

Religion GU4304: KRISHNA

Spring, 2024. Mondays 2:10-4:00, Milstein 113
 Jack Hawley, 219a Milbank Hall, 212-854-5292
 Office hours Thursdays 12-2, or by appointment: jsh3@columbia.edu



General description

In this course we study a single deity in the Hindu pantheon: Krishna—hero, teacher, king, child, lover. Textual sources will include the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, the *Gitagovinda*—all Sanskrit texts—and in addition poetry attributed to Annamayya, Surdas, and Mirabai, all of whom composed in the regional, spoken languages of India. We will also give attention to non-textual media, focusing especially on painting, and music will often hover overhead. We will explore theologies from both north and south India. We'll conclude with the present-day social and physical landscape of the places most closely associated with Krishna—the Braj region and Vrindavan.

Enrollment is with the instructor's permission. The course has no specific prerequisite, but some background is expected, academic or otherwise. This can be in the academic study of religion per

se, or in the study of Indian history and culture. Or, somehow, in life. If you feel you could use a quick infusion of background, please turn to the Eck and Flood books listed in the introductory session—the one lighter and more buoyant, the other heavier and more stick-by-the-bones.

This course can be used to satisfy Barnard's "Foundations" requirement in Arts/ Humanities and Global Inquiry. At Columbia it satisfies the Global Core requirement.

Format and requirements

(1) *Weekly postings and class discussion.*

This is a seminar, so the basic requirement is active class participation, based on a careful consideration of common readings. These form the subject for the first eleven sessions in the course; the remaining classes are devoted to individual student presentations.

To prepare for the discussion sessions, students are required to submit short papers (optimal length ca. 600 words) reacting to the readings assigned for any given unit of the course and framing one or two issues that should be treated in discussion. These short papers must be posted by Sunday at noon on the day prior to the Monday seminar. You can skip two of these responses (from a total of ten) and still be in good standing. Please post these as MSWord attachments to Courseworks > Discussions. Use a 12-point font, spaced 1.5 or 2.0. Check spelling and syntax, paginate, and double-space; be sure to include your name and the date at the top of the posting.

One student will launch any given discussion. This involves reading all responses received for that week in time to have a discussion with me by 8:00 pm on the Sunday preceding the seminar, so that we can check signals and be ready to go. You don't have to post a response yourself in the week you're scheduled to launch.

(2) *Seminar paper and oral presentation in class.*

A major objective of the course is to encourage students to do work requiring independent research and thought, and present it in convincing ways. The ultimate products are two: a paper of some 15-20 pages in length and a seminar presentation of 10 minutes' duration (to which there will be response from others in the seminar). I'm happy to consider other sorts of projects than a traditional paper: please make me a proposal. This could be creative work with a commentarial component; a "curated" set of Zoom conversations; a generously annotated PowerPoint presentation; or something more imaginative that you yourself design. Stages along the way:

(a) By Thursday February 22nd you must have had a conversation with me about the subject of your paper or project. Please contact me by email to find a time, whether Zoom-time or real-time in or near Milbank Hall. Then write a brief prospectus for the paper you envision (no more than 2 pages 1.5-spaced) together with a bibliography (ditto), due at midnight on Friday, March 1. Post it to the box in Courseworks/Discussions that has been marked to receive it.

(b) You will present your work orally to the rest of the class on April 22 or 29, in the order that appears on the schedule dated 4/10/24. Because the eclipse has knocked a week out of our schedule,

we will be able to allot only 15 minutes to each paper/presentation. If you are presenting, limit what you want to say (or show) to 7 minutes. We will then have 7 minutes for discussion. 1 minute for between-presentation shuffle. Everyone in the room will have read the draft you present by 9:00 on the Saturday before we discuss your paper. Please count on that and choose an aspect or two that you would like to emphasize for our discussion. You might also like to say a word about what you found to be the greatest challenges of your subject. To repeat: Drafts for your classmates to read are due in Courseworks > Discussions on the Saturday morning by 9:00 am sharp.

(c) The final version of your paper or project is due on Thursday, May 2, by 11:59 p.m.

