Course Description:

The Bhagavad Gita, a Sanskrit philosophical dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and the god Krishna, has been described by some as “the Bible of the Hindus.” Why has this text inspired so many philosophers and religious thinkers across the ages, from ancient India to contemporary North America? We will first read the text itself in English translation carefully, our interpretations informed by the latest historical discoveries about the time and place in which the Bhagavad Gita was composed. This will be followed by readings from the many thinkers who were inspired by the text in India and the West. We will read interpretations of the Gita by the Indian thinkers Sankara, Ramanuja, Gandhi, and Tilak, and by the Western thinkers G.W.F. Hegel and Henry David Thoreau, among others.

Required Texts:

4. E-readings for download on Blackboard (http://blackboard.sunysb.edu/)

Suggested Texts (You must purchase ONE OTHER translation of the Bhagavad Gita):

5. If you wish to use some other translation, check with the professor.

Course Learning Objectives:
1. Students will understand central concepts from Indian philosophy such as dharma, karma, and mokṣa.
2. Students will have knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita’s central teachings and its context in Hinduism and in Indian intellectual history.
3. Students will compare some of the diverse ways the Bhagavad Gita has been interpreted in the pre-modern and modern periods in India, Europe, and North America.
4. Students will be able to express themselves in writing, including proper use of citations.
5. Students will be able to effectively communicate their ideas in a public presentation of 10-15 minutes.

Class Requirements:

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

Attendance and participation. Participation grades will be determined primarily by regular contribution to class discussion. Participation includes being punctual and attentive during lectures and class discussions, and being prepared for class by doing all required readings. Students who have more than three unexcused absences will be penalized for each subsequent absence.

Class presentation. Each student is required to give a ten-minute presentation at the beginning of class. Students will choose a specific verse or verses from the Bhagavad Gita, and spend ten minutes explicating the verse or verses. If two students are signed up for the same day they are expected to present jointly, and both students will be issued a single grade.

Mid-term exam. There will be a mid-term exam from 7:00-8:20 PM on March 24.

Final exam. There will be a final exam from 5:30-6:50 PM on Tuesday, May 20. It will be cumulative, covering material from both the first and second half of the course. More information on the content of the mid-term and final exam will be available closer to the dates of each exam.

Commentary and Subcommentary paper. Students will write two papers. The first, a “commentary paper,” will be a close reading of a small number of verses (ideally no more than 10 verses) from the Bhagavad Gita. The second, the “subcommentary paper” will examine a specific section or theme in the writings of one of the other authors we read for class (e.g., Sankara, Devi Gita, Gandhi). Each paper will be 5-8 pages and due at the beginning of class. More information on the format of the papers will be available later in the semester.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity. Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html
**Electronic Devices Policy.** All phones and electronic devices must be silent during our class period. I strongly encourage you to turn off all phones, laptop computers, iPads, etc., during class. This is because a growing body of scientific evidence suggests that the type of multitasking students often engage in during class impairs their ability to acquire and store new information. Although you may turn on your computer intending only to use it to take notes, it is difficult to resist the urge to answer e-mails, visit social networking sites, and surf the web.

**Disability Support Services.** If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

**Course Schedule (subject to revision)**

week 1

Jan. 27 Introduction to the course

Jan. 29 Literary and philosophical context of the Bhagavad Gita
*Reading:* E-reading

week 2

Feb. 3 Bhagavad Gita Ch. 1-3
*Reading:* Gitas (Ch. 1-3)

Feb. 5 Bhagavad Gita Ch. 4-6
*Reading:* Gitas (Ch. 4-6)

week 3

Feb. 10 Bhagavad Gita Ch. 7-9
*Reading:* Gitas (Ch. 7-9)

Feb. 12 Bhagavad Gita Ch. 10-12
*Reading:* Gitas (Ch. 10-12)

week 4

Feb. 17 Bhagavad Gita Ch. 13-15
*Reading:* Gitas (Ch. 13-15)

Feb. 19 Bhagavad Gita Ch. 16-18
*Reading:* Gitas (Ch. 16-18)

week 5

Feb. 24 Sankara
*Reading:* E-reading

Feb. 26 Sankara
*Reading:* E-reading

week 6
Mar. 3  Ramanuja; **Commentary paper due**  
*Reading: E-reading*

Mar. 5  Ramanuja and Madhva  
*Reading: E-reading*

**week 7**  
Mar. 10  Isvara Gita Ch. 1-6  
*Reading: E-reading*

Mar. 12  Isvara Gita Ch. 7-11; **Review for Mid-term**  
*Reading: E-reading*

**week 8**  
Mar. 17  NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Mar. 19  NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

**week 9**  
Mar. 24  **MID-TERM EXAM** **

Mar. 26  Film: Peter Brook’s Mahabharata (excerpt)

**week 10**  
Mar. 31  Devi Gita Ch. 1-5  
*Reading: Brown Ch. 1-5*

Apr. 2  Devi Gita Ch. 6-10  
*Reading: Brown Ch. 6-10*

**week 11**  
Apr. 7  The Gita in the Modern World  
*Reading: E-reading*

Apr. 9  Transcendentalism  
*Reading: E-reading*

**week 12**  
Apr. 14  Transcendentalism  
*Reading: E-reading*

Apr. 16  Gita and Social Activism  
*Reading: E-reading*

**week 13**  
Apr. 21  Tilak  
*Reading: E-reading*

Apr. 23  Tilak  
*Reading: E-reading*
week 14
Apr. 28  Gandhi
Reading: E-reading

Apr. 30  Gandhi
Reading: E-reading

week 15
May 5  Spivak
Reading: E-reading; **Subcommentary Paper Due**

May 7  Film: The Legend of Bagger Vance; **Review for Final Exam**

Week 16-17
May 20  **FINAL EXAM 5:30-6:50**