**Classics of Indian Literature (CLAS1160-S01) – Fall 2014**

**Department of Classics, Brown University**

**Instructor:**

David Buchta, david\_buchta@...

Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30, Th 2:30-3:30 in Wilbour Hall 005, or by appointment

**Introduction:**

India (and South Asia more broadly) is home to some of humanity’s richest and most long-standing literary cultures. Works of Indian literature, although embedded each in their own historical and cultural context, are of relevance and appeal even in contemporary America, as they profoundly address important issues in human life: morality and guilt – ambition, hope, fear, and despair – friendship, love, desire, and envy – freedom and oppression – etc. This course has two primary aims: to provide an opportunity to read and reflect upon some of the greatest examples of Indian literature (**in English translation**), and to cultivate cultural literacy by building a body of background knowledge through which to enhance one’s understanding and appreciation of Indian literature. Students will be introduced to the theory of *rasa* (aesthetic delight) which informed and was informed by the wide emotional range in the writing and reading of classical Indian literature. The course will span over two millennia, examining the foundational epic narrative traditions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata,* classical love poetry of Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, a Sufi romance, and the social and political consciousness of Hindi and Bengali literature during the colonial period.

**Learning Goals:**

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

* Identify major genres of Indian literature.
* Demonstrate familiarity with some important examples of Indian literature.
* Successfully search for relevant background information for a better contextual understanding of a work of literature.
* To bring this background knowledge to bear in explicating important themes and issues raised in Indian text through written and oral presentations.

**Required Texts:**

Some of the works examined in this course have been translated multiple time. I prefer that students all primarily use the same translation (although different editions are fine), to facilitate communication about the works. The bookstore should carry the following books where most of our readings will be found. A few shorter works will be made available in PDF format through the course’s Canvas site.

Ingalls, Daniel H. H. *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyākara’s Treasury.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2000.

Ramanujan, A. K. *The Interior Landscape: Classical Tamil Love Poems*. New York: NYRB Poets. 2014.

Khoroche, Peter and Herman Tieken. *Poems on Life and Love in Ancient India.* Albany: SUNY Press. 2009.

Miller, Barbara Stoler. *The Bhagavad-Gita : Krishna's Counsel in Time of War.* Bantam.

Thapar, Romila. *Śakuntalā: Texts, Readings, Histories.* New York: Columbia University Press. 2011.

Miller, Barbara Stoler. *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva’s Gītagovinda.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Qutban Suhravardi. *Mirigāvatī.* Translated by Aditya Behl. New York: Oxford University Press. 2012.

Rabindranath Tagore. *The Home and the World*. Translated by Surendranath Tagore. New York: Penguin Classics. 2005. (This book is available for free from Google Books.)

**Structure of the Course:**

The course will have both lecture and seminar elements. I will offer brief remarks about each text both at the end of the class before the reading is to be done and at the beginning of the day’s discussion. Students are also encouraged to bring to class any questions of a technical or detailed nature that arise during their reading, and I will do my best to answer such questions. The remainder of the class time will be dedicated to students’ discussion of the material. To facilitate active participation, students will be expected to prepare a brief comment or question related to at least one particular passage from the reading for each class session. If the class size is large and the discussion is robust, we may not get to every student’s comment/question in each class session, but I will resort to cold-calling if necessary to ensure that all students have a chance to participate. Students will also be required to submit 5 short (at least 1 page, double spaced) written responses to the assigned readings. At least two of these must be submitted before the midterm paper. Finally, two days during the semester will feature student presentations of the topics of their midterm and final papers. (These should be somewhere between five to fifteen minutes per student, depending on class size.) There will be two main writing assignments: a mid-term paper (5-10pp.) and a final paper (8-15pp.) These papers will be submitted in stages: first, a brief proposal and outline of the paper topic; second, a working draft which should be at least 50% complete, for which I will provide feedback and suggestions for improvement; and finally, a finished draft, refined as appropriate in light of feedback. A list of suggested topics, both general and text-specific will be distributed, but students are welcome to formulate their own topics if approved. Each of these papers must deal with at least one of the works covered in the class, and must also draw from secondary sources. (An in-progress list of suggested secondary readings for each work will be made available, and students are encouraged to make their own suggestions to add to this list.) A grading rubric for the paper (including all the component parts of the assignment) will be distributed two weeks before the initial outlines are due. Finally, I want each student to meet with me at least once during my office hours, to discuss the literature we are reading in a one-on-one setting. I will schedule these meetings beginning after shopping period. These meetings will be required for full participation credit.

