Wisdoms of Liberation: Dharma, Yoga, and Tantra
Course Number
3 Units
Starr King School for the Ministry – Graduate Theological Union
Spring 2016

Instructor Information:
Rev. Jeremiah Kalendae, M.Div., M.S.S.A.
jkalendae@sksm.edu
(510) 549-4704 (office)
Availability: Available by appointment

Meeting Dates and Times:
2:10-5:00pm - Thursday

Course Description:
Through philosophical reflection, study of sacred texts, and application of spiritual technologies, this course will introduce pathways of spiritual liberation found in dharmic, yogic, and tantric wisdom traditions. Students will investigate the thea/ologies, cosmologies, soteriologies, cultures, and consciousnesses of these diverse traditions. Special analysis will be given to marginalized heterodox traditions of spiritual emancipation—such as the tantric path of the Mahavidyas or Great Wisdoms. Scriptures explored will include the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Tantras, and devotional writings of the bhakti poet-saints. Coursework will include embodied ritual, religious exercise, scriptural study, spiritual lecture, pilgrimage, group processes, classroom presentations, and scholarly research. Prerequisite readings will be announced. A learning immersion will be required.

Learning Objectives:
During this course, students will:

• Explore dharmic, yogic, and tantric philosophical systems and their thea/ologies, cosmologies, soteriologies, and cultural contexts. Principal schools investigated through primary texts and secondary readings will be Vedanta, Yoga, Samkhya, and Tantra.

• Study primary sacred texts, engaging in interpretive comparisons and exercises, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Tantras, and devotional writings of the bhakti poet-saints.

• Engage with the application of holistic, integrative, and embodied spiritual technologies that advance spiritual liberation, including yogic practices, kirtan, mantra, yantra, tantric rituals, sacred rites, and ceremonies.

• Gain familiarity with heterodox movements within and beyond the Hindu tradition and discuss their relevance to contemporary counter-oppressive philosophies of spiritual liberation.
• Participate in a learning immersion at least one Hindu ceremony of the Vedic or Tantric traditions.

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the conclusion of this course, students will...

• Philosophically reflect upon the systems studied and articulate clear philosophical positions on the themes explored (e.g., the nature of self/Self, liberation/salvation, death, the cosmos, deities, teleology, eschatology, etc.). Be able to apply these philosophical reflections to one’s thea/ological process and spiritual leadership.

• Interpret sacred texts explored through personal experience, reason, scholastic commentaries, and grounded in the philosophical and broader cultural landscapes in which the texts emerged and evolved.

• Utilize spiritual technologies to advance spiritual growth and be able to adapt many of those technologies to appropriate traditions, cultural context, and identities.

• Critically analyze dynamics oppression and privilege of the philosophical systems, their cultural contexts, and contemporary realities with special attention given to race, sex, gender, sexual/affectional orientation, caste, and religious identity.

• Gain familiarity with the language, terminology, ethics, etiquette, aesthetics, and cultural contexts of these philosophical systems and religious traditions to encourage multireligious engagement.

**Course Policies:**

• Regular class attendance and participation is expected.

• Students are expected to arrive on time and remain for the duration of the class. Students may request to be absent for up to two class sessions. Any other attendance accommodations must be approved in advance by the instructor.

• All assignments are expected to be completed on time. Any special arrangements must be made in advance with the instructor by email.

• If you have special needs, please discuss these with the instructor in advance of the beginning of the course by email.

**Course Assignments:**

• Weekly written reflections of 1-3 pages in length on the week’s reading materials, experiential learning, and/or proposed questions for reflection.

• Attendance at one pilgrimage to a puja ceremony for experiential immersion. Maha Shivaratri Puja Immersion is scheduled for Monday, March 7th, 5pm, Shri Maa & Swamij Ashram, Napa Valley, CA.

• Midterm of 5-7 pages exploring either 1) one of the major philosophical themes or systems in greater depth or 2) analyzing that dynamics of ceremonial/ritual process experienced in the experiential immersion in light of the material covered in class.

