



**RELS 212/312**

**Love and Heroism  
Religions of South India**

**Semester 2  
2016**

**Department of Theology and Religion  
University of Otago**

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# Course Outline

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## Introduction

This paper will examine five major religious traditions in South Indian history. Some of the most important currents of both popular, passionate devotion to the deities and philosophical reflection in the Hindu tradition have their roots in South India. In earlier centuries, both Buddhism and Jainism also flourished here in an often combative relationship with Hinduism, and both have left their mark on southern culture in the form of literature and architecture. Since at least the fourth century Christianity has been present in the region, which has been the site of extensive encounter between missionaries and followers of other religions in the modern period. The paper also examines how Islam has accommodated itself to the religious landscape of South India over the several centuries of its presence there. The bulk of our time will be devoted to Hinduism, but you will also be required to consider either Buddhism or Jainism, and either Christianity or Islam, in their South Indian context.

We teach this paper on campus and by distance learning. Distance students should make sure to look at the section on “Distance Learning” below.

## Aims and Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete the paper will have gained:

- a sound factual knowledge of the historical development in South India of three Indic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) and the enculturation of two other religions (Christianity and Islam) in South India,
- an understanding of the cultural context of South India, in particular the *caṅkam* literature and its enduring influence upon religion in South India, and
- an awareness of the primary themes of love and heroism in these religious traditions and the *caṅkam* literary conventions which have shaped them.

## Resources

A comprehensive list of advice about the Religion programme is available and regularly updated on our website at: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/courses/resources.html>. This includes information on how to use Blackboard and Zoom, how to format and submit assignments, and where to find help. It is important that you review this information!

## Course Materials

Readings are assigned for each lecture—and most are included in this coursebook (see below for details). Please ensure that wherever possible you have read the assigned material before the lecture. Lectures will assume knowledge of the material covered in the readings, and there will be scope during lectures for discussion and questions relating to the reading. Lectures will be recorded and uploaded to Blackboard within an hour or two of the lecture taking place. There are substantial additional resources available through Blackboard for this paper.

## Read to succeed!

The readings specified for each lecture represent the bare *minimum* reading required for successful completion of the paper. You should also read extensively in the works listed on the lecture handouts, and on the bibliography on Blackboard. These are intended to provide a starting point for your research when writing an essay and in preparing for the exam.

## Course Structure

The paper is divided into five modules, each lasting between two and three weeks. The first two modules introduce the major Hindu traditions of the south. The first focusses on practice, the second on literary and philosophical traditions. The next module introduces Jainism and Buddhism, and their literary remains. The fourth module considers how Christianity and Islam have developed in the predominantly Hindu context of South India. A concluding module examines aspects of the ritual life of the different religions alongside one another. For each lecture in the first four modules there is one reading (except 3.1 & 3.2). For the last you have alternative readings for either Christianity or Islam—you may choose which set of readings to follow in this module. These readings are not in the coursebook—you will find them in the eReserve section on Blackboard.

## Lecture Schedule

### 1. South Indian Hinduism

- 12 July 1.1 Love and Heroism: The South Indian Region  
 Reading Susan Bayly, "South Indian Religion and Society," in *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 19–46.
- 14 July 1.2 Fierce Gods  
 Reading Diane P. Mines, "The Hindu Gods in a South Indian Village," in *Everyday Life in South Asia*, 2nd ed., ed. Diane P. Mines and Sarah Lamb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 226–37.
- 19 July 1.3 The Goddess of the Village  
 Reading Richard L. Brubaker, "Barbers, Washermen, and Other Priests: Servants of the South Indian Village and Its Goddess," *History of Religions* 19, no. 2 (1979): 128–52.
- 21 July 1.4 Murukaṅ and Mīnākṣī  
 Reading Fred W. Clothey, "Murukaṅ," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, vol. 1: Regions, Pilgrimage, Deities (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 233–48.
- 26 July 1.5 Temple Culture  
 Reading C.J. Fuller, "The Divine Couple's Relationship in a South Indian Temple: Mīnākṣī and Sundareshvara at Madurai," *History of Religions* 19, no. 4 (1980): 321–48.
- 28 July 1.6 Caste  
 Reading André Bêteille, "Social Organization of Temples in a Tanjore Village," *History of Religions* 5, no. 1 (1965): 74–92.

### 2. Tamil Religious Literature and Thought

- 2 Aug 2.1 *Caṅkam* Literature  
 Reading George L. Hart, "Some Indigenous Elements in the Religion of the Ancient Tamils," in *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 21–50.
- 4 Aug 2.2 The Nāyaṅmārs: Masters of Devotion  
 Reading Vidya Dehejia, "The Four Revered Ones of Saivism," in *Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988), 33–69.

