

**RELG 350: Lives of Hindu and Buddhist Saints**  
**Fall 2009**

MWF 12:30 - 1:20

EHFA 166

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Office hours: Monday through Thursday 11:30-12:45 or by appointment

**Course description:** In this course, we will read works about the lives of individuals related to Hinduism and Buddhism, who are alleged to be “saints.” These include stories, biographies and autobiographies. We will compare some of the life accounts to similar episodes occurring in canonical epics such as the Hindu *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata Purana*, and Buddhist *Jataka*. We will consider the genre of religious biography in such terms as intended audience and practical usage of the texts. We will have the opportunity to learn stories about ancient and modern Hindu and Buddhist personalities from India, China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia and America, and to think of these in terms of history, hagiography and myth.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

On completion of this course, students will be able to

1. identify major historical figures in the history of Hinduism and Buddhism,
2. speak with familiarity on issues in hagiography,
3. apply hermeneutic approaches to interpreting writings about religious figures,
4. express themselves on issues concerning religious biography as a means of conveying Hindu and Buddhist ideas.

**Required Texts:**

1. *Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland. Vedanta Press, 1929. ISBN: 8185301441
2. *Life of the Buddha* (Clay Sanskrit Library) by Ashvaghosha, Patrick Olivelle (Translator). NYU Press, 2008. ISBN: 0814762166.
3. *The Silk Road Journey With Xuanzang* by Sally Wriggins. Basic Books, 2003. ISBN: 0813365996.
4. *The Life of Milarepa: A New Translation from the Tibetan*. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa (Translator). Penguin, 1992. ISBN: 0140193502.
5. *Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism: portraits of his life* by Ronald S. Green (available online through Blackboard).

Optional Text: *Play of Consciousness: A Spiritual Autobiography* by Swami Muktananda. Siddha Yoga Publications; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2000. ISBN: 0911307818.

## Required Assignments and Grading

1. **Quizzes on the readings.** There will be **four short quizzes**, one on each of the first four required texts (not on the Kūkai text). The average of scores on these five quizzes is worth 75% of the final grade for the term. Each quiz will consist of ten short-answer questions.

2. Students are required to submit a **written evaluation of Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism: portraits of his life**. This must include comments on portions of that writing that are difficult to understand or otherwise in need of elaboration. Comments may also address such issues as believability, internal continuity, and how boring or interesting passages appear. Students are encouraged to make comparisons between portraits of Kūkai's life and lives of other religious or secular personalities. This evaluation may be written in essay form or as margin notes to the text. The evaluation is due at the beginning of the final exam but may be submitted earlier. This evaluation is worth 10% of the final grade for the term

3. **Final exam.** There will be a **cumulative** final exam administered during exam week. It will consist of five questions focusing on the course information not included in the five quizzes, e.g., the TM movement, Nichiren, the Dalai Lama, etc. Students are expected to relate this information to the readings. For example, students may be asked to explain how depictions of the life of Nichiren or the Dalai Lama compare and contrasts to those of the Buddha.

<i>Summary of grading:</i> Average of the four quizzes	=	75%
Evaluation of <i>Kūkai</i> ...	=	10%
Final Exam	=	15%

Based on this, students will earn a letter grade for the term according to the following system:

A = 91 - 100%	C = 70 - 77%
B+ = 88 - 90%	D = 61 - 69%
B = 81 - 87%	F = below 61%
C+ = 78 - 80%	

**Attendance:** Following the guidelines posted in the *CCU Student Handbook*, students who are absent for more than 25% of the regularly scheduled class meetings will receive a final grade of "F" for the term. In our course, this means **if you miss 10 classes for any reason, you will fail.**

\* Please bring the appropriate book/s to class.

