

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

Session	Topics	Readings, viewings
1	Ritual: Sri Lankan Perspectives	Catherine Bell, <i>Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice</i> (New York: OUP, 1992) pp. 13-46. Bryan Pfaffenberger, "The Kataragama Pilgrimage: Hindu-Buddhist Interaction and its Significance in Sri Lanka's Polyethnic Social System," <i>Journal of Asian Studies</i> 38.3 (1979) pp. 253-270. John Holt, "Toward a Theory of Ritual and Violence: The Recent Sinhala Experience," n.d. Patricia Lawrence, "Grief on the Body: The Work of Oracles in Eastern Sri Lanka," in <i>Sri Lanka: Collective Identities Revisited Vol. 2</i> (Colombo: Marga Instituted, 1998) pp. 271-294.
Hindu Religious Practice		

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2	The Hindu Temple Rituals of Jaffna	<p>C.J. Fuller, "Popular Hinduism and Indian Society," in <i>The Camphor Flame</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) pp. 3-28.</p> <p>C.J. Fuller, "Worship," in <i>The Camphor Flame</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) pp. 57-82.</p> <p>N. Shanmugalingam, "From Ghora to Bhoga: Role Change and Rise of the Goddess Turkkai in Yalppanam," <i>Lanka</i> 5 (1990): pp. 186-200.</p>
3	Popular vs. Brahmanic Rituals in Jaffna	<p>S. Susindrarajah, "Religiousness in the Saiva Village," in <i>Religiousness in Sri Lanka</i>, ed. John Ross Carter (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1979) pp. 176-190.</p> <p>Bryan Pfaffenberger, "Social Communication in Dravidian Ritual," <i>Journal of Anthropological Research</i> 36.2, 1980, pp. 196-219.</p> <p>C.J. Fuller, "Gods and Goddesses," in <i>The Camphor Flame</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) pp. 29-56.</p>
4	Hindu Cosmology and Religious Pantheon	<p>Kim Knott, <i>Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction</i> (Oxford: OUP, 2016).</p> <p>Roger Ballard, <i>The Conceptual Foundations of the Hindu Cosmological Vision: An Introductory Glossary</i>, 2002. (http://www.casas.org.uk/papers/pdfpapers/hinducos.pdf)</p>
5	Hindu Life Cycle Rituals	<p>Deborah Winslow, "Rituals of First Menstruation in Sri Lanka," <i>Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland</i> 15.4 (1980) pp. 603-625.</p> <p>Anthony Good, "The Female Bridegroom: Rituals of Puberty and Marriage in South India and Sri Lanka," <i>The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice</i> 11 (1982) pp. 35-55.</p>
Buddhist Religious Practice		
6	A Monastic's Place is in the Temple?	<p>Selection of poems from Charles Hallisey, <i>Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women</i>.</p> <p>Susanne Mrozik, "A Robed Revolution: The Contemporary Buddhist Nun's (<i>Bhikṣuṇī</i>) Movement," pp. 360-78.</p>

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		<p>H.L. Seneviratne, “Dharmapala and the Definition of the Monk’s Mission,” in <i>The Work of Kings</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) pp. 25-55.</p> <p>Daniel Kent, “Onward Buddhist Soldiers: Preaching to the Sri Lankan Army,” pp. 157-174.</p>
7	Buddhist Ritual Redefined: The Changing Contexts of <i>Upasampada</i>, <i>Dāna</i>, and the <i>Perahera</i>	<p>Ananda Abeysekara, “Tradition and Difference” in <i>Colors of the Robe</i> (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 2002) pp. 174-200.</p> <p>Jeffrey Samuels, “Is Merit in the Milk Powder? Pursuing <i>Puñña</i> in Contemporary Sri Lanka,” <i>Contemporary Buddhism</i> 9.1 (2008) pp. 123-147.</p> <p>John Holt, “Asala Perahara: Powers of the Buddha’s Tooth-Relic in Sri Lanka” in <i>Theravada Traditions: Buddhist Ritual Cultures in Contemporary Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka</i> (Honolulu: UHP, 2017) pp. 67-130.</p>
8	Buddhism Meditation	TBA
Muslim Religious Practice		
9	Muslim Ethnic Groups and their Religiosity in Sri Lanka	<p>M. A. Nuhman, <i>Sri Lankan Muslims: Ethnic Identity within Cultural Diversity</i> (Colombo, ICES: 2007).</p> <p>M. A. M. Shukry, <i>Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity</i> (Beruwala, Jamiah Naleemia Institute: 1983) pp. 337-363.</p> <p>Vamadevan, <i>The History of the Sri Lankan Muslims</i> (Wattle Grove, Australia: 1999) pp. 5-17.</p>
10	Islamic Rituals	<p>M. A. M. Hussain, “The Faith of Muslims in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice,” in <i>Religiousness in Sri Lanka</i>, ed. John Ross Carter (1979) pp. 191-221.</p> <p>Dennis McGilvray, “Arabs, Moors and Muslims: Sri Lankan Muslim Ethnicity in Regional Perspective,” <i>Contributions to Indian Sociology</i> (1998) pp. 433-482.</p>
11	Religiosity Among Muslim Women	<p>Farzana Haniffa, “Piety as Politics Amongst Muslim Women in Contemporary Sri Lanka” <i>Modern Asian Studies</i> 42.2/3 (Mar – May 2008) pp. 347-375.</p>

