

PHIL 378
TTh 11am-12:30pm

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11am – 1pm; TTh after class or by appointment

PHIL 378: Philosophical Wisdom of Early India

According to the common Sanskrit adage, the point of philosophy is *yathābhūtadarśana*: to see things as they really are, so that we may live in accord with reality. So, how is reality, how do we know it, and how does this knowledge guide our goals and actions? This course explores the early foundational texts whose visions will shape Indian philosophical instincts, inquiries, and debates moving into the classical period of systematic thought. With a focus on primary texts in translation, we'll begin with the early Vedas and the Brahmanical Epics (the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*) and then move to explore reorientations and challenges to the early Vedic worldview in the Upaniṣads and by the Buddha.

Our general plan will be to have a set of readings for each week. On Tuesdays, I'll give a formal lecture on the material. On Thursdays, we'll have about half an hour for open questions, and then you'll be given an assignment to complete with a regular small group (see below for details).

Assignments and Grading Structure:

All assignments will be submitted via Canvas. You do not have to submit physical copies of any assignments. Our assessment scale follows [UBC's standard grading policy](#).

1) Weekly Group Assignments (30%; due Thursdays at the end of class)

On Thursdays, you'll break into regular small groups and each group will complete an assignment. Generally, you'll be given a question to answer or a scenario to respond to. Each member of a given group (who is present) will receive the same mark on the assignment. At the end of the term, you'll have an opportunity to evaluate the performance of the other members of your group, and your final group exercise grade can be affected by these evaluations. *If there's some structural reason why you're not able to attend class on Thursdays, talk to Cat immediately to determine if we can work out an alternative way for you to complete these assignments.*

2) Short Answer Paper #1 on the Epics and Early Vedas (20%; due Friday, Oct. 15th)

I'll give you three prompts a week before, and you'll pick two to respond to. Each response will be approximately 1000 words long. Your responses will be based on our class readings. You should NOT do outside research for this paper. All sources must be properly cited within the text of the paper. You must give page numbers in your citations.

3) Short Answer Paper #2 on new movements (20%; due Friday, Nov. 26th at 11:59pm)

I'll give you three prompts a week before, and you'll pick two to respond to. Each response will be approximately 1000 words long. Your responses will be based on our class readings. You should NOT do outside research for this paper. All sources must be properly cited within the text of the paper. You must give page numbers in your citations.

4) Final Paper: 30% (Monday, Dec. 20th)

1500-1750 words (approximately 6-7 pages). I'll provide a topic in class. This paper will be based on our class readings. You should NOT do outside research for this paper. All sources must be properly cited within the text of the paper. You must give page numbers in your citations. *If you'd like to write an independent thesis-driven research paper instead, talk to me early in the term. You'll have to propose a topic and meet with me by **no later than November 9th**. I only recommend this option for highly-motivated advanced Philosophy students. This option will be much more work, with the corresponding potential to be even more rewarding.*

UBC's Academic Integrity Policies are in effect at all times in this class. I take plagiarism very seriously and there will be consequences, ranging from failing the assignment to being reported to UBC's Academic Misconduct Committee, if you do not properly cite any and all sources you use in your assignments. For your reference, here is UBC's policy on plagiarism:

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments (<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>).

Statement of UBC Values and Resources: UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details

of the policies and how to access support are available at <https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>

Late Policy

If you do not ask me for an extension, I will deduct 5% from the assignment grade for each day that the assignment is late. This is a hard and fast policy. If you would like an extension of up to 48 hours, *just ask*. Send me an email requesting a specific amount of additional time (for example, you could ask for an additional 24 hours). You can ask for the extension at 11:58pm the day the assignment is due if you need to; as long as you email me a request for a specific amount of additional time up to 48 hours, the request will be granted. **You do not need to give me an excuse or a justification. Please DO NOT send medical documentation or pictures.** I trust you, and I trust that if you're asking for an extension it's because you just need a little more time to produce your best work.