Grading

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|---|-----|
| Weekly postings | 50% |
| Participation in class discussion | 15% |
| Seminar paper/project and its oral presentation | 35% |

Books for recommended for purchase (e.g., at Book Culture). Versions are also available digitally, either via CLIO or as scans in Courseworks > Files. In the order we read them, these are:

Barbara Stoler Miller, *The Bhagavad Gita* (1986)
Barbara Stoler Miller, *Lord Song of the Dark Lord* (1977)
Robert Bly and Jane Hirschfield, *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems* (2004)
David Haberman, *Journey through the Twelve Forests* (1994)
John Stratton Hawley, *The Memory of Love: Sūrdās Sings to Krishna* (2009)
John Stratton Hawley, *Krishna's Playground: Vrindavan in the 21st Century* (2020)

Academic Integrity

Approved by the student body in 1912 and amended in 2016, the Barnard College Honor Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by refraining from every form of dishonesty in our academic life. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any papers or books not authorized by the instructor in examinations, or to present oral work or written work which is not entirely our own, unless otherwise approved by the instructor. We consider it dishonest to remove without authorization, alter, or deface library and other academic materials. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

The complexities of technology and of our cognition sometimes make it difficult to determine what constitutes plagiarism (e.g., Did I come up with that idea myself or did I read it somewhere? Was that sentence something I cut and pasted from the internet and intended to reformulate later but never got around to?). Please feel free to consult me if you encounter ambiguous situations in the course of your work.

I gratefully acknowledge that I have plagiarized the paragraphs appearing immediately above from my colleague Beth Berkowitz, who composed them as a part of the syllabus for her course *Introduction to Talmud Text Study* (Spring, 2014).



SYLLABUS

Key: Required readings from books available for purchase are listed without any special insignia. Course readings can be found in Courseworks and as electronic materials available through CLIO. Those required are indicated with a single asterisk (*). Optional or collateral readings, many of which are also available on Courseworks, appear with a double asterisk (**).

I. Three introductions: the course, Krishna, the Gita (1/22)

General resources relating to this session are the following, though they are not required reading:

** Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially chapters 5-6.

** J. S. Hawley, "Kṛṣṇa," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 8, ed. Mircea Eliade et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 384-387.

II. Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (1/29)

Student coordinator: Colin Wulff

* Barbara Stoler Miller, *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (New York: Bantam, 1986), entire.

* J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 1-29.

** Richard H. Davis, *The Bhagavad Gita—A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

** D. Dennis Hudson, "Krishna's Mandala and the *Bhagavad Gita*," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 11:1 (2002), pp. 81-130.

III. Krishna in the Puranas: the *Harivamsa* and the *Bhagavata* (2/5)

Student coordinator: Roma Tiwari

* Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "The *Harivamsa* as a *Mahakavya*," in *Melanges d'Indianisme a la memoire de Louis Renou* (Paris: Editions E. de Boccard, 1968), pp. 381-394.

* Ekkehard Lorenz, "The *Harivamsa*: The Dynasty of Krishna," in Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, pp. 95-110. (CLIO)

* C. L. Goswami, tr., *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahapurāṇa*, Part II (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1997), 10:29-33, pp. 223-244. (Courseworks, under Bhagavata)

* Dominic Goodall, ed. and tr., *Hindu Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), BhP 10:29-33, pp. 273-393. (Courseworks, under Bhagavata)

* Edwin E. Bryant, "Krishna in the Tenth Book of the *Bhagavata Purana*, tr., in Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, pp. 111-136. (CLIO)

** Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Sacred Text and Living Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). (CLIO)

** Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Selected Readings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). (CLIO)

** Simon Brodbeck, "Harivaṁśa, *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, and Vasudha Narayanan (Brill Online, 2018).

** Bibek Delroy, tr., *Harivamsha* (Gurgaon: Penguin, 2016).

** M. N. Dutt, tr., *A Prose English Translation of Harivamsha* (Calcutta: Elysium Press, 1897), pp. 244-285 (birth of Krishna through the defeat of Kaliya), 314-319 (the *ras lila*, according to Dutt's chapter heading), and 338-377 (from the arrival of Akrur in Braj through the death of Kamsa).

** Francis G. Hutchins, *Young Krishna* (West Franklin, NH: Amarta Press, 1980), introduction.

** André Couture, *Kṛṣṇa in the Harivaṁśa*, 2 vols. (Delhi: DK Printworld, 2015-2017).

** Edwin E. Bryant, *Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God (Srimad Bhagavata Purana Book X)* (London: Penguin, 2003).

** Noel Sheth, S. J., *The Divinity of Krsna* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984), pp. 3-24 ("Krishna in the *Harivamsa*").

** Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (New York: Vintage, 1964 [originally 1914]), pp. 3-96.

** Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 526-547.

** Benjamin Preciado-Solis, *The Krsna Cycle in the Puranas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984).

** Graham M. Schweig, *Dance of Divine Love: The Rasa Lila of Krishna from the Bhagavata Purana, India's Classic Sacred Love Story* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

** McComas Taylor, *Seven Days of Nectar: Contemporary Oral Performance of the Bhagavatapurana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

** J. S. Hawley, "Krishna's Cosmic Victories," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47:2 (1979), pp. 201-221.

