



**Hartford International**  
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE

Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

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**RS-590: The Hindu Tradition**

<b>Course</b>	RS-590: The Hindu Tradition
<b>Term</b>	Summer Course
<b>Dates</b>	May 20 – June 26, 2025
<b>Times</b>	Tuesdays & Thursdays @ 7pm-9pm EST
<b>Format</b>	Synchronous Online Zoom Instruction (cameras on)
<b>Style</b>	Engaging Lecture and Inviting Discussion
<b>Instructor</b>	Dr. Raj Balkaran, BA, MA, PhD   <a href="https://rajbalkaran.com">https://rajbalkaran.com</a>
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:raj.balkaran@gmail.com">raj.balkaran@gmail.com</a>
<b>Zoom Office</b>	<a href="https://zoom.us/j/3079194627">https://zoom.us/j/3079194627</a> (by appointment)

**Curricular Requirements:**

- MAIRS - Interreligious Studies Elective
- MAIRS - Islamic Studies: Religious Pluralism
- MAC - Chaplaincy Elective
- MAC - Islamic Studies Pathway Elective

**Description**

- This course provides an overview of key texts, beliefs and practices comprising Hinduism, the world's oldest religion. This historical survey will interlace philosophical perspectives to convey the core lived experiences of Hindus worldwide. Special attention will be paid to Hindu perspectives on Interreligious Dialogue, Spiritual Care, Justice, Equity, and the Ethics of War and Peace. Above and beyond a historical survey, this course considers the practical modern global application on Hindu thought and practice.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Identify foundational Hindu scriptures and philosophical concepts.
- Analyze the historical evolution of Hindu beliefs and practices.
- Articulate key concepts such as karma, dharma, moksha, and bhakti.
- Engage critically with Hindu perspectives on contemporary issues including spiritual care and conflict ethics.
- Reflect on the Hindu tradition's relevance within global religious pluralism and inclusive cultural landscapes.

**Required Reading**

- *Introducing Hinduism* by Hillary P. Rodrigues  
3rd Edition  
ISBN 9780367676926  
458 Pages 59 B/W Illustrations  
April 30, 2025 by Routledge  
<https://www.routledge.com/Introducing-Hinduism/Rodrigues/p/book/9780367676926>



### **Recommended Reading** (pending interests)

- *Hindu Approaches to Spiritual Care: Chaplaincy in Theory and Practice*  
Edited by Vineet Chander and Lucinda Mosher  
ISBN: 9781785926051  
304 pages  
Oct. 21 2019 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers  
<https://us.jkp.com/products/hindu-approaches-to-spiritual-care>
- 2024. Balkaran, Raj and A. Walter Dorn. “[Exploring Hindu Ethics of Warfare: The Purānas.](#)” *International Review of the Red Cross*. Open Access [HERE](#).
- 2022. Balkaran, Raj and A. Walter Dorn. “[Charting Hinduism’s Rules of Armed Conflict: Indian Sacred Texts and International Humanitarian Law.](#)” *International Review of the Red Cross*, pp. 1 - 36.
- 2012. “[Violence in the Valmiki Ramayana: Just War Criteria Prefigured in an Ancient Indian Epic.](#)” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 8 (3): 659–90. (Co-authored with A. Walter Dorn.)

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

##### **Tues, May 20:**

- **Introduction to Hinduism**
- *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 1
- *Interreligious Understanding:* Set the tone of respectful inquiry across traditions.

##### **Thurs, May 22:**

- **Vedic Religion and the Sanskrit Language**
  - *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 2
  - *Academic Foundation:* Explore textual transmission and language as spiritual medium.
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#### **Week 2**

##### **Tues, May 27:**

- **Karma, Time, and Cosmology**
- *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 3
- *Spiritual Care:* Understand karma’s impact on personal and communal healing.

##### **Thurs, May 29:**

- **Hindu Social Organization and Values**
  - *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 4
  - *Spiritual Care & Justice:* Discuss family life, caste, gender, and dharma in community life.
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### Week 3

#### Tues, June 3:

- **Dharma and the Individual**
- *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 5
- *Spiritual Care:* Self-realization and ethical living as personal spiritual care.

#### Thurs, June 5:

- **Indian Philosophical Schools**
  - *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 6
  - *Interreligious Dialogue:* Engage Indian metaphysical models alongside other traditions.
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### Week 4

#### Tues, June 10:

- **The Epics, Bhagavad Gītā, and the Rise of Bhakti**
- *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 7
- *Ethics of Violence & Peacebuilding:* Discuss dharma-yuddha (righteous war), nonviolence, duty.

#### Thurs, June 12:

- **Major Hindu Sects, Deities, and Purāṇic Myths**
  - *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 8
  - *Spiritual Symbolism:* How myths embody paths of devotion and liberation, especially regarding the Goddess
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### Week 5

#### Tues, June 17:

- **The Hindu Temple and Worship Rituals**
- *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 9
- *Spiritual Care & Practice:* Temple as a center of communal and individual spiritual support.

#### Thurs, June 19:

- **Tantra**
  - *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 10
  - *Interreligious Curiosity:* Introduce subtler paths of energy work and ritual mysticism.
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## Week 6

### Tues, June 24:

- **Colonization and Reform**
- *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapter 11
- *Justice and Equity:* Analyze colonial impacts, resistance movements (e.g., Gandhi's nonviolence).

### Thurs, June 26:

- **Transnational Hinduism in Asia, Hinduism and the West, Contemporary Configurations and Issues**
  - *Reading:* Rodrigues, Chapters 12 & 13
  - *Practical Application & Global Interfaith:* Explore Hinduism's evolution in diasporic contexts.
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## Course Assignments

(Specific scope of each to be discussed and mutually decided upon in class.)

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|-----------------|------------------------|-----|
| • May 29, 2025  | Test 1                 | 25% |
| • June 12, 2025 | Test 2                 | 25% |
| • June 26, 2025 | Final Paper (12 pages) | 30% |
| • Throughout    | Participation          | 20% |