

**For planning purposes. Details of the assignments and readings are subject to change.**

PHIL 378

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### **PHIL 378: Philosophical Wisdom of Early India**

According to the common Sanskrit adage, the point of philosophy is *yathābhūtarśana*: 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.

This course is **in-person** and attendance is mandatory. 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 or to finish the lecture, and then you'll be given an assignment to complete in-class with a small group (see below for details).

#### **Assignments and Grading Structure:**

Our assessment scale follows [UBC's standard grading policy](#). Chat GPT or other AI tools are not permitted for any assignment in this class. Use of these tools will constitute plagiarism (see policy below).

#### **1) Weekly Group Assignments (40%; due Thursdays at the end of class)**

On Thursdays, you'll break into random small groups and each group will complete an assignment based on the week's readings and lectures. Each group will submit one copy of the assignment at the end of class. Generally, you'll be given a question to answer or a scenario to respond to.

Unless you are granted a formal Academic Concession (see Missed Work/Late Policy for details), you must be present in class to get credit for this assignment.

#### **2) Short Answer Paper on the Epics and Early Vedas (20%; due on Friday, Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>)**

This assignment will have two prompts, and you'll respond to each prompt in approximately 500 words, for a total of about 1000 words. 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.

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**4) Final Paper on New Movements and the course as a whole: (40% total (20% for New Movements; 20% for the course as a whole section); due on our exam day)**

Your responses will be based on our class readings. You should NOT do outside research for these responses. All sources must be properly cited within the text of the paper. You must give page numbers in your citations. This assignment will have two parts:

1. The first part will mirror your short answer paper on the Epics and Early Vedas, but the prompts will be about the material in the New Movements section of the course. So, you'll respond to two prompts in approximately 500 words each, for a total of about 1000 words.
2. In Part II of the assignment, you'll be given a prompt about the course as a whole. Your response to this prompt will be approximately 1000 words long.

UBC's [Academic Integrity Policies](#) are in effect at all times in this class. AI tools such as Chat GPT are **NOT PERMITTED** for ANY assignments in this course. 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.

**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>

### **Missed Work/Late Policy**

For the independent short-answer papers, you may request an extension of up to 48 hours. If you would like an extension of up to 48 hours, *just ask*. To get this extension, email BOTH me AND our TA 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 BOTH me AND our TA 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. If you do not request an extension in line with this procedure, I will deduct 5% from the assignment grade for each day that the assignment is late.

**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->

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[performance/academic-concession/](https://science.ubc.ca/students/advising/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.

**The weekly group assignments must be completed in-class and submitted at the end of class. If you are unable to be in class on a particular Thursday, you must file for a formal Academic Concession with the appropriate UBC office (see links above). If the concession is granted, I will send you the prompt and you will be allowed to complete it on your own.**

The idea behind this policy is that it matters for your learning to be part of a community that regularly dedicates time to working through unfamiliar ideas. The Academic Concessions office is supposed to be able to handle small requests for accommodations based on illness, etc., in addition to larger requests. It's important for someone in these offices to know, and for you to have a record, if you end up having to request multiple accommodations. This policy is designed to make sure that you have access to the resources you need if something impacts your week-by-week ability to engage the course.

### **Required Texts:**

You must have a copy of each of these texts. They're available in the bookstore, or, if you prefer to order them on your own, I've provided amazon.ca links for each book.

1. Bodhi, Bhikku, trans. *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2005. Amazon link [here](#).
2. Doniger, Wendy, trans. *The Rig Veda*. London: Penguin Classics, 1981; reprint 2005. Amazon link [here](#)
3. Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Upaniṣads*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1998; reprint 2008. **NOTE THAT OLIVELLE HAS ANOTHER LONGER SET OF TRANSLATIONS FROM THE EARLY UPANIṢADS. IF YOU GOOGLE OUR BOOK TO DOWNLOAD A PDF, YOU WILL MOST LIKELY FIND THE WRONG VERSION, AND YOU'LL READ THE WRONG MATERIALS.** [Here](#) is the Amazon link.

\*\*\*We will have additional readings posted to Canvas.\*\*\*

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### *Course Schedule*

#### **Part I: Early Vedas and Epics**

Week 1: Syllabus; get to know each other; bit of background to ancient South Asia (Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>)

Week 2: Ṛg Vedas (Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>): selections

Week 3: *Rāmāyaṇa* (Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>): selections

Week 4: *Mahābhārata* (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> and Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>): selections

Week 5: *Bhagavad Gītā* (Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>): selections; Gandhi's reading of the *Gītā*

Week 6: The Upaniṣads (Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>): selections

**\*\*Part I short answer paper due Friday, Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>\*\***

#### **Part II: The End of the Vedas and New Movements**

Week 7: Foundational Nikāyas (Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>): *In the Buddha's Words*, "The Human Condition" and "Shining the Light of Wisdom"

Week 8: Nirvāṇa (Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>): Gethin on cosmology; selections from Collins, *Nirvāṇa*

Week 9: Buddhahood (Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>): *In the Buddha's Words*, "The Bringer of Light"; Ganeri on silence and secrecy; "Past and Future Buddhas" from Collins

Week 10: Early Buddhist practices (lay) (**Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> ONLY**): *In the Buddha's Words*, "The Happiness Visible in this Present Life," 107-142 and "The Way to a Fortunate Rebirth," 145-179

Week 12: Early Buddhist practices (renunciant) (Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>): Anderson, "Defining Women's Bodies"; some *Songs*

Week 13: Meditation (Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>): Selections from the *Yoga Sūtra*; *In the Buddha's Words*, "Mastering the Mind," 257-299

Week 13: (Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>): No new readings; in-class activities related to your final paper

**\*\*\*Final paper due at 11:59pm via Canvas on our exam day\*\*\***