

## Indian Philosophy, Global Literature (ENGL 4425)

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Modern literature owes a rich debt to ancient Indian philosophy. This seminar begins by reading several works of Indian philosophy, such as the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, before studying the manner in which they inspired writers as diverse as T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Leo Tolstoy, Simone Weil, Rabindranath Tagore, Clarice Lispector, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The class will also examine the manner in which these writers made use of this philosophy via frameworks of orientalism, indigeneity, and appropriation, assessing both their affordances as well as their limitations, while earnestly seeking a way to understand how we are to study, encounter, and create knowledge about other cultures in the twenty-first century.

### Required Texts

1. *The Upanishads*, translated by Patrick Olivelle (Oxford)
2. *The Bhagavad Gita* (new Penguin translation)
3. T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*
4. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G. H.*
5. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*
6. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*
7. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*

All other readings available on Canvas.

## Assessment

- 1) Attendance and weekly discussion posts [15%]
- 2) Discussion Leading [10%]
- 3) 3-page first essay [10%]
- 4) 4-5-page creative translation OR critical essay [20%]
- 5) Final 10-15-minute presentation [20%]
- 6) 8-10-page final essay [25%]

## Suggested Resources (available in print & online at Coates)

Jonardon Ganeri & Peter Adamson. *Classical Indian Philosophy*.

[\\*Brief podcast excerpt on the Bhagavad Gita](#)

Jonardon Ganeri. *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*.

[The Gita Super Site](#)—compares translations of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Richard Davis. *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*.

Angelika Malinar. *The Bhagavadgita: Doctrines and Contexts*.

Amartya Sen. *The Argumentative Indian*.

Signe Cohen. *The Upanishads: A Complete Guide*.

Dorothy Figueira. *The Afterlives of the Bhagavad Gita*.

Roberto Calasso, *Ardor*.

Kevin McGrath, “[Heroic Kṛṣṇa: Portrait of a Charioteer](#).”

Jay Garfield & Nalini Bushad, ed. *Indian Philosophy in English*.

S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*.

M. Ram Murty, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction*.

Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*

Sheldon Pollock & Wendy Doniger, collected works.

A. K. Ramanujan, *Collected Essays* (& poems)

## Course Schedule

1/10: Introduction. Discussion leader sign-up.

1/17: Roberto Calasso, *Ardor* (selections)  
Edward Said, *Orientalism*  
Wael Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*

1/24: *Upanishads*: Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.  
S. Radhakrishnan on Brahman and Atman  
Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being* (pp. 1-20)

1/31: *Upanishads*: Chandogya Upanishad & Mandukya Upanishad  
Leela Gandhi, "On Sitting: The Death of Sita"  
Jonardon Ganeri, "Dārā Shukoh & the Transmission of the Upaniṣads to Islam"

**2/2: \*First essay (3 pages) due at midnight**

2/7: T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*  
T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"  
Excerpts from *T. S. Eliot and Indic Traditions* &  
Excerpt from *T. S. Eliot: Vedanta and Buddhism*

2/14: *The Bhagavad Gita* (first half)  
Vedanta Society article: "The Bhagavad Gita Casts Its Spell on the West"  
T. Padmanabhan, "My Favorites from the *Gita*."  
Compare your edition with selections from the three other translations

2/21: *The Bhagavad Gita*. (second half)  
Dorothy Figueroa, "The Nazi Kstriya Ethos" (only read this chapter)  
Martha Nussbaum, "The Costs of Tragedy"  
A. K. Ramanujan, "Three Hundred *Ramayanas*"

2/28: *Gandhi* (film). Dir. Richard Attenborough  
Excerpts from Gandhi's memoir  
BK Ambedkar, *The Annihilation of Caste*  
Leo Tolstoy, "Letter to a Hindu"  
Dipesh Chakrabarty & Rochona Majumdar, "Gandhi's *Gita* and Politics as Such"  
KC Bhattacharaya, "Svaraj in Ideas"

3/6: W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*  
Gauri Viswanathan, "In Search of Madame Blavatsky"

**3/6: \*Second critical essay due before midnight.**

- 3/20: Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G. H.*  
Taittiriya Upanishad from Olivelle.  
\*Optional, my article on Lispector & Indian philosophy.
- 3/27: Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*.  
Emerson, "Brahma"  
Figueira chapter.  
Excerpt from Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*
- 4/3: Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*  
Tagore, "World Literature" / Vishva Satiya"  
A. K. Ramanujan, "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking?"
- 4/10: Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God"  
Weil, "On the Abolition of All Political Parties"  
Film: *Oppenheimer*.  
James Hijiya, "The Gita of J. Robert Oppenheimer"  
Figueroa chapters on Oppenheimer and Weil.  
Analysis of the translation of [the line](#) in the film.  
Woodhead, "Simone Weil's Conversation with the Bhagavad Gita"
- 4/17: Edward Said, "Travelling Theory" (excerpt)  
In-class workshop. Come to class with a completed thesis and outline.
- 4/24: In-class conference.
- 4/28: Final critical essay (8-10 pages) due.**