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12	Islamic Rituals	<p>M.A.M.Hussain (1979) "The Faith of Muslims in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice" In <i>Religiousness in Sri Lanka</i>, ed. John Ross Carter, pp.191-221).</p> <p>Dennis McGilvray, "Arabs, Moors and Muslims: Sri Lankan Muslim Ethnicity in Regional Perspective" <i>Contributions to Indian Sociology</i>, Online Sage Publications, 1998: pp. 433-482.</p>
Challenging Religious Boundaries		
13	Buddhism and the Pantheon of Gods and Deities	<p>Gananath Obeyesekere, "The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions," <i>Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).</p> <p>John Holt, "Introduction: The Setting and the Problem," <i>Buddha in the Crown: Avalokitesvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 1-26.</p> <p>Rohan Bastin, "The Regenerative Power of Kali Worship in Contemporary Sinhala Buddhism," <i>Social Analysis</i> 40 (1996) pp. 59-94.</p> <p>Premakumara de Silva, "God of Compassion and the Divine Protector of 'Sri Pada': Trends in Popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka," <i>The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities</i>, Vol. XXXIV No. 1&2 (2008) pp. 93-107.</p>
14	Exorcism, Healing, and Ritual Power	<p>Bruce Kapferer, "Demonic Illusions, Demons and the Cosmic Hierarchy," <i>A Celebration of Demons, Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Sri Lanka</i> (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) pp. 247-330.</p> <p>Bruce Kapferer, "Emotion and Feeling in Sinhalese Healing Rites," <i>Social Analysis</i> 1 (1979) pp. 1-25.</p> <p>Bob Simpson, "Possession, Dispossession and the Social Distribution of Knowledge Among Sri Lankan Ritual Specialists," <i>The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute</i>, 3.1 (1997) pp. 43-59.</p>

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15	The Bōdhi Pūjā: A Case Study in Ritual and Socio-Political Transformation	<p>H. L. Seneviratne and Swarna Wickmereratne, "Bodhipuja: Collective Representations of Sri Lanka Youth," <i>American Ethnologist</i> 7.4 (1980) pp. 734-743.</p> <p>Gombrich and Obeyesekere, "The Bōdhi Pūjā" in <i>Buddhism Transformed</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) pp. 384-410.</p>
16	The Challenges of a Multi-Religious Society	<p>Jonathan Walters, "Multireligion on the Bus: Beyond 'Influence' and 'Syncretism' in the Study of Religious Meetings" in <i>Unmaking the Nation</i> (Colombo: SSA, 1995) pp. 34-61.</p> <p>Neena Mahadev, "The Maverick Dialogics of Religious Rivalry in Sri Lanka: Inspiration and Contestation in a New Messianic Buddhist Movement," <i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)</i> 00 (2015) pp. 1-21.</p> <p>Tudor Silva, et al., <i>Religious Interface and Contestations between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka</i> (Colombo: ICES, 2016) pp. 1-28.</p> <p>John Holt, "A Religious Syntax to Recent Communal Violence in Sri Lanka," in <i>Buddhist Extremists and Muslim Minorities</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). pp. 194-212.</p>
17	Seminar: Plurality in Practice: Ritual, Identity, and the Politics of Making 'Sacred Space'	<p>Gananath Obeyesekere, "Religion Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon," in <i>The Two Wheels of Dhamma</i> (Chambersburg, PA: AAR, 1972) pp. 58-78.</p> <p>Jonathan Spencer, et al. "Making Sacred Space" in <i>Checkpoint, Temple, Church, and Mosque</i> (London: Pluto Press, 2015) pp. 68-89.</p> <p>Luke Heslop, "On Sacred Ground: The Political Performance of Religious Responsibility," <i>Contemporary South Asia</i> 22.1 (2014) pp. 21-36.</p> <p>Film: <i>Haro Hara!</i></p>

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.

Institute for Study Abroad
6201 Corporate Dr., Suite 200 | Indianapolis, IN 46278
800-858-0229 | www.ifsa-butler.org