- 9 Aug 2.3 The Ālvārs: Drowning in God  
Reading Vasudha Narayanan, "Tamil Nadu: Weaving Garlands in Tamil: The Poetry of the Alvars," in *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, ed. Edwin F. Bryant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 187–204.
- 11 Aug 2.4 Religious Systems: Śaiva Siddhānta and Śrī Vaiṣṇavism  
Reading R. Champakalakshmi, "From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The Bhakti of the Tamil Alvars and Nayanars," in *Religious Movements in South Asia, 600–1800*, ed. David N. Lorenzen (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 47–80.

### 3. Jain and Buddhist Traditions

- 16 Aug 3.1 Conquest of the Self: An Introduction to Jainism
- 18 Aug 3.2 Buddhism in the Tamil Country  
Reading James Ryan, "The Heterodoxies in Tamil Nadu," in *Religion and Public Culture: Encounters and Identities in Modern South India*, ed. Keith E. Yandell and John J. Paul (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 232–57.
- 23 Aug 3.3 *Cilappatikāram*: The Tale of an Anklet  
Reading R. Parthasarathy, "Introduction and Prologue," in *The Cilappatikāram: The Tale of an Anklet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 1–22.
- 25 Aug 3.4 *Maṇimēkalai*: A Courtesan and her Bowl  
Reading Paula Richman, "The Portrayal of a Female Renouncer in a Tamil Buddhist Text," in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 143–65.
- 29 Aug–2 Sep *Mid-semester break*

### 4. Christianity and Islam

- 6 Sept 4.1 Ancient and Catholic Christianity  
Reading Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Christians in India: An Historical Overview of Their Complex Origins," in *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 33–61.
- 6 Sept 5pm ***Deadline for submission of essay outline***
- 8 Sept 4.2 Protestant Beginnings  
Reading Eliza F. Kent, "Into the Fold: Protestant Christian Communities in South India," in *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15–49.

- 13 Sept 4.3 Islam in South India  
Reading Susan Bayly, "Islam in Southern India: 'Purist' or 'Syncretic'?" in *Two Colonial Empires: Comparative Essays on the History of India and Indonesia in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. C.A. Bayly and Dirk Kolff (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 35–74.
- 15 Sept 4.4 Contemporary Tamil Christianity  
Reading Michael Bergunder, "Miracle Healing and Exorcism: The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Context of Popular Hinduism," *International Review of Mission* 90, nos. 356/7 (2001): 103–12.

## 5. Shared Spaces: Christians, Muslims, and Hindus

- 20 Sept 5.1 The Cult of the Saints  
Reading Vasudha Narayanan, "Nagore: Dargah of Hazrat Shahul Hamid," in *Dargahs: Abodes of the Saints*, ed. Mumtaz Currim and George Michell (Mumbai: Marg, 2004), 138–49.  
Options David Mosse, "Catholic Saints and the Hindu Village Pantheon in Rural Tamil Nadu, India," *Man* 29, no. 2 (1994): 301–32.
- 22 Sept 5.2 Festival Religion  
Reading S. A. A Saheb, "A 'Festival of Flags': Hindu-Muslim Devotion and the Sacralising of Localism at the Shrine of Nagore-e-Sharif," in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality, and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, ed. P. Werbner and H. Basu (London: Routledge, 1998), 55–76.  
Options Paul Younger, "Healing Mother Vēḷaṅkaṇṇi: Hindu Patterns of Worship at a Christian Shrine," in *Playing Host to Deity: Festival Religion in the South Indian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 109–17.
- 27 Sept 5.3 Ritual Order  
Reading Mattison Mines, "Social Stratification among Muslim Tamils in Tamil Nadu, South India," in *Caste and Social Stratification Among Muslims in India*, 2nd ed., ed. Imtiaz Ahmad (Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 159–69.  
Options David Mosse, "South Indian Christians, Purity/Impurity, and the Caste System: Death Ritual in a Catholic Community," *Journal of the RAI* 2, no. 3 (1996): 461–83.
- 29 Sept–6 Oct No lectures
- 7 Oct 5pm **Deadline for submission of essay**
- 11 Oct Conclusions, Summary and Exam Preparation

## Course Coordinator

Will Sweetman is Associate Professor of Asian Religions. He studied Religious Studies and Philosophy at Lancaster University, and Philosophy of Religion at the University of Cambridge. He has taught at universities in London and Newcastle, and held research fellowships at the University of Halle (Germany) and the University of Cambridge. His primary field of research is the encounter between Asian religions and the West in the modern period, and in particular the study of Hinduism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The primary locale of this research is the Tamil region of South India. As well as this paper, he also teaches papers on Hinduism and Buddhism, the Body in Asian Religions, Asian Religions and the West, World Christianity, and Method & Theory in the Study of Religion.

