	B+	3.3	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature
73–76	B	3.0		
70–72	B-	2.7		
67–69	C+	2.3	Adequate	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
63–66	C	2.0		
60–62	C-	1.7		
57–59	D+	1.3	Marginal	Some evidence of familiarity with the subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
53–56	D	1.0		
50–52	D-	0.7		
0–49	F	0.0	Inadequate	Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Course Readings There is no textbook for this course. Readings will be available on Portal.

Course Policies

1. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offence and should be avoided. To learn how not to see here: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

2. Absences and Missed Quizzes: Students are expected to attend class regularly as the readings merely supplement the lecture materials and are not supplant them. If students are unable to attend a significant portion of the semester due to medical reasons they should contact the instructor as soon as possible. Given that students will be given three and half days to complete the quiz there will be no make up quizzes except in the case of religious accommodations or exceptional circumstances. The final decision is up to the discretion of the course instructor.

3. Notice of Collection: The University of Toronto respects your privacy. The information on this form is collected pursuant to section 2(14) of the University of Toronto Act, 1971. It is collected for the purpose of administering accommodations for academic purposes based on medical grounds. The department will maintain a record of all medical certificates received. At all times your information will be protected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

4. Email Policy: I will respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends. Emails must be sent from university email accounts & include RLG207 at the beginning of the subject line. Urgent requests should have the “Urgent” typed in the subject line.

5. Recording Lectures: Students are not allowed to record or photograph lectures without the explicit permission of the instructor. Failure to do so contravenes the Canadian Copyright Act.

6. AccessAbility Centre and the Academic Skills Centre: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Resource Centre as soon as possible. AccessAbility staff (located in Rm 2047, South Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 905-569-4699 or email access.utm@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. For more info, please see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessability/>. All UTM students are eligible to use the resources of the Academic Skills Centre. For information regarding, e.g., individual appointments, writing workshops, and peer facilitated study groups, see: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/>

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction and Historical Background

1. May 11 – Introduction

Required Reading: Syllabus.

2. May 13 – Sufis and Society in Late Medieval Punjab

Required Reading: Eaton, “The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Bābā Farīd,” 203–24.

Week 2: Sants and Yogis

3. May 18 – Victoria Day! No class.

3. May 20 – Asceticism and Devotionalism in Late Medieval North India

Required Reading: Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 3–7 and 9–23.

Week 3: The Beginnings of the Sikh Community

4. May 25 – Guru Nanak and the Beginnings of the Sikh Community

Required Reading: Kaur Singh, “Guru Nanak and the Origins of Sikhism,” 1–21.

5. May 27 – The Sikh Darbar

Required Reading: Fenech, “(Re)forming the Early Sikh Court,” 49–68.

Week 4: The Court of God in the World of Men

6. June 1 – Spiritual Guide and Temporal King

Required Reading: Fenech, “Spirit and Structure: The Court of Guru Gobind Singh,” 122–64.

7. June 3 – In Class Mid Term

Week 5: When Sparrows Became Hawks

9. June 8 – Debating the Role of the Guru

Required Reading: Syan, “The Emergence of Sikh Militancy, 1606–1644,” 48–104.

10. June 10 – Formations and Transformation of the Sikh Khalsa

Required Readings: Dhavan, “(Re)making the Khalsa, 1708–1748,” 47–73.

Syan, “Debating Revolution: Early Eighteenth Century Sikh Public Philosophy on the Formation of the Khalsa,” 1096–1133. Available here: <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/475221>

Week 6: Sikhism in the Colonial Period

11. June 15 – Ranjit Singh’s Sikh Kingdom in Punjab

Required Readings: TBA.

12. June 17 – Colonial Reforms and Transformations

Required Readings: TBA.

Week 7: Sikh Nationalism

13. June 22 – A Quest for Home

Required Readings: TBA