## **Schedule of Classes**

### Week One

**Wednesday, August 19**

**Overview of the course; introduction to the required texts**

**Friday, August 21**

**Fundamentals of Hinduism in relation to hagiography and myth** (part 1)

Weekend reading suggestion, start reading *Life of Ramakrishna*

Week Two

**Monday, August 24**

**Fundamentals of Hinduism in relation to hagiography and myth** (part 2)

**Wednesday, August 26**

**Models for lives of saints** (part 1): **Rama and Krishna**

**Friday, August 28**

**Models for lives of saints** (part 2): **Shankara and Chaitanya**

Weekend reading assignment, continue reading *Life of Ramakrishna*

Week Three

**Monday, August 31**

**Life of Ramakrishna**

**Wednesday, September 2**

**Ramakrishna and hagiography - QUIZ 1: *Life of Ramakrishna***

**Friday, September 4** - (Full Moon *Upasatha*)

***Play of Consciousness: A Spiritual Autobiography*** by Swami Muktananda.

Week Four

<b>Monday, September 7 Holiday - No Classes</b>
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**Wednesday, September 9**

**Baba Ram Das *Fierce Grace***

**Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1917-2008) Transcendental Meditation (TM), a trademark of Maharishi Foundation, Ltd.**

**Friday, September 11**

**Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948)**

Weekend reading assignment, Handout on Meher Baba

Week Five

**Monday, September 14 - Friday, September 18** - (New Moon *Upasatha*)

**World Religions and Hagiography**

Week Six

**Monday, September 21 - Friday, September 25**

**Meher Baba (1984-1969)**

Weekend reading assignment, *Life of the Buddha*, chapters 1-6

Week Seven

**Monday, September 28** (*Yom Kippur*) – **Friday October 2**

**The Life of the Buddha – exemplifying Buddhist ideology in hagiography**

Weekend reading assignment, *Life of the Buddha*, chapters 7-14

Week Eight

**Monday, October 5 - QUIZ 2: *Life of the Buddha***  
**Life of the Buddha**

**Wednesday, October 7**  
**Hagiography in Meissonnier's *Life of the Buddha (La Vie de Bouddha)***

**Friday, October 9**  
**Giving away the body in Indian Buddhist literature.**  
Weekend reading assignment, *The Silk Road Journey With Xuanzang*

Week Nine

**Monday, October 12**  
***The Silk Road Journey With Xuanzang***

**Wednesday, October 14 - QUIZ 3: *The Silk Road Journey With Xuanzang***  
**Film - *A Chinese Tale Story***  
Weekend reading assignment, *Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism: Portraits of his life*, Introduction – Chapter 4

<b>Friday, October 16 - No Classes</b>
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Week Ten

**Monday, October 19**  
***Nihon Reiiki, Miraculous Lives of Japanese Saints***

**Wednesday, October 21**  
**Life of Kūkai**  
Weekend reading assignment, *Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism: portraits of his life*, Chapter 5 - end

**Friday, October 23**  
**Kūkai comics, historical ‘truth’ and the life stories of Kūkai**

Week Eleven

**Monday, October 26**  
**Film: *Kūkai***

**Wednesday, October 28**  
**Kamo no Chomei's *Ten Foot Square Hut***

**Friday, October 30**  
**Halloween talk**

Week Twelve

- **Monday, November 2** - (Full Moon *Uposatha*)  
Film – *Nichiren and the Great Mongol Invasion* (*Nichiren to moko daishurai*, 1958)

**Wednesday, November 4**  
**Nichiren Shonin (1222-1282)**

**Friday, November 6**  
**Nichiren and Soka Gakkai International (SGI)**  
Weekend reading assignment – *The Life of Milarepa*

Week Thirteen

**Monday, November 9**  
**The Life of Milarepa (c. 1052-c. 1135 CE)**

**Wednesday, November 11 – QUIZ 4 - *The Life of Milarepa***  
**Milarepa; Hagiography in *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa* (956-1041);**  
**Padmasambhava (8<sup>th</sup> century CE) and Marpa the Translator (1012-1097)**

**Friday, November 13**  
**Film: *Milarepa***  
Weekend reading assignment – handout on the Dalai Lama

Week Fourteen

**Monday, November 16** (New Moon *Uposatha*) - **Wednesday, October 18**  
**The Dalai Lama and *Kundun***

**Friday, November 20**  
**Lives of Modern Korean Buddhists**

<b>NO CLASSES NOVEMBER 23 - 27</b>
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Week Fifteen

**Monday, November 30**  
**How to be a Saint – The Way of the Bodhisattva (part 1)**

**Wednesday, December 2** - (Full Moon *Uposatha*)  
**The Way of the Bodhisattva (part 2)**

**Friday, December 4**  
**Conclusions and discussion of the Final Exam**

*The Final Exam will be on Monday, Dec. 7 at 1:30 in EHFA 166 (our regular classroom).*