COURSE SYLLABUS

RELIGION, RITUAL AND EVERYDAY LIFE
Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education Program (ISLE) Program

Suggested US semester credit hours: 4
Contact Hours: 60
Course Code: RL282-06 and PACS282-06
Course Length: Semester
Delivery method: Face to Face
Language of Instruction: English
Suggested cross-listings: Religious Studies; Peace and Conflict Studies

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides insights into the religious life of various ethnic communities in Sri Lanka: Sinhala Buddhists, Tamil Hindus and Muslims of different orientations. Indeed, the question of how and when religious identity intersects with ethnic identity—and ritual’s role in articulating those politically significant relationships—will undergird our lectures and discussions. It will include an examination of different forms of worship at home and in religious shrines, healing rituals as well as rites of passage. The main objective of the course is to help students understand the perspectives of practitioners through the study of the context in which each of the rituals considered in this course are observed. The overarching theme of the course is to explore the complex relationship between canonical understanding of religion and its popular practice as it is reflected in the practice of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam in Sri Lanka. Sustained consideration will be given to the historical and contemporary dynamics of religious borrowing, appropriation, and interaction. Students will leave the course with a command over not only basic religious concepts in Sri Lanka, but an understanding of how those concepts are deployed in practice.

COURSE GOALS

• To introduce students to concepts and practices central to religious life in Sri Lanka;
• To analyze how and why these ideas found resonance with particular social and historical conditions;
• To track the complex ways in which religious and ritual cultures stand in reflexive relation to social, economic, and political change;
• To interrogate received representations of Asian religions as strictly rational philosophies;
• To cultivate a critical perspective on the concept of ‘ritual,’ as well as different theoretical and methodological approaches to its study;
• To provide an opportunity for students to improve writing and critical thinking skills;
• To develop a tolerance for ambiguity, particularly in coming to terms with religious world views that are quite different from what is normative in modern America.

EVALUATION METHODS

Participation in classroom discussions
Observation of ritual performances
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Guided visits to religious shrines and pilgrimage centers
Written assignments (topics and prompts will grow out of class discussions, as well as student interests)

Grading

Class participation and presentations 25%
3 field reports of approximately 500-800 words each 15% (@ 5% each)
3 assignments of approximately 1500-2000 words each 60% (@ 20% each)

ATTENDANCE

Students studying on an IFSA program are required to attend all regularly scheduled classes, studios, recitations, workshops and laboratory sessions. Failure to attend classes may result in a loss of credit and a fail on your transcript. The specific application of the attendance guidelines is at the instructor’s discretion. Lateness or absence can affect the student’s grade.

COURSE OUTLINE

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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings, viewings</th>
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Hindu Religious Practice
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| 6    | A Monastic’s Place is in the Temple? | Selection of poems from Charles Hallisey, *Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women*.  
### COURSE SYLLABUS

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Buddhism Meditation</strong></td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Muslim Religious Practice</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Islamic Rituals</strong></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Religiosity Among Muslim Women</strong></td>
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#### Muslim Religious Practice

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<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Film: <em>Haro Hara!</em></td>
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**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Any academic endeavor must be based upon a foundation of honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by principles of academic integrity and must be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work while studying abroad. Any academic work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill an academic requirement must represent a student’s original work. Any act of academic
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misconduct, such as cheating, fabrication, forgery, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will subject a student to disciplinary action.

IFSA takes academic integrity very seriously. Students must not accept outside assistance without permission from the instructor. Additionally, students must document all sources according to the instructions of the professor. Should your instructor suspect you of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty, you may receive a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action may result. The incident will be reported to the IFSA resident director as well as your home institution.

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