World Religions

Hinduism

Ross Arnold, Summer 2015
World Religion Lectures

• August 21 – *Introduction: A Universal Human Experience*

• **August 28 – Hinduism**

• September 4 – Judaism

• September 11 – *Religions of India (Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, etc.)*

• September 18 – *Religions of China & Japan (Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, etc.)*

• September 25 – Christianity

• October 2 – Islam

• October 9 – Animism, New Age, Atheism, Secularism
What is “Religion?”

“Genuine religion is fundamentally a search for meaning beyond materialism… A World Religion tradition is a set of symbols and rituals, myths and stories, concepts and truth claims, which a historical community believes gives ultimate meaning to life, via its connection to a transcendent beyond the natural order.”

Joseph Runzo, *Global Philosophy of Religion*
Three Types of Religions

World Religions – those extant faiths which are historically transcultural and international.

Indigenous Religions – smaller, culture specific or nation-specific religious groups.

New Religious Movements – those faiths that are recently developed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Pop. (000s)</th>
<th>% of World</th>
<th>Founded (c.)</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Hinduism

- **Sanatana Dharma** – “Eternal Way (Law)"
- **Vaidika Dharma** – “Way (Law) of the Vedas”

**Hindu** – *most likely* derived from the ancient Persian name for the Indus River (*Sindu*, or *Hindu*). The region was therefore called “Hindustan,” the inhabitants “Hindus,” and their religion “Hinduism.”

- World’s oldest extant religion, begun in the Indus River region between 10,000 BC and 2700 BC.
- No single founder, no prophets, no single concept of deity, no single theological system, no single holy text, no central religious authority.
- Variously perceived as monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic, pantheistic, panentheistic, pandeistic or atheistic.
Hindu Religious Texts ("Shastras")

- **Shruti** ("heard") literature (from ancient Hindu monks)
  - **Vedas** (Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda)
  - **Upanishads**

- **Smriti** ("memorized" or "remembered") poetry/epics
  - **Ramayana**
  - **Mahabharata**
    - *Bhagavad gita*

Also...

- **Sutras** - a collection of aphorisms in the form of a manual or text
- **Puranas** - ancient texts eulogizing deities.
- **Aranyakas** - the ritual sacrifice part of the Vedas.
Five Principles of Hinduism

1. **God Exists** – the One Absolute OM, manifest in many divine forms, especially the Trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Shiva (the Destroyer).

2. **All human beings are divine.**

3. **There is unity of existence through love.**

4. **Religious harmony.**

5. **Knowledge of the Three Gs:**
   - *Ganga* (sacred river)
   - *Gita* (sacred script)
   - *Gayatri* (sacred mantra)
Hindu Conception of Deity

Brahman – the One; the Supreme Absolute; the unity of all reality.

The Trimurti
• Brahma – the Creator.
• Vishnu (Krishna/Rama) – the Preserver *(Vaishnavaism)*.
• Shiva – the Destroyer *(Shivaism)*.

Also:
• Shakti (Devi) – the Divine Mother *(Shaktism)*.
• Ganesha – patron of writing, arts & sciences *(Smartism)*.
• Surya – the chief solar deity.
OM, symbol of Brahman (and of the *atman*)

Brahma, the Creator  Vishnu, the Protector  Shiva, the Destroyer
Hindu Beliefs/Terminology

Dharma – “that which supports the universe;” what is right; ultimate truth; righteousness; balance.

Karma – the accumulated sum of a person’s good and bad deeds.

Samsara – the continuing cycle of birth, life, death & rebirth; the transmigration of the soul.

Atman – the spirit or “true self” of a person.

Avatar – a deliberate descent of a deity to Earth.

Mantra – a sacred utterance, sound or syllable, word or group of words believed to have power.

Yoga – paths/practices of discipline (mind/body/spirit).

Puja – worship/prayer directed to Brahman or avatars.

Bhakti – devotional practices, esp. to personal gods.

Devas – angelic beings or lesser gods (330 million!).

Ahimsa – the Hindu principle of non-violence.
Three Karmas and Four Yogas

**Karma** – accumulated sum of good & bad deeds.
1. **Kriyamana** (current), active karma being done now, the effects to be known later.
2. **Sanchita** (accumulated), karma from past lives that has followed to the present.
3. **Prarabdha** (fruit-bearing), part of unalterable sanchita leading to a person’s present life.

**Yoga** – Hindu paths or practices of discipline.
1. **Karma Yoga** – action in doing what is right.
2. **Jnana Yoga** – knowledge leading to awareness.
3. **Raja Yoga** – meditation to cultivate the mind.
4. **Bhakti Yoga** – love towards God in worship.

Also, **Hatha Yoga** – secular yoga for health and wellness.
Four Aims (*Purusharthas*) of Hinduism or, “Doctrine of the Fourfold End of Life”

**Grihastha Dharma** (*Domestic Religion*) has four goals for the “*pravritti*” – those in the world:
- **Dharma** – righteousness; right living.
- **Artha** – wealth and material prosperity.
- **Kama** – gratification of the senses; pleasure; sensuality; sexual and mental enjoyment.
- **Moksha** – liberation from “samsara” rebirth (the supreme goal of humankind)

**Sannyasin Dharma** (*Ascetic Religion*) has the one goal of “Moksha” for the “*nivritti*” – those who renounce the world.
Ten Disciplines of Hinduism

1. *Satya* (truth)
2. *Ahimsa* (non-violence)
3. *Brahmacharya* (non-adultery; celibacy)
4. *Asteya* (no stealing; no desire to possess)
5. *Aparighara* (non-corruption)
6. *Shaucha* (cleanliness)
7. *Santosh* (contentment)
8. *Swadhyaya* (reading of scriptures)
9. *Tapas* (austerity, perseverance, penance)
10. *Ishwarpranidhan* (regular prayers)
Hindu Social Classes (Varnas)

The Hindu Shastras (esp. the Bhagavad gita) identify all people as belonging to one of four social classes, as a reflection of their individual duty, inborn nature and natural tendencies:

1. **Brahmins** – Vedic teachers and priests
2. **Kshatriyas** – warriors and kings
3. **Vaishyas** – farmers and merchants
4. **Shudras** – servants and laborers

Scholars debate whether this caste system was actually intended by Hindu scriptures, or has developed as a social custom.
Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in Delhi