

# HINDU ECOWOMANISM & THE BLACK MOTHER GODDESS



**FALL 2021 | ST-3330 | ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS | 3 UNITS  
THURS 2:10 PM-5:00 PM PST**

Drawing on Hindu Goddess' traditional lore, this synchronous online course explores the relationship of identity between ecology, women, and the Goddess as not symbolic or representational, but substantive and real. This indigenous non-dual epistemology stands in contrast to dominant dualistic epistemologies that tend to contain fragmented perspectives of reality. The symbiotic, porous, interdependent nature of reality is an embodied realization that takes place when the Black Goddess Kali dissolves the solipsism, the subject-object dichotomy that is part of the human condition. This course intertwines the three strands of Hindu Goddess ecowomanism: 1) Hindu Cosmology and the feminine principle; 2) the theology of the Black Mother Goddess 3) the voice of activists, scholars, and grassroots organizers in the face of environmental degradation and earth justice. This course will use a lecture & discussion format. Requirements include class participation, reading of required texts, and the submission of a final 20-page paper. This Course is suitable for MDiv, MA/MTS, DMin, PhD/ThD students. No prior knowledge of Hindu studies is required. Relates to Threshold/s # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and to MFC competency # 3, 4, 6, 7. [20 max enrollment; Auditors excluded]

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**Instructor Office Hours: By Appointment**

**Learning Objectives:** During this course, students will be introduced to the theological foundations of the Great Goddess in the Hindu tradition. They will learn the semiotics of the Black Goddess Kālī, Her soteriological themes, observe the trajectory in the development of Her theology, and its ecological significance. They will also see the impact of Dharmology on ecological concerns in South Asia.

Learning Outcomes: Students will understand a non-dualistic worldview and its consequences on ecological concerns. They will see how Hindu cyclic cosmology grounds grass roots ecological movement and respects nature.

Students are expected to complete reading assignments and be prepared for robust discussions of course materials in class. Please contact the instructor regarding accessibility, including any special needs or considerations.

### **Grading**

**Grades will be determined as follows:**

**Class participation – 40%**

(Absences will impact this portion of your grade)

**Preparedness – 30%**

(Level of engagement with materials will impact this portion of your grade)

**Final Paper – 30% (Due December 15<sup>th</sup>)**

(Lateness will impact this portion of your grade)

### **Final Paper Guidelines**

Write a well-researched paper (Approx. 20 pages, 12-pt. font, Times Roman, doubled spaced, with footnotes and a full bibliography) on a topic or theme that pertains to the materials studied in class. You may bring the subject of Śākta theology into engagement with interdisciplinary and interreligious issues related to ecowomanism.

1. You may use either sources that speak from within or outside the tradition, but be critically aware of, and document the authors' perspective and standpoint.
2. Topic and sources must be first approved by the instructor
3. Focused choice of theme.
4. Clarity of thesis.
5. Careful and comprehensive understanding of the readings being used.
6. Critical-Constructive BUT Evenhanded Approach to the subject.
7. Language: Grammar | Punctuation | Clarity.
8. Citations: Sufficient textual or other evidence to support each of your arguments.
9. Turabian Style: Consistent Style & Research Paper Format
10. Sections (and if necessary, Subsections), including Introduction and Conclusion.
11. Journal article(s) may be included.
12. Breadth of research (multiple sources beyond class readings) | Variety of Sources | Examples: Authored Books, Edited Volumes, Anthologies, Primary Sources in Translation, and Credible Web Sources.

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

\*Students may take this course pass/fail or for a letter grade. Instructor must be notified well in advance.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Required texts will be posted on Moodle*

- ❖ Christopher Key Chapple & Mary Evelyn Tucker editors, *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water (Religions of the World and Ecology)*, Harvard University Press, 2000.  
ISBN-13: 978-0945454250  
\$141.73 Hardcover, \$50.61 Paperback
- ❖ Tracy Pintchman, *The Rise of the Goddess in the Hindu Tradition*. State University of New York Press, 1994.  
ISBN-13 : 978-8170305217  
\$27.98 Hardcover, \$33.95 Paperback



## CLASS SCHEDULE

### SECTION 1 HINDU COSMOLOGY

#### WEEK 1

#### INTRODUCING THE HINDU WORLD OF DIVERSITY

- ❖ Overview of Course

#### Articles on Moodle:

- ❖ Gavin Flood, *An Introduction To Hinduism*
- ✓ “Points of Departure & Ancient Origins” | pp. 1-50
- ❖ Rita D. Sherma (ed), *In Swami Vivekananda His Life, Legacy, and Liberative Ethics: Explorations in Indic Traditions: Theological, Ethical, and Philosophical*
- ✓ Arvind Sharma, “What is Hinduism?: A Reflection on Vivekananda’s Legacy in Relation to the Definition of Hinduism | pp. 227–243.

