

WARRIOR SAINTS: INTRODUCTION TO SIKHISM

Level - 200

Instructor: Arvind Mandair

Term: Fall 2013

Location and Time:

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Course Objectives: Sikhism's relatively short but eventful history provides a fascinating insight into one of South Asia's most vibrant sub-cultures. By taking contemporary Sikhism's preoccupation with the enigmatic figure of the "Warrior-Saint" (*sant-sipahi*) as its focus, this course will examine a variety of different themes including, but not limited to, problems of migration, racial stereotyping, the relationship between violence and mysticism, or politics and religion.

This interdisciplinary course begins by providing an introduction to the forms and central ideas of Sikh culture, ethnicity and religion. In weeks 1-3 we shall study the historical development of Sikh traditions and the construction and institutionalisation of its major beliefs, practices and festivals. In addition the course will aim to explore the Sikh textual and interpretive traditions. Students will be expected to analyse the complex interactions that have given rise to the contemporary interpretive scene, and will be encouraged to link their understanding of the various traditions to the present day problems of textual transmission and reception in global diasporas. In the second part of the course (weeks 8-14) we shall probe some of the central teachings and leading ideas in Sikhism (traditionally known as *Gurmat*). By focusing on the dual context of contemporary Sikhism situated between its Indian and modern Western diasporic contexts, we shall explore the possibility of a cross-cultural dialogue between *Gurmat* and some central concepts of Western philosophy and religion. In the latter part of the course we shall look at the visual perception Sikhs in the West, asking how the visual appearance of Sikhs has affected their treatment in film, literature and real life. Special reference will be made to the racial profiling of Sikhs in the US and Europe as result of world political events such as the US-Iran crisis in 1979 and 9/11, and the classification of Sikhs as a race in British law during the 1960's.

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory with unexcused absences resulting in grade reductions. More than 1 unexcused absences will result in grade reductions as follows:

2 absences – 1/2 grade

3 absences – Full grade

4 absences – D for the course

More than 4 absences – F for the course

Student Participation: The course will contain a mixture of lecture and discussion time. All students are expected to read the weekly assignments and be prepared to participate in class discussions based on the material being taught. **Class Presentations** will begin after week 4. Students will be asked to present/introduce one of the readings or to take a lead role in group presentations during the discussions of Sikh ethics. Presentations will be graded *not* on a student's ability to simply regurgitate the readings, but to present a succinct and novel analysis which is able to pose a question to the class as a whole and to generate discussion.

Assignments:

Two or three 4 page papers (min. 800 words). These papers are designed to help students to clarify their understanding of lectures and reading assignments based on the traditions examined over the preceding 2-3 weeks.

Paper 1: The Sants and Early Sikh Tradition

Paper 2: The Khalsa and the Rise of Sikh Militarism

Paper 3: Leading Ideas in the Sikh Scripture

Although papers will initially focus on providing a detailed textual analysis, as the semester progresses students will be encouraged to branch out into more comparative and reflective themes.

Research Paper (1500 words) due at the end of the semester. Students will be given a choice of essay titles midway through the semester from which they will be expected to choose one topic. This paper will give students the opportunity to carry out guided research and develop a more detailed understanding of one of the traditions examined in class.

Final Exam: details TBA

Grading:

Papers 1-3 count in total for 35%.

Research Paper 4 counts for 10%.

Final Exam count for 20%

Quizzes count for 20%

Class participation (including presentations) together count for 10%.

Attendance of relevant seminars, lectures and symposia: 5%

Grading (continued):

The following scheme provides a general guideline of the way in which the marks will be allocated:

- A+ or 95 and above: superb, well constructed design, consistent argument, deep and through research, unique viewpoint etc.
- A or 91-94. Very good paper but with minor flaws in argument or presentation
- B+ or 85-89
- B or 80-84: consistent argument with a clear thesis, minor problems, some shallow, unsubstantiated arguments
- B- or 71-79: overall consistent arguments, occasional structural problems, unclear
- D or 60-70: clear thesis, but arguments do not support your thesis. Contradiction etc.
- 50 – 60 E, No effective thesis nor arguments
- F or below 50: at least you wrote something...