• Final 7-10 page reflection paper reflecting on the major philosophical themes, sacred texts, and religious practices, as they relate to one’s personal the()ology or philosophical system.

**Grading:**
• Students default graded as Pass/Fail.
• Letter grades can be requested from Instructor and the Registrar before the course commences.
• Evaluation Value Distribution:
  • Course Attendance & Participation 40%
  • Weekly Written Reflections 25%
  • Midterm Paper 15%
  • Final Paper 20%

Required Texts:


  27 Used from $14.29 54 New from $14.30
  ISBN-10: 0865477361


  Used from $9.16 New from $21.10
  ISBN-10: 0231112653


  Used $12.71
  ISBN-10: 1440071233


  12 New from $29.37 42 Used from $0.76
  ISBN-10: 0300079834


  20 Used from $10.48 12 New from $25.00
  ISBN-10: 0520204999


  22 New from $24.90 29 Used from $5.88
  ISBN-10: 0195134346


  10 Used from $4.85 5 New from $4.85
  ISBN-10: 0553213652


48 Used from $0.01 26 New from $3.50
ISBN-10: 0140442707


11 Used from $19.03 10 New from $27.31
ISBN-10: 0791438163


26 Used from $16.95 31 New from $30.05
ISBN-10: 0691057796

Course Schedule*:

*The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and assigned readings to achieve course objectives.

**Week 1: Introduction to the Course, the Vedas, and Upanishads (February 4)**

Topics to be Covered:

- Student Introductions
- Introduction of Indian Philosophical Traditions
- Language and Vocabulary
- Introducing the Vedic Tradition
- Philosophy of the Upanishads

Readings (To be read for this class):

- *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion* (Pages 1-63)
- *Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Pages 1-92)
- *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Read 1-72, 73-176)
- *Rig Vega Selections Online* (Review Book 1 Online)

**Week 2: The Upanishads (February 11)**

Topics to be Covered:

- The Philosophy of the Upanishads
- Chandogya Upanishad
- Isa Upanishad
- Mundaka Upanishad
- Svetasvatara Upanishad

Readings (To be read for this class):
• *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion* (Pages 64-156)
• *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Read 177-274; 362-365; 366-377; 394-411)

**Week 3: The Upanishads** (February 18)

**Topics to be Covered:**

- The Philosophy of the Upanishads
- Briihad-aranyaka Upanishad
- Taittiriya Upanishad
- Aitareya Upanishad
- Maitri Upanishad
- Mantra Yoga: AUM & Gayatri Mantra

**Readings (To be read for this class):**

- *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion* (Pages 64-156)
- *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Read 73-176; 275-293; 294-301; 412-458)

**Week 4: Vaishnavism, Saivism, and the Bhakti Movement** (February 25)

**Topics to be Covered:**

- Introduction to Bhakti Movement
- Vaishnavism and Shivism
- Introduction to The Bhagavad Gita
- Introduction to the Bhakti Poet-Saints (i.e., Basavanna)

**Readings (To be read for this class):**

- *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (Pages 1-49)
- *Speaking of Šiva* (19-91)

**Week 5: Vaishnavism, Saivism, and the Bhakti Movement** (March 3)

**Topics to be Covered:**

- The Bhagavad Gita
- Bhakti Poet-Saints (i.e., Devara Dasimayya & Mahadeviyakka)

**Readings (To be read for this class):**

- *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (Pages 50-96)
- *Speaking of Šiva* (Pages 91-143)

**Week 6: Maha Shivaratri Puja Immersion** (March 7)
• Maha Shivaratri Puja Imersion
  • (Monday, March 7th, 5pm, Shri Maa & Swamij Ashram, Napa Valley, CA)
  • No Regular Class Scheduled for March 10