### Contact details

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## Assessment

There are three components in the assessment for this paper:

- an essay outline (5%)
- a 2,500-word essay (35%)
- a three-hour examination (60%)

### 1. Essay Outline (5%)

For the first assignment you should choose one of the questions below as the title for an essay. The outline should be no longer than two pages (max. 500 words) and include:

- headings and subheadings, to show what topics you will cover
- a brief indication of the anticipated conclusion
- at least *three* of the works you intend to consult.

The outline is intended to assist you in the process of writing a good essay. Your final essay need not be identical with what you present on your outline, if I suggest (or you choose) another approach to the topic. The deadline for the essay outline is 5pm on Tuesday the **6th of September**. No extensions will be granted for this assignment.

## 2. Essay (35%)

For the second assignment you should choose one of the questions below as the title for a 2,500-word essay. You are *not* expected to adapt or replace the title of the essay (as is usual in some universities). Any alteration to the title of the essay *must* be negotiated with me. Guidelines for presentation of essays are available from the Religious Studies office, or through Blackboard, where you will also find further advice on study skills, including the University's policies on plagiarism and advice on how to avoid it. The deadline for the essay is 5pm on Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of October. No requests for extensions will be entertained after Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> of September.

Choose one of the following as the title for your essay:

1. Tamil temples are critical sites for displaying and constituting dominant social hierarchies. Yet... the power of gods does more than merely echo the power of human beings. Diane Mines  
Discuss the role of temples in displaying and constituting social hierarchies.
2. Discuss the connection between heat and sexuality in the goddess traditions of south India.
3. Early bhakti movements, whether devoted to Śiva or to Viṣṇu, used whatever they found at hand, and changed whatever they used. Vedic and Upaniṣadic notions, Buddhist and Jaina concepts, conventions of Tamil and Sanskrit poetry, early Tamil conceptions of love, service, women, and kings, mythology or folk religion and folksong, the play of contrasts between Sanskrit and the mother tongue: all these elements were reworked and transformed in bhakti. A. K. Ramanujan  
How do the Nāyaṁmārs and Ālvārs make use of, and change, what they found in earlier Tamil religion and culture?
4. What do the stories of Nandaṅār and Tiruppāṅ Ālvār allow us to conclude about the social message of the poetry of the Nāyaṁmārs and Ālvārs?
5. To what extent is *Maṇimēkalai* best understood as a specifically *Tamil* Buddhist work, rather than simply a Buddhist work which happens to be written in Tamil?
6. How do the authors of Jain works in Tamil such as *Cilappatikāram* and *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* make use of the conventions of *caṅkam* literature?
7. To what extent have popular Hindu ideas shaped the religious beliefs and practices of *either*:  
a) Christian communities of South India?  
*or*: b) Muslim communities of South India?



### 3. Examination (60%)

In the examination you will be required to answer three questions, one from each of three sections. The first section is on Hinduism, the second on Buddhism and Jainism, and the last on Christianity and Islam. The date for the examination will be sent to you as soon as it has been set by the Registry. All arrangements for examinations are handled by the Registry as outlined in the Student Handbook. Past exam papers for this course are available from the library.

### Plagiarism

Students should make sure that all submitted work is their own. Plagiarism is a form of dishonest practice. Plagiarism is defined by the University as

copying or paraphrasing another person's work and presenting it as one's own – whether intentionally, or through failure to take proper care. Being party to someone else's plagiarism (by allowing them to copy your work or by otherwise helping them plagiarise work for an assessment) is also dishonest practice.

University of Otago Plagiarism and Examination Conduct Regulations

In practice this means plagiarism includes *any* attempt in any piece of submitted work (e.g. an assignment or test) to present as one's own work the work of another (whether of another student or a published authority), including work from the internet. Any student found responsible for plagiarism in any piece of work submitted for assessment shall be subject to the University's dishonest practice regulations which may result in various penalties, including forfeiture of marks for the piece of work submitted, a zero grade for the paper, or in extreme cases exclusion from the University. For more advice on this policy see <http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/plagiarism/> and the 'Study skills' section in Blackboard.

### Referencing

If you are in any doubt about how to reference your work, please consult the Department's *Study and Style Guide*, which is available through Blackboard, or the Religion website. The style guide recommends the widely-used Chicago style (which is also used on the bibliography for this paper) but if you are already familiar with another recognized style of referencing, you may use that instead. Whatever style you use, use it consistently and provide full references *wherever* you rely on the work of others.

## **Distance Learning**

This paper is taught concurrently on campus and by distance. While distance students cannot come to the weekly lectures, we make sure that they stay on target by recording lectures and sharing them on Blackboard. These recordings can be used alongside uploaded pdfs of the lecture slides used for each class. If, however, you are enrolled by distance but living in or visiting Dunedin, you are more than welcome to come to lectures.

Opportunities for discussion of the lectures and readings are more limited for distance students, but please feel free to contact me by phone or email if you have questions arising from the lectures and readings.