IV. Krishna as Lover: The *Gitagovinda* and Shankaradeva (2/12)

Student coordinator: Avighna Suresh

* Barbara Stoler Miller, *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gitagovinda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), entire (125 pp.). (Many copies are available in the Columbia libraries.)

* Donna M. Wulff, "Radha," in J. S. Hawley and D. M. Wulff, eds., *Devi: Goddesses of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 109-134. (CLIO)

* "Assam: Shankaradeva's *Parijata Harana Nata*," in Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, Part II, pp. 163-186. (CLIO)

** Jesse Ross Knutson, *Into the Twilight of Sanskrit Court Poetry: The Sena Salon of Bengal and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), pp. 72-88.

** David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), Chapter 6, "Radha," pp. 81-94.

** Edward C. Dimock, Jr., and Denise Levertov, *In Praise of Krishna* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967; subsequently Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

V: Yet More Love: Annamayya and Mirabai (2/19)

Student coordinator: Ellie Harris

* Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati* [by Annamayya] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), entire. (CLIO)

* Robert Bly and Jane Hirschfield, *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), entire. (CLIO)

** William J. Jackson, *Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 36-68.

** Adapa Ramakrishna Rao, *Annamacharya* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1989).

** A. J. Alston, *The Devotional Poems of Mīrābāī* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980). These careful translations represent Paraśurām Caturvedī's edition in Hindi, which has long been standard in Indian universities (see below). (COURSEWORKS > FILES, both text and notes.)

** Paraśurām Caturvedī, ed., *Mīrāñbāī kī Padāvalī* (Allahabad/Prayag: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1976).

** J. S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 119-140 (on Mirabai).

** J. S. Hawley, *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 89-138 (on Mirabai).

** Parita Mukta, *Upholding the Common Life* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 69-114.

** Amit Chaudhuri, *Finding the Raga: An Improvisation on Indian Music* (New York: New York Review Books, 2021), pp. 85-106.

** Sudhir Kakar and John M. Ross, *Tales of Love, Sex and Danger* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. 74-103 ("The Cloistered Passion of Radha and Krishna").

** Nancy M. Martin-Kershaw, "Mirabai: Inscribed in Text, Embodied in Practice," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 3:4 (1995), pp. 5-44.

** Nancy M. Martin, "Rajasthan: Mirabai and Her Poetry," in Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, pp. 241-254. (CLIO)

** Nancy M. Martin, "Mirabai in the Academy and the Politics of Identity," in Mandakranta Bose, ed., *Faces of the Feminine from Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 162-182.

** Nancy M. Martin, *Mirabai: The Making of a Saint* New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

** Frances Taft, "The Elusive Historical Mirabai: A Note," in Lawrence A. Babb, Varsha Joshi, and Michael Meister, eds., *Multiple Histories: Culture, and Society in the Study of Rajasthan* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications), pp. 313-335.

** Dalpat Rajpurohit, Mīrā's "Earliest" Song and Her Images in History and Hagiography," *Journey of the American Oriental Society*, 142:4 (2023), 841-860.

** Pauwels, Heidi R. M., *Mobilizing Krishna's World: The Writings of Prince Sāvant Singh of Kishangarh* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 140-146.

VI. Krishna in the *Mahābhārata* (2/26)

Distinguished guest: Nell Shapiro Hawley, Vassar College

Student coordinator: Gayatri Sharma

* Nell Shapiro Hawley and Sohini Sarah Pillai, eds., *Many Mahābhāratas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), Introduction (partial: pp. 1-22) and essays by Nell Hawley and Lawrence McCrea (pp. 91-133). (CLIO)

* Alf Hiltebeitel, "Krishna in the *Mahabharata*: The Death of Karna," in Edwin F. Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 23-76. (CLIO)

* Emily T. Hudson, *Disorienting Dharma: Ethics and the Aesthetics of Suffering in the Mahabharata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 198-205. (CLIO)

** Bijoy M. Misra, “Orissa: Shri Krishna Jagannatha: The *Mushali-parva* from Sarala’s *Mahabharata*, in Edwin F. Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 139-161. (CLIO)

** Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahabharata* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

NOTE: Paper/project prospectus and bibliography are due in Courseworks>Discussions on 3/1/24 before midnight.

VII. The Theological Krishna (3/4)

Student coordinators: Swathi Aravind, Arush Sarda

* Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, Part III, pp. 329-356 (Ramanuja) and 409-440 (Rupa Gosvami—also spelled Rupa Gosvamin, Rupa Goswami). (CLIO)

* Emily T. Hudson, *Disorienting Dharma*. pp. 205-217, on theodicy in the Epic. (CLIO)

** Neil Delmonico, “Reassembling the Giant: Caitanya Vaisnava Theology in Context,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*, 2001.