**Week 7: Vaishnavism, Saivism, and the Bhakti Movement (March 17)**

***MIDTERM DUE*** (Email to jkalendae@sksm.edu as MS Word Document)

**Topics to be Covered:**

- The Bhagavad Gita
- Bhakti Poet-Saints (i.e., Allama Prabhu)
- Midterm Evaluations

**Readings (To be read for this class):**

- *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (Pages 97-162)
- *Speaking of Śiva* (Pages 143-189)

**Week 8: Reading Week (March 24) (NO CLASS)**

**Week 9: The Yogic Philosophy of The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (March 31)**

**Topics to be Covered:**

- History of Yoga
- Introduction to Samkya Philosophy
- Yoga Sutras Chapter 1 & Commentary: Meditative Absorption
- Yogic Ethics: Yamas (Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha)
- Yogic Ethics: Niyamas (Saucha, Santosha, Tapas, Swadhyaya, Ishwara Pranidhana)

**Readings (To be read for this class):**

- *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (Pages i-Iix; 3-168)
- *The Integrity of the Yoga Darsana* (Pages 1-143)

**Week 10: The Yogic Philosophy of The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (April 7)**

**Topics to be Covered:**

- Ashtanga Yoga
- Yogic Practice: Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi
- Yoga Sutras Chapter 2 & Commentary: Practice

**Readings (To be read for this class):**

- *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (Pages 169-301)
- *The Integrity of the Yoga Darsana* (Pages 144-253)
Week 11: The Yogic Philosophy of The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (April 14)

Topics to be Covered:

- Ashtanga Yoga II
- Yoga Sutras Chapter 3-4 & Commentary: Mystic Powers and Absolute Independence

Readings (To be read for this week):

- *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (Pages 301-476)
- *The Integrity of the Yoga Darsana* (Pages 259-308)

Week 12: Shaktism, Tantra, and the Mahavidyas (April 21)

Topics to be Covered:

- Introduction to Shaktism
- Introduction to Tantra
- Introduction to MahaKali
- Tantric Puja

Readings (To be read for this class):

- *Tantra in Practice* (Pages 1-36; 41-51; 72-80; 463-488) Introduction; The Tantric Guru; Interviews with a Tantric Kali Priest: Feeding Skulls in the Town of Sacrifice; The Worship of Kali According to the Todala Tantra
- *Singing to the Goddess: Poems to Kālī and Umā from Bengal* (Pages 1-75)

Week 13: Shaktism, Tantra, and the Mahavidyas (April 28)

Topics to be Covered:

- Introduction to the Mahavidyas
- Shaktic & Tantric Devotional Poetry
- Tattva Shuddhi Spiritual Exercise

Readings (To be read for this class):

- *Tantra in Practice* (Pages 167-183; 347-360; 509-520; 574-586) Raising Snakes in Bengal; The Ocean of the Heart: Selections from the Kulārṇava Tantra; The Purification of the Body; On The Seal of Sambhu: A Poem by Abhivnava Guptā)
- *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine* (Pages 92-176; Tara, Tripur-Sundari, Bhuvanesvari; Chinnamastā; Bhairavi)
- *Singing to the Goddess: Poems to Kālī and Umā from Bengal* (Pages 76-103)

Week 14: Shaktism, Tantra, and the Mahavidyas (May 5)

Topics to be Covered:

- The Mahavidyas
- Shakta & Tantric Devotional Poetry
- Yoga Nidra Spiritual Exercise
Readings (To be read for this class):

- *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine* (Pages 176-252; Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi; Kamala; Conclusion)
- *Singing to the Goddess: Poems to Kālī and Umā from Bengal* (Pages 103-151)

**Week 15: STUDY WEEK (May 12) (NO CLASS)**

**Week 16: Final Class (May 19)**

***FINAL DUE**** (Email to jkalendae@sksm.edu as MS Word Document)

Topics to be Covered:

- Final Presentations
- Course Summary & Conclusion
- Course Evaluations

**Additional Suggested Texts:**