About the papers:

All papers must be typed using standard margins (1" all around) using standard typefaces and fonts. A standard page should have about 250 words on it. I strongly urge students to use computer for preparation of the work and to keep back up files of whatever is submitted. Hand written work will not be accepted unless there is a valid excuse. Late papers will not be accepted unless proper documentation can be produced.

Required Reading

- Various articles posted on C-Tools for Asian 303
- A.S. Mandair and C. Shackle, *Teachings of the Sikh Gurus*, Routledge, 2005
- A.S. Mandair, *Sikhism: A Guide For the Perplexed*. Continuum, 2013.

Recommended Reading

Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture and Theory (journal: Routledge)

W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition*, Oxford, 1980

W.H. McLeod, *Textual Sources For the Study of Sikhism*, Manchester University Press, 1984

W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968.

Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, Oxford, 1994

Gurinder Mann, *Sikhs in North America*, Prentice Hall, 2009

Robin Rinehart, *The Dasam Granth*, Oxford University Press, 2010

Nikky Singh, *The Birth of the Khalsa*, SUNY, 2006

E. Nesbit, *Sikhism*, Oxford, VSI Series, 2006.

W.H. McLeod, *Sikhism*, Penguin, 1998

Other texts may be prescribed.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

Class	Topic(s)	Reading Assignment	
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Introduction: Form and Imagery of Contemporary Sikhism. Perceptions of Sikhs and Sikhism in West. Racial stereotyping of Sikhs since 1979 and 9/11. 	“Sikhism”, <i>Encyclopedia of India</i> , Macmillans, 2005, pp 65-70	
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnic and socio-religious milieu of 15C Punjab. Race and Caste in Punjabi hierarchy. Islamic Presence in India. Sufism and <i>bhakti</i> as precursors of Sikhism. 	J. S. Grewal: <i>Sikhs of the Punjab</i> , “Introduction” and chapters 1 and 2	
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sants 	Peter Heehs, “The Sants” Charlotte Vaudeville: “Sant Mat”	
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guru Nanak: personality, mystical experience and life history 	M.A. Macauliffe, <i>The Sikh Religion</i> , Vol 1. excerpts.	
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Sikh Tradition: Guru Nanak to Guru Ramdas 	W.H.McLeod: <i>Sikhism</i> , Penguin 1998, chapters 1, 2 and 3	
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation of Sikhism: Guru Arjan to Hargobind 	J.S. Grewal, <i>Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order</i> , Manohar 1996, pp 39-72	
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of the Khalsa 	J.S. Grewal, <i>Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order</i> , Manohar 1996, pp 39-72	
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sikhism after the Khalsa 	W.H.McLeod, <i>Sikhism</i> , Penguin 1998, chapter 4	
9.	Modern Sikhism and the Secular State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Singh Sabha movement Construction of Modern “Sikh Theology” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>guru</i>)
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sikhs and Indian State 1984 and its Aftermath 		
11.	Sikh Worship, Customs and the Role of the Guru: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gurdwara Guru Granth Guru Panth 	W.H.McLeod, <i>Sikhism</i> , Penguin 1998, chapter 7	
12.	Role and Form of Sikh Scripture		

13.	Philosophy of the Sikh Gurus: 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and Existence (<i>samsara</i>) • Duality (<i>maya</i>) • Mind Self and Ego • 	A.S. Mandair and C. Shackle, "Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Selections From Scripture", Routledge, 2005
14.	Philosophy of the Sikh Gurus 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karma and Rebirth (<i>avan jan</i>) • Grace • Freedom 	
15	Sikh Ethics I	A.S. Mandair and C. Shackle, "Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Selections From Scripture", Routledge, 2005
16.	Sikh Ethics II	
17. 18.	Sikh Marraiges and Death Ceremonies in Sikhism	<i>Sikhism: Its Beliefs and Practices</i> , by Cole and Sembhi, Routledge, 1989.
19. 20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sikh Diasporas: migration and transnational movements. • Race as a formative concept for British Sikh identity. 	Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Tatla: <i>Sikhs in Britain</i> , Zed Publications, UK, 2006.
21 22.	Sikhs in Contemporary Film and Literature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hollywood and Bollywood constructions of Sikhs as racial and religious category. • New Films produced by Diaspora Sikhs 	Pal Ahluwalia, Harleen Singh <i>et al</i> , articles from: <i>Sikh Formations: Religion Culture and Theory</i> (Routledge)
23 24	Review week	