#### WEEK 2

#### INTRODUCING ŚĀKTISM

- ❖ Introduction ~ *The Devi Sūktam* (In class)
- ❖ Gavin Flood, *An Introduction To Hinduism*
- ✓ *The Goddess and Śākta (Shakta) Traditions*
- ✓ Thomas Coburn, *Devi: Goddesses Of India*

#### WEEK 3

#### VEDIC FEMININE PRINCIPLE

- ❖ Tracy Pintchman, *The Rise Of The Goddess In The Hindu Tradition*
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Chapter 1: The Feminine Principle in the Vedas: Cosmogony, Cosmology & Goddesses in the Vedas

#### WEEK 4

#### PHILOSOPHICAL THEALOGY

- ❖ Tracy Pintchman, *The Rise Of The Goddess In The Hindu Tradition*,
- ✓ Chapter 2: *Prakṛiti, Maya, and Śakti: The Feminine Principle in Philosophical Discourse*

#### WEEK 5

#### FEMININE PRINCIPLE IN NARRATIVE THEOLOGY

- ❖ Tracy Pintchman, *The Rise Of The Goddess In The Hindu Tradition*
- ✓ Chapter 3: *The Feminine Principle in Puranic Cosmogony and Cosmology*

### SECTION 2

#### GODDESS THEALOGY

#### WEEK 6

## THE GLORY OF THE GREAT GODDESS

### Articles on Moodle:

- ❖ Thomas B. Coburn, *Encountering The Goddess: A Translation Of The Devi Mahatmya And A Study Of Its Interpretation*
- ✓ Chapter 1: *Introduction*
- ✓ Chapter 2: *The Historical Setting*
- ✓ Chapter 7: *Encounters in the Contemporary World*

### WEEK 7

## THE GLORY OF THE GREAT GODDESS

- ❖ Rita D. Sherma, *God the Mother and Her Sacred Text: A Hindu Vision of Divine Immanence*
- ❖ Thomas B. Coburn, *Encountering The Goddess: A Translation Of The Devi Mahatmya And A Study Of Its Interpretation*
- ✓ Chapter 3: *The Text in Translation*
- ✓ Chapter 5: *Encounter with the Text I—The Ritual and Philosophy of the Angas*
- ✓ Chapter 6: *Encounter with the Text II: The Commentaries*

### WEEK 8

## THE BLACK MOTHER GODDESS

- ❖ Lecture: *Semiotics of Mahākālī*, Pravina Rodrigues
- ✓ David R. Kinsley: *Kālī: Blood and Death out of Place*
- ✓ Neela Bhattacharya Saxena: *Gynocentric Theology Of Tantric Hinduism-A Meditation Upon the Devi*

### WEEK 9

## SA HAM: SHE I AM

- ✓ Brenda Dobia. *Seeking Ma, Seeking Me*
- ✓ Rita D. Sherma, *Sa Ham—I Am She: Woman as Goddess*
- ✓ Kathleen Erndl, *Is Shakti Empowering for Women? Reflections on the Feminism and the Hindu Goddess*

### WEEK 10

## THE BLACK MOTHER GODDESS & HER ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- ✓ Loriliai Biernacki. *The Kālī Practice: Revisiting Women's Roles in Tantra*
- ✓ Loriliai Biernacki. *Sex talk and Gender Rights*
- ✓ Vrinda Dalmiya. *Loving Paradoxes: A Feminist Reclamation of the Goddess Kali*

## SECTION 3

## ACTIVISTS, SCHOLARS, AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS

### WEEK 11

- ❖ Selections from *Hinduism and Ecology*
- ✓ Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Preface*
- ✓ Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Series Foreword*
- ✓ Christopher Chapple, *Introduction*

### WEEK 12

- ❖ Selections from *Hinduism and Ecology*

- ✓ O.P. Dwivedi, *Dharmic Ecology*
- ✓ K. L. Seshagiri Rao, *The Five Great Elements (Pañcamabhūta): An Ecological Perspective*

### WEEK 13

- ❖ Selections from *Hinduism and Ecology*
- ✓ Madhu Khanna, *The Ritual Capsule of Durga Pūjā: An Ecological Perspective*
- ✓ Chris Deegan, *The Narmada: Circumabulation of a Sacred Landscape*
- ✓ George A. James, *Ethical and Religious Dimensions of Chipko Resistance*

### WEEK 14

### SUMMATION

- ✓ Student Presentations
- ✓ Kālī Pūjā (Worship by Naren Schreiner)

Statement on Academic Integrity and Misconduct can be found here: <https://www.sksm.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integrity-misconduct/>

Disability Policy can be found here: <https://www.sksm.edu/students-with-disabilities-policy/>

SKSM FERPA policy can be found here: <https://www.sksm.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act/>