I will not grant any extension of more than 48 hours unless you file for a formal Academic Concession with the appropriate UBC office. Here's a link to UBC's guide to Academic Concessions for Arts Students: <https://www.arts.ubc.ca/degree-planning/academic-performance/academic-concession/>, and here's the link for Sciences Students: <https://science.ubc.ca/students/advising/concession>

The idea behind this two-tiered late policy (automatically granting short extensions if they're requested before the assignment is due but requiring long extensions to go through UBC's formal process) is that I know that there are many reasons why it might take longer than planned to produce high-quality intellectual work. An extension of 48 hours is unlikely to significantly affect your ability to keep up with the new work in the course, but if something longer than that is needed, there is a good chance that your ongoing work will be impacted. UBC has excellent resources for academic advising, and they can help you figure out a plan if there's a significant disruption. Please take advantage of these resources knowing that I will always follow whatever formal guidance they give us.

Required Texts (in the bookstore):

1. Bodhi, Bhikku, trans. *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2005.
2. Doniger, Wendy, trans. *The Rig Veda*. London: Penguin Classics, 1981.
3. Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Upaniṣads*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1998.
4. Narasimhan, C.V. *The Mahabharata: An English Version Based on Selected Verses*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
5. Sattar, Arisha, trans. *Ramayana: An Illustrated Retelling*. With illustrations by Sonali Zohra. Restless Books, 2016.

6. Stoler Miller, Barbara, trans. *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*. New York: Bantam, 1998
7. van Buitenen, J.A.B, trans. *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

We will have additional readings posted to Canvas as PDF's.

Course Schedule

Part I: Early Vedas and Epics

Week 1: Syllabus; get to know each other; bit of background to ancient South Asia (Sept. 9th)

Week 2: Ṛg Vedas (Sept. 16th): selections

Week 3: *Rāmāyaṇa* (Sept. 23rd): all of Sattar, selections *Uttaraकाण्डा*; Pollock, “Rāmāyaṇa and Political Imagination in India”

Week 4: *Mahābhārata* (Sept. 30th): selections; Ganeri, “A Clever Cloak of Words”; something from *Many Mahābhāratas*?

Week 5: *Bhagavad Gītā* (Oct. 7th): Discourses 1-12; Gandhi’s reading of the *Gītā*

Week 6: *Yoga Sūtra* (Oct. 14th); first short answer paper due Friday, Oct. 15th

Part II: The End of the Vedas and New Movements

Week 7: The Upaniṣads (Oct. 21st): selections

Week 8: Foundational Nikāyas (Nov. 4th): *In the Buddha’s Words*, “The Human Condition” and “Shining the Light of Wisdom”; maybe Gethin on No Self

Week 9: Nirvāṇa (Tuesday Nov. 9th only; no class Thursday for UBC holiday; no weekly assignment): Selections from Collins, *Nirvāṇa*; must confirm with me by today if you want to do an independent final research paper

Week 10: Buddhahood (Nov. 18th): *In the Buddha’s Words*, “The Bringer of Light”; Ganeri on silence and secrecy; “Past and Future Buddhas” from Collins

Week 11: Early Buddhist narratives and practices (lay) (Nov. 25th): *In the Buddha’s Words*, “The Happiness Visible in this Present Life,” 107-142 and “The Way to a Fortunate Rebirth,” 145-179; some *avadānas*; Short Answer Paper #2 due on Friday, Nov. 26th

Week 12: Early Buddhist narratives and practices (monastic) (Dec. 2nd): Schopen, “Monastic Law Meets the Real World”; Anderson, “Defining Women’s Bodies”; some *Songs; In the Buddha’s Words*, “Mastering the Mind,” 257-299

Week 13: Last day of class Tuesday, Dec. 7th; final paper topic handed out in class

****Final paper due at 11:59pm via Canvas on Monday, December 20th****