

Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

Continuing Education Department

Students Handbook



A RECOGNISED INDEPENDENT CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Version 1, September 2007
The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
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Continuing education courses in Hindu Studies

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (OCHS) Continuing Education Department (CED) aims to provide an objective academic study of one of the world's oldest and richest religious traditions.

Its courses can be taken as standalone units or can be used towards a Certificate in Hindu Studies, certified by the University of Wales, Lampeter.

There are no prerequisite qualifications. We welcome anyone who has an interest in Hinduism regardless of their background or beliefs.

OCHS Hindu Studies courses

The OCHS CED runs Certificate courses (commensurate with first year higher education).

Students may submit coursework and qualify for this Certificate, or they can attend as many modules as they want without qualifying.

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is responsible for the educational material and provision of teaching, and the courses are approved and accredited by the University of Wales, Lampeter, which is widely recognised as a centre of excellence in the academic study of religion. This accreditation ensures that all modules are designed and delivered with an academic rigour appropriate to the highest standards in Higher Education.

Structure and accreditation

A CED course proceeds through a series of modules on different topics. These can be taken separately as standalone courses, or the credits for each module can be added together to contribute toward the Certificate.

Students who successfully complete twelve modules (120 credits) will be awarded a Certificate in Religious Education from the University of Wales, Lampeter. Details of the twelve modules that comprise the Certificate course are given below.

For each module there is a requirement of 16 hours teaching time, usually spread over eight weeks. The last class of each module summarises the module and gives students a chance to prepare for coursework and consult with the tutors.

Students who submit coursework for any module become registered as students at the University of Wales, Lampeter. For those who have submitted coursework or intend to do so, the Lampeter Student Handbook is available.

There are no academic qualifications required for entry to the course. Those under 18 are welcome to attend the classes and will be charged only a nominal fee, but the University of Wales can only award credits to those aged 18 and above.

The Certificate Course in Hindu Studies

The modules we offer are listed below. Each of these represents an individual course of study in its own right and students are free to choose any of the modules without it being necessary to have studied any of the others previously.

HS101: Understanding Hindu Identity

This module provides an introductory overview of the scope of Hindu dharma, looking at the question of how the Hindu identity is defined. We touch on many of the topics covered in more detail later in the course, thereby providing an introduction to the field of Hindu studies.

HS102: The Vedas and the Upanishads

The first part of this module will provide students with an overview of the religious ideas contained in the four original Vedas (the Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva) and in their principal Upanishads. In the second part of the module we proceed to a more detailed study of five selected Upanishads – the Brihad-Aranyaka, Chandogya, Katha, Shvetashvatara, and the Isha – reading from these texts as a group and considering the teachings they convey.

HS103: The Mahabharata and the Ramayana

We begin this module with a review of the central narratives and principal characters of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. We then consider the structure and contents of the two works, the religious teachings contained within the stories, and the ways that specific characters have served as both positive and negative role models for the Hindu tradition.

HS104: The Bhagavad-gita

The module on the Bhagavad-gita allows students to make a chapter-by-chapter study of the Gita, highlighting the principal ideas presented by Lord Krishna in his discourse to Arjuna. Here we examine the Gita's understanding of *atma*, *dharma*, *yoga*, *bhakti*, and *moksha*, and note the relationship that exists between its ideas and those expressed in the Upanishads and elsewhere in the Mahabharata. The module will also encourage students to consider the relevance of the Bhagavad-gita's teachings for modern society.

HS105: Readings from the Puranas

This module introduces students to the scale and contents of Puranic literature before moving on to consider selected passages from different Puranas, opening up each text for group discussion. Here we focus in particular on the life of Krishna described in Book ten of the Bhagavata Purana, the glorification of Shiva presented in the Shiva Purana, and the triumph of the Goddess over the forces of evil as revealed in the Devi Mahatmya of the Markandeya Purana.

HS106: The Way of Bhakti

'The Way of Bhakti' looks first at the theology of Hindu monotheism as taught by Vaishnava acharyas such as Madhva and Ramanuja, and the Shaiva Siddhanta as taught by Manikka Vachaka. It then explores the intense expressions of devotion to Krishna, Rama, and Shiva found in the writings of poets such as Chaitanya, Mirabai, and Basabanna.

HS107: Advaita Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga

This module looks in more detail at some of the principal expressions of Hindu religious philosophy. Here we examine the ideas of Shankaracharya, especially his commentary on the Vedanta Sutras, as well as the Samkhya teachings of the Mahabharata and the Samkhya Karika and the Yoga teachings of the Bhagavad-gita, Mahabharata, and Yoga Sutras.

HS108: Hindu Ethics and Lifestyle

This module marks a progression from the previous study of scripture and doctrine and considers the practical issues surrounding the Hindu way of life. Here we examine a range of topics such as war and peace, poverty, diet, alcohol and smoking, parents and children, euthanasia, abortion, and cow protection, and consider the perspectives that Hinduism brings to bear on these moral issues.

