

AAS/PHI 472.01 – Buddhism and Early Vedanta
Chemistry 126, Fall 2015
Tu/Th 2:30 – 3:50 PM

Professor Andrew J. Nicholson
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Office hours: Tu 10:00-11:00 & 1:20-2:20, Th 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

Course Description:

In India between the 5th century BCE and 8th century CE, Hindu and Buddhist philosophers debated one another on questions that many of us continue to ponder today: Who are we? Is there an eternal “soul” or “self,” or is all existence impermanent and fleeting? What should we do with our lives? Is the world real or just an illusion? The answers they gave frequently disagreed. Yet recent scholars have argued that there is a deep connection between Buddhist philosophy and the philosophy of Vedanta, the most famous of all the Hindu philosophical schools. Through careful reading of some of the arguments of these Buddhist and Vedanta philosophers we will seek to understand the complex web of historical interrelationships between the two schools, and also begin to appreciate how their insights can help us find meaning in our lives today.

Required Texts:

1. King, Richard. Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought (ISBN: 0878407561)
2. Isayeva, Natalia. From Early Vedanta to Kashmir Shaivism (ISBN: 0791424502)
3. Mayeda, Sengaku. A Thousand Teachings: The Upadesasahasri of Sankara (ISBN: 0791409449)
4. Garfield, Jay L. The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika (ISBN: 0195093364)
5. Olivelle, Patrick. Upanisads (ISBN: 0192835769)
6. E-readings for download on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.sunysb.edu/>)

Recommended text:

1. Hajime Nakamura, A History of Early Vedanta Philosophy, Part I (ISBN: 8120806514)

Class Requirements:

Grades will be computed on a point system: Attendance and participation, 10%; Class presentation, 10%; Mid-term exam, 20%; Final exam, 20%; Term paper, 40%.

Attendance and participation. This grade will be determined by 1) attendance (students who are tardy or absent more than three times will be penalized for each subsequent absence) and 2) making well-informed contributions to daily in-class discussions. Students who do not feel comfortable speaking in class can also visit me during my office hours to discuss topics we have gone over in class and in our readings. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings.

Class presentation. Each student is required to give one ten- to fifteen-minute presentation at the beginning of class. You are encouraged to be creative in your presentations; although the presentation should have some direct relevance to the day's readings, you should not attempt to summarize the entire reading. The instructor will pass out a class presentation sign-up sheet in the second week of class. In the event there are more students in the class than there are class presentation slots, on some days we will have two-person presentations.

Mid-term exam. There will be a mid-term exam at 2:20-3:50 on Oct. 20.

Final exam. There will be a FINAL exam at 11:15-12:35 on Dec. 14. It will be cumulative, covering material from both the first and second parts of the course.

Term paper. Students will choose a topic and write a one-page term paper proposal due at the beginning of class Nov. 5. Each proposal should also include a tentative bibliography. Students will have wide latitude to choose a topic of their own interest in consultation with the instructor. The term paper itself will be 10-15 pages, due at the beginning of class Dec. 1. Paper extensions will not be granted except in extraordinary circumstances. More information on the format of the term paper will be available later in the semester.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The minimum penalty for students who plagiarize, cheat, or engage in other forms of academic dishonesty will be a "0" for the assignment in question. Penalties may also include a grade of "F" for the course, or in very serious cases expulsion from the University. For more information on Stony Brook University's academic integrity policies, consult the University website: http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/policies.html

Disability Support Services

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to summarize the doctrines of the Vedanta thinkers Sankara, Bhartrhari, and Gaudapada, and Buddhist thinkers Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu.
2. Students will understand major concepts from Vedanta and Buddhist philosophy such as *brahman*, *atman*, *anatman*, *svabhava*, *sunyata*, and so forth.
3. Students will express themselves and their understanding of the material we have read for class in one 10-15 minute in-class presentation.
4. Students will be able to argue a thesis in a term paper of 10-15 pp., employing appropriate concepts from Vedanta and Buddhist philosophy.
5. Students will investigate some of the similarities and differences between Vedanta and Buddhist philosophies.
6. Students will discuss the applicability (or inapplicability!) of ancient Indian philosophy to our lives in the 21st century.

Course Schedule

week 1 Introduction, Hindu Thought

Aug. 25 Introduction to the Course

Aug. 27 King 42-73

week 2 Buddhist Thought

Sep. 1 King 75-102, Olivelle xxiii-lvi

Sep. 3 Olivelle 148-156; 167-176

week 3 Upanisads

Sep. 8 Olivelle 232-247; 289-290

Sep. 10 Mayeda 3-27; Film excerpt: Adi Shankaracharya

week 4 Sankara

Sep. 15 Mayeda 211-233

Sep. 17 **NO CLASS**

week 5 Sankara

Sep. 22 King 212-221

Sep. 24 King 153-159; e-readings

week 6 Bhartrhari

Sep. 29 Isayeva 69-96

Oct. 1 Isayeva 97-129; e-readings

week 7 Bhartrhari

Oct. 6 E-readings

Oct. 8 Isayeva 13-34; e-readings

week 8 Gaudapada

Oct. 13 Isayeva 35-65; e-readings

Oct. 15 E-readings, review for exam

week 9 Exam, Buddhism

Oct. 20 **** MID-TERM EXAM – 2:20-3:50 PM ****

Oct. 22 E-readings

week 10 Madhyamaka Buddhism

Oct. 27 King 115-126; Garfield 87-99, 207-215

Oct. 29 King 137-145; Garfield 293-321

week 11 Madhyamaka Buddhism

Nov. 3 Garfield 322-341

Nov. 5 Garfield 342-359; e-reading; **Term Paper Proposal Due**

week 12 Yogacara Buddhism

Nov. 10 E-reading

Nov. 12 E-reading

week 13 Yogacara Buddhism

Nov. 17 E-reading

Nov. 19 E-reading

week 14

Nov. 24 NO CLASS

Nov. 26 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

week 15 Vedanta and Buddhism Reconsidered

Dec. 1 E-reading; **Term Paper Due**

Dec. 3 E-reading

week 16-17 Final Exam

Dec 14 **** FINAL EXAM 11:15-12:35 ****