

University of Calgary
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Religious Studies
[May 5, 2005]

Religious Studies 325 L20 - Spring 2003

Time: MW 2:00-4:45

Female Saints and Sacred Figures in Eastern Religions

Instructor: Dr. Michael Hawley

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Textbooks

Kathleen M. Erndl, *Victory to the Mother: The Hindu Goddess of Northwest India in Myth, Ritual, and Symbol*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

RELS 325 Course Readings (available at the Bookstore)

Course Description

This course deals with the various dimensions and expressions of the goddess tradition in northwest India. The course will begin by locating the local, popular goddess traditions in northwest India within the broader, orthodox goddess tradition as expressed in the Sanskrit text, the *Devā Māhātmya*. The course will then examine the dimensions of pilgrimage, ritual performance, and shamanism and possession as they relate to the local goddess traditions in northwest India. Following a brief examination of goddesses and women in popular culture in India, the course will conclude with a discussion of women writers and Asian fiction.

While this course focuses explicitly on the goddess tradition in northwest India, the theoretical models and methodological approaches discussed in the course are broad enough to provide a basis upon which students might analyze and seek to understand issues dealing with female saints and sacred figures outside of the Indian context.

Films will be shown to supplement the lecture and reading material. The films offer "insider" perspectives and provide students with the opportunity to experience visually the religious traditions as they are expressed by some of their adherents today.

Core Competencies

This course provides students the opportunity to develop a wide range of critical and practical skills necessary for reflective thinking and the communication of ideas. Over and above gaining an introductory knowledge of female saint and sacred figures in northwest India, this course challenges students to reflect upon and assess how we and those we study organize, live in, and

relate to the world. It challenges students to identify and to call into question the presuppositions, central concepts, agendas, and cultural biases of both the scholar and the subjects of our inquiry. The analytical and self-reflective skills emphasized in this course will find application in the bulk of courses offered at the university as well as in life outside the academic setting.

Course Requirements

This is an inter-session course and classes are held twice per week. The amount of material to be covered in each session is significant. A missed class has the potential to compromise the student's understanding of the material, and ultimately the student's grade. Therefore, students are strongly encouraged not only to attend class regularly but to be self-motivated and proactive in their reading and study habits.

1. Midterm Test

There will be one midterm test held on June 1 worth 25% of the final grade. The test will cover the introductory material on the goddess traditions in India and on the *Devã Mâhãmya*.

2. Literature Analysis

Students are required to submit an analysis of a work of fiction written by and dealing with Asian women. The analysis should be approximately 1500-2000 words (6-8 typed, double-spaced pages) in length and is due in class on June 15. The analysis is worth 25% of the final grade.

3. Discussion of Asian Literature

Students are to come prepared on June 22 to discuss their literature with others in the class. Your participation in this discussion is worth 10% of your final grade.

4. Final Exam

There will be one two-hour registrar-scheduled final exam worth 40% of the final grade. The final exam will deal with the material covered in the Erndl text and the related essays in the course reader.

Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

A+	100 - 96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Policy Regarding Late/Missed Requirements

Due dates are firm. Without acceptable documentation (i.e. a medical certificate, police report, bereavement notice, confirmation of religious observance, or court summons) or without PRIOR arrangement with the instructor, missed requirements will be awarded an "F". Late papers will be awarded a 5% penalty per day (This includes weekends). This policy is intended to encourage diligence and integrity on the part of each student as well as to uphold the principles of fairness and equality with respect to other students in the class.

Academic Accommodation: If you are a student with a disability who requires academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation.

Intellectual Honesty: Students should be familiar with University regulations regarding academic integrity (See the current University Calendar).

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offence, the penalty for which is an **F** on the assignment and possibly also an **F** on the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw. The University Calendar states that "*plagiarism exists when:*

- a) *the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),*
- b) *parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,*
- c) *the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or*
- d) *a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.*

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted."

Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement but also when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography is insufficient to establish which portions of the student's work are taken from external sources; footnotes or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

Safewalk Program: "You don't have to walk alone...." Call 220-5333 and a member of the Safewalk Team will walk you to your car, the LRT, or any destination on campus. Safewalk is available to all students, staff and faculty any time of the day or night. Look for the Campus Security Help Phones located throughout the University. Please don't hesitate to call!

Withdrawing from courses: Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the 2002/03 University Calendar.

Gnosis: Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

Tentative Lecture and Reading Schedule

- May 16 Introduction**
- 18 An Introduction to Hinduism and the Goddess Traditions of India: Types, Models and Themes**
Reading:
David Kinsley, *Sacred Female Imagery and Women's Religious Experience in Hinduism*
Klaus Klostermaier, *A Short History of øaktism*
- 23 Victoria Day - No Class**
- 25 Devã Mãhãtmya**
Reading:
Thomas Coburn (trans.), *Devã Mãhãmya*
Kathleen Erndl, *Divine Materialism: Myth and Theology of Goddess Worship* (Chapter 1)
- 30 Devã Mãhãtmya**
- June 1 Midterm Test / Film**
- 6 Introduction to the Goddess Tradition in Northwest India**
Reading:
Kathleen Erndl, *Introduction*
Kathleen Erndl, *Speaking of the Goddess: Stories of the Seven Sisters* (Chapter 2)
- 8 Pilgrimage in the Goddess Tradition in Northwest India**
Reading:
Victor Turner, *Liminality and Communitas*
Victor Turner, *Pilgrimages as Social Processes*
Kathleen Erndl, *The Call of the Goddess: The Dynamics of Pilgrimage* (Chapter 3)
- 13 Ritual Performance in the Goddess Tradition in Northwest India**
Reading:
Catherine Bell, *Performance*
Kathleen Erndl, *Waking the Goddess: The Jagrãtã as Ritual Performance* (Chapter 4)
- 15 Possession in the Goddess Tradition in Northwest India**
Reading:
I.M. Lewis, *Trance and Possession*
Kathleen Erndl, *The Play of the Goddess: Possession and Participation* (Chapter 5)
- 20 Goddesses and Popular Culture in India**
Reading:
Kathleen Erndl, *The Goddess and Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspective* (Chapter 6)
Kathleen Erndl, *The Goddess as an Enduring Presence* (Chapter 7)
- 22 Asian Women Writers, Women in Asian Fiction**
Reading:
Nancy Falk, *Shakti Ascending*
Lucinda Joy Peach, *Hinduism*