HS109: The Hindu Social Structure: Caste and Gender

Students will have the opportunity to explore in more detail the traditional Hindu ideas on caste and gender, returning to texts such as the Manu Smriti, Bhagavad-gita, Ramayana, and Mahabharata to understand their perspectives on these issues. We will also look at the ideas presented by modern reformers such as Vivekananda and Gandhi and consider the ways in which Hindu society should shape itself within the context of modernity.

HS110: Hindu Religious Practice

This module looks at the great temples and pilgrimage sites of India and considers the principles of temple worship in relation to the doctrines of *bhakti*. It also explores the ritual life of Hindu dharma: fire *yajna*, forms of meditation, patterns of worship, and the worship of sacred images.

HS111: Modern Teachers and Modern Trends in Hinduism

In this module we examine in greater detail the lives and teachings of some of the great teachers of modern Hinduism: M. K. Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Sarasvati, Ram Mohan Roy, and Aurobindo Ghose. The module also considers current trends in Hindu thought, including expressions of political Hinduism and Indian nationalism.

HS112: Modern Hindu Movements

Here we examine some of the manifestations of Hindu dharma that have become prominent in the modern era. This will include consideration of organisations such as the Swaminarayan Mission, the Hare Krishna movement, the Ramakrishna Mission, Transcendental Meditation, and the followers of Satya Sai Baba.

Assignments

Written assignments are only required of students seeking accreditation. For these students, a written assignment (essay) of 2,000 words is required for the 10 credits awarded for each module.

Students receive essay titles in the notes to the first class, or can get this information from Nick Sutton or the administrator if required. The last class of each module will be devoted to advice and tutorial discussions in which students can consult tutors on their assignments.

Course tutors will provide written and verbal guidance and support to enable students to successfully complete their written work, and further tips can be found in the University of Wales, Lampeter's Open Learning Theology and Religious Studies Student Handbook.

We advise students to write their essays in the fortnight after each module has ended – while the ideas are still fresh in their minds. The provisional deadline for coursework is two weeks after the last class of each module. Students may still submit work after this deadline, but the award of credits will be delayed.

Essays must be accompanied by the Assignment Cover Sheet (and therefore must be posted rather than sent by email). They will then be marked, moderated, and those who have successfully qualified for the module credits will be notified at the beginning of the next term.

Coursework can be sent directly by post to the following address:

CED Administrator
Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
13–15 Magdalen Street
Oxford, OX1 3AE

Administration

The OCHS CED has a centralised administrative structure provided by the Student-Secretaries, designated students in each class who act as administrators for that particular class. Student-Secretaries give out registration forms and bursary forms, keep a register of attendance, collect completed forms and payments, and can answer many of the questions that students have. They are the first port of call for general queries.

Students are also welcome to contact the CED Director on academic matters, the CED Administrator on administrative matters, and the CED Financial Administrator for financial questions.

Contact details are available at the end of this document.

Tutors and teaching

Each module is taught by qualified Higher Education staff of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. The main staff are committed educators specialising in the field. The Centre also hosts scholars from around the world specialising in Hindu Studies, who may deliver guest teaching on occasion.

In addition, students are welcome to attend lectures and seminars (and use the library) at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in Oxford. See www.ochs.org.uk for information on these.

Study resources and skills

It is the student's responsibility to obtain the books required for in-depth study. We will also do our best to facilitate this.

For students who submit work and register for modules, association with the University of Wales, Lampeter, offers further resources including a student card and use of academic libraries. See the University of Wales, Lampeter, Open Learning Theology and Religious Student Handbook for details of these.

Every module ends with a class devoted to summarising the module, preparing for essays, and discussing relevant study skills. This is a chance to ask for advice and guidance in your work, and it should be used as a valuable resource both for first hand consultations on your coursework, and general comprehension and appreciation of the course.

Booklist

The following list is a selection of basic introductory and primary texts which would form a useful library for the course. A full list of books relating to all of the modules is available from the Administrator and CED Director. The editions of classic texts given below are not the only translations available, and students are welcome to work from different editions as a useful exercise in understanding the issues and methods surrounding textual study.

Introductory texts

- Brockington, J. *The Sacred Thread* (Edinburgh University Press, 1996)
Flood, G. *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge University Press, 1996)
Fuller, C. J. *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton University Press, 1992)
Knott, K. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 1998)
Lipner, J. *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Routledge, 1994)
Coward H., Lipner J., and Young K. *Hindu Ethics* (State University of New York, Press 1989)
Dasgupta, S. *A History of Indian Philosophy* (vol. 3 and 4) (Cambridge University Press, 1985)
Eck, D. *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Columbia University Press, 1998)

Primary texts

- Easwaran, *The Upanishads* (Nilgiri Press, 2006)
Johnson, W. J. *The Bhagavad-gita* (Oxford World's Classics 2004)
Narayan, R. K. *The Mahabharata* (Penguin Classics, 2001)
Narayan, R. K. *The Ramayana* (Penguin Classics, 1993)
O'Flaherty W. *The Rig Veda* (Penguin Classics, 1981)
Olivelle, P. *The Law Code of Manu* (Oxford World