YOGA
The Art of Spiritual Transformation

RELG 351 * Fall 2015

Instructor: Mari Jyväsjärvi Stuart
MW 3:55 – 5:10

Yoga has become a mainstream cultural phenomenon in affluent Western societies. Yoga studios, yoga styles, yoga accessories, yoga celebrities, and yoga magazines proliferate, marking yoga as India’s greatest cultural export.

But what were the original yoga traditions of ancient India, and how are they related to modern postural yoga? This course explores the spiritual and religious traditions of India through the prism of yoga, a word meaning "practice" or "discipline." From its earliest pre-history to the classical formulations of yoga in the Yoga-sutra and the Bhagavad-gita, to Buddhist and Hindu and Jain renditions of yoga and to fascinating stories about medieval yogis performing miracles with their yogic superpowers, the course introduces students to richness of all that yoga meant in its original cultural contexts. But we also critically examine the modern transformation of yoga into a westernized phenomenon and the creative, innovative developments – as well as the cultural tensions and controversies – that have emerged as a result.

A variety of assignments allow students to experience the practice dimension of yoga and to develop a case study of their choosing.
Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete the course should be able to

- demonstrate their familiarity with the key concepts and terms of yoga and relevant South Asian religious traditions
- explain the main outlines of yoga's historical trajectory from its origins in South Asia to modern postural yoga
- critically discuss and analyze the range of meanings attributed to yoga and the contemporary controversies and tensions involving authenticity, commodification, and cultural appropriation in yoga

Course Readings

Books available for purchase at the Bookstore:

J.A.B. van Buitenen (trans.), *The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata*
Barbara Stoler Miller (trans.), *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*
Stephanie Syman, *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America*
David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis*

All other readings available as PDF documents via Blackboard (B)

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Participation, including class discussion and in-class group projects (20%)
   Your contributions in class should reflect careful and thoughtful reading of the assigned materials, and active engagement with the ideas. If you have concerns about class participation, please come and talk to me.

2. Four short (1 page) writing assignments in the course of the semester (20%)

3. Mid-term exam (30%)

4. Case study (30%)
   As the final project for this course, you will visit of a yoga studio or center of your choice and produce a report on the site, the organization, the style of yoga practiced at this site, and how traditional or Indian elements of yoga are
incorporated (or not) in the yoga teaching and practice there. The site may be in Columbia, SC, or elsewhere. The report will be both published on the class blog and presented in class. Detailed guidelines for developing the case study will be provided.

Grading Scale
100-90 A; 89-87 B+; 86-80 B; 79-77 C+; 76-70 C; 69-67 D+; 66-60 D; 59 and below F

Course Policies

Academic Integrity
The University of South Carolina has clearly articulated its policies governing academic integrity and students are encouraged to carefully review the policy on the Honor Code in the Carolina Community. Any deviation from these expectations will result in academic penalties as well as disciplinary action. The area of greatest potential risk for inadvertent academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, paraphrasing or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement.

Attendance
Prompt and regular attendance is crucial for success in the course. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. We will follow the university’s policy regarding attendance and the effect of unexcused absences on a student’s course grade. If you are absent for an excusable reason, be sure to present the needed documentation to the instructor immediately upon your return (e.g., if you are absent for a legitimate medical reason, bring a doctor’s note as soon as you come back to class). The University attendance policy specifies that students may miss up to 3 class meetings (10% of class time) without penalty. Beyond that, class absences will affect your class participation grade.

Classroom Conduct
All cell phones are to be turned off or silenced during class; there is no text messaging, web browsing, etc, during class. Please come to class on time, and be respectful of everyone else in the class. Refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. Disrespectful or disruptive behavior, such as talking out of turn, may result in dismissal from class and/or an academic penalty.

Assignment Submission
All assignments should be submitted using Blackboard’s “submit assignment” link. Assignments lose 20% of their point value per day late and will be counted as if the whole assignment was submitted at the time of the latest timestamp present.

Accommodating Disabilities
Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.
Schedule of Classes

Week 1  The Present Day and Pre-history of Yoga

Aug 24  Introduction to course
Aug 26  Narayanan, pp. 28-40 (B)
The Rig Veda, selections (B)
The Upanishads, selections (B)

SHORT ASSIGNMENT # 1

Week 2  Classical Hinduism

Aug 31  Narayanan, pp. 41-66 (B)
Sept 2  Narayanan cont.

Week 3  Jain Yoga

Sept 7  LABOR DAY – No classes
Sept 9  Tattvārtha Sūtra: That Which Is, selections (B)

Week 4  Buddhist Yoga

Sept 14  Gethin, Foundations of Buddhism (selections) (B)
Sept 16  Ānāpānasati sutta: Mindfulness of breathing
Satipaṭṭhāna sutta: The foundations of mindfulness  (B)

Week 5  The Three Yogas of the Bhagavad-gīta

Sept 21  The Bhagavadgīta in the Mahabharata, ch. 1-9
Sept 23  The Bhagavadgīta in the Mahabharata, ch. 10-18

SHORT ASSIGNMENT # 2
Week 6  The Ultimate Yoga Classic: The Yoga-sutra of Patañjali
Sept 28  Yoga: Discipline of Freedom, pp. 1-43
Sept 30  Yoga: Discipline of Freedom, pp. 44-83

Week 7  Yoga in Art and Narrative
Oct 5    Swami Venkatesananda, The Concise Yoga Vasistha, pp. 333-62 (B)
         http://www.asianart.org/exhibitions_index/yoga-artwork-highlights
Oct 7    White, Sinister Yogis, Ch. 1

Week 8  Medieval Yogis and Subtle Bodies: Yoga and Tantra
Oct 12   White, Sinister Yogis, Ch. 2
Oct 14   White, Sinister Yogis, Ch. 3-4

Week 9  Hatha Yoga
Oct 19   Hatha-yoga-pradipika (selections) (B)
         White, “Yoga: Brief History of an Idea,” pp. 15-17 (B)
Oct 21   Midterm Exam

FALL BREAK Oct 22-25

Week 10 Yoga Comes to Europe and America
Oct 26   Mark Singleton, “Fakirs, Yogis, Europeans” pp. 35-53
Oct 28   Syman, Ch. 2-3

SHORT ASSIGNMENT # 3
Week 11  Yoga in 20th-Century America: Counterculture to Mainstream

Nov 2  Narayanan, pp. 66-69 (B)
       Syman, Ch. 5
Nov 4  Syman, Ch. 9-10

Week 12  Yoga Today: Pop Culture, New Age, and Commercialization

Nov 9  Syman, Ch. 12-13
Nov 11  Andrea Jain, “Branding Yoga” (B)

Week 13  Is Yoga Hindu? Is Yoga Indian? Cultural Appropriation and the “Religiousness” of Yoga

Nov. 16  Andrew Nicholson, “Is Yoga Hindu? On the Fuzziness of Religious Boundaries” (B)
Nov 18  The Case of yoga teaching in California schools (materials TBA) (B)

SHORT ASSIGNMENT # 4

Recommended reading online:
  •  https://moonlitmoth.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/why-i-stopped-teaching-yoga-my-journey-into-spiritual-political-accountability/
  •  http://saapya.com

Week 14: Thanksgiving Week

Nov 23  INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE – no class
Nov 25  THANKSGIVING RECESS – no class

Week 15  Case Study Reporting

Nov 30  Student presentations on case studies
Dec 2   Student presentations on case studies