** Justin N. Smolin, “Kṛṣṇa the Magician: Metapoesis and Ambivalence in Faiḍī’s *Mahābhārat*,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, series 3 (2024), 1-35.

[3/11: No Class—Spring Break]

VIII. Krishna in Poetry: Surdas (3/18)

Student coordinator: Luke Malinda

* J. S. Hawley, *The Memory of Love: Sūrdās Sings to Krishna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), entire (pp. 1-197), consulting the notes as needed.

** Kenneth E. Bryant and John Stratton Hawley, *Sur’s Ocean: Poems from the Early Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). Here may be found Brajhasha originals for all the poems rendered in *The Memory of Love*; it’s a facing-page edition with the English, which, however, is differently formatted. The poems are enumerated according to the same system in *The Memory of Love*.

IX. Krishna Poetry’s in Art—Surdas at Udaipur (3/25)

Student coordinator: Mala Singh

* J. S Hawley, “Krishna Devotion in Painting, Performance, and Poetry: From the Gita to Almost Today.” Posted to Courseworks > Files > Folders > Hawley, Missoula 10 26 20.

* J. S. Hawley, *Sūrdās: Poet, Singer, Saint*, revised and expanded edition (Delhi: Primus Books, 2018), Chapter 7, pp. 204-303. Available on Courseworks as Hawley, Surdas: PSS, TEXT and PLATES. Make specific comparisons between poems and the paintings that were made to accompany them. More detailed images than appear in this chapter appear on Courseworks for the illustrated *Sūrsāgar* from Mewar ca. 1700, which is now dispersed to museums and collections in India, Europe, and the United States. These are posted on Courseworks as “Amar Singh in Sequence.”

* A large painting featuring Holi from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, together with curatorial notes by Joseph Dye and Joanna Williams and a translation by J. S. Hawley. See if you can figure out what’s going on. Images of the entire painting and a number of details are to be found in Courseworks: the folder (to the left, not file) called Richmond Sursagar; also under Files.

** Alok Bhalla and Chandra Prakash Deval, *The Gita: Mewari Miniature Painting (1680-1698) by Allah Baksh* (Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2019).

** Enrico Isacco, Anna L. Dallapiccola, et al., *Krishna, the Divine Lover* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), pp. 5-101. Available on Courseworks.

** Cynthia Packert, *The Art of Loving Krishna: Ornamentation and Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. xv-73.

X. Krishna’s Footsteps: The Ban-Yatra of Braj (4/1)

Student coordinators: Anjali Reddy, Ram Arunmozhi Varman

* David Haberman, *Journey through the Twelve Forests*, preface and chapters 1-5, pp. vii-x, 3-195. Note also the maps that follow the table of contents.

** Owen M. Lynch, “Pilgrimage with Krishna, Sovereign of the Emotions,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* n.s. 22:2 (1988), pp. 171-194.

** Christian Novetzke, “A Family Affair: Krishna Comes to Pandharpur and Makes Himself at Home,” in Beck, ed., *Alternative Krishnas*, pp. 113-138.

** Tracy Pintchman, “Domesticating Krishna: Friendship, Marriage, and Women’s Experience in a Hindu Women’s Ritual Tradition,” in Beck, ed., *Alternative Krishnas*, pp. 43-63.

** Barbara A. Holdrege, “Sacred Geography: Krishna Embodied in Geographic Place and Transcendent Space,” in Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey, eds., *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Sacred Text and Living Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 91-116.

[Eclipse of the sun, 4/8. Class optional; focus: Surdas, Shrinathji, Mt. Govardhan]

XI. Krishna in Vrindavan Today (4/15)

Student coordinators: Lucas Cang, Rohan Kulkarni

* J. S. Hawley, *Krishna’s Playground: Vrindavan in the 21st Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020), Chapters 1, 3-5, 7 (pp. 1-21, 62-217, 266-297). (CLIO)

** Margaret H. Case, *Seeing Krishna: The Religious World of a Brahman Family in Vrindaban* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

** Shrivatsa Goswami, *Celebrating Krishna*, with photographs by Robyn Beeche (Vrindaban: Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana, 2001).

** McKim Marriott, “The Feast of Love,” in Milton Singer, ed., *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), pp. 200-212, 229-231.

XII. Paper presentations-I (4/22)

* Other seminar papers than your own, available on Courseworks > Discussions.

XIII. Paper presentations-II (4/27)

* Other seminar papers than your own, available on Courseworks > Discussions.

XIV. The final version of your seminar paper is due before midnight on Thursday, May 2.

Please post it to the appropriate section of Courseworks > Discussions.