**Grading:**

Class Participation: 20%

Short Written Responses: 15%

Midterm Paper: 25 %

Final Paper: 40%

**Academic Integrity:**

Please be aware of and abide by the Principles of the Brown University Community:

<http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/documents/principles.pdf>

**Disability Assistance and Other Concerns:**

Students who, by nature of a documented disability, require academic accommodations for this class should feel free to discuss this with me directly or may speak with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS) at 401-863-9588 to discuss the process for requesting accommodations.

**Schedule:**

**Introduction**

1. Thursday, September 4th: Introduction, Praise of the Goddess of Speech from the *Ṛgveda* (in-class handout)

**Lyric Poetry in Sanskrit, Classical Tamil, and Prakrit**

1. Tuesday, September 9th: Sanskrit Court Poetry: *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyākara’s Treasury* (selections TBD, after reading these selection, read pp. 1-16 of the introduction), Buchta & Schweig “Rasa Theory” (Canvas)
2. Thursday, September 11th: Sanskrit Court Poetry cont. *Sanskrit Poetry* (additioal selections TBD, plus pp. 16-29 and 49-53 of the introduction)*,* Bilhaṇa’s *Fifty Verses of a Love Thief* (Canvas)
3. Tuesday, September 16th: Tamil Caṅkam poetry: *The Interior Landscape* (selections TBD)
4. Thursday, September 18th: Hāla’s Prakrit *Sattasai: Poems on Life and Love in Ancient India* (selections TBD)

**Epic Narrative Traditions**

1. Tuesday, September 23rd: *Rāmāyaṇa* pt. 1: Introduction and Overview: *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.1-4; Goldmans “Rāmāyaṇa,” (both on Canvas)
2. Thursday, September 25th: *Rāmāyaṇa* pt. 2: Key Episodes: *Rāmāyaṇa* 3.41-47; 6.42, 101, 108, 115-118 (Canvas)
3. Tuesday, September 30th: *Rāmāyaṇa* pt. 3: Alternate Rāmāyaṇas: Ramanujan “300 Ramayanas”; Granoff “The Death of Lakṣmaṇa and the Awakening of Rāma” (a Jain narrative); Buchta, “Sītā at the Hands of Premchand’s Rāma.” (All on Canvas)
4. Thursday, October 2nd: *Mahābhārata* pt. 1: Sargeant “The Setting of the *Bhagavadgītā*”; The Dice Match: 2.43-44, 55-65; (both on Canvas)
5. Tuesday, October 7th: *Mahābhārata* pt. 2: The Killing of Kīcaka: 4.1-23; Fitzgerald “Mahābhārata” (both on Canvas)
6. Thursday, October 9th: *Mahābhārata* pt. 3: *Bhagavadgītā* Chs. 1-3, 9-12, 14, 18
7. Tuesday, October 14th: *Mahābhārata* pt. 4: Nala: 3.50-54 (on Canvas), Śakuntalā: in Thapar’s *Śakuntalā* **Outlines of Midterm Papers Due**
8. Thursday, October 16th: Presentations on Midterm Papers

**Classical Drama**

1. Tuesday, October 21st: *Śākuntala* Acts I-IV **Working Draft of Midterm Papers Due**
2. Thursday, October 23rd: *Śākuntala* Acts V-VII

**Love and Devotion, Hindu and Sufi**

1. Tuesday, October 28th:*Gītagovinda* pp. 69-96

Thursday, October 30th: *Gītagovinda* pp. 97-125

1. Tuesday, November 4th: *Mirigāvatī* pp. 39-117
2. Thursday, November 6th: *Mirigāvatī* pp. 117-195 **Final Draft of Midterm Papers Due**

**Sanskrit Fable and Story Literature**

1. Tuesday, November 11th: *Pañcatantra* Book 1 (on Canvas)
2. Thursday, November 13th: Buddhist Jātaka Tales and a story from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (on Canvas)

**Politics and Society in Bengali and Hindi Fiction**

1. Tuesday, November 18th: Tagore’s *The Home and the World* Chapters 1-5
2. Thursday, November 20th: Tagore’s *The Home and the World,* Chapters 6-12
3. Tuesday, November 25th: Premchand’s “Price of Milk,” “Ramlila,” “My Big Brother,” “Thakur’s Well,” and maybe “The Chess Players,” plus “Aim of Literature” (all on Canvas) **Outline of Final Papers Due**
4. Thursday, November 27th: **No Class, Happy Thanksgiving!**
5. Tuesday, December 2nd: Krishna Sobti’s *Listen Girl!*
6. Thursday, December 4th: Course Review Discussion, Student Presentation of Final Paper topics **Working Draft of Final Papers Due**

**Tuesday, December 16th: Final Papers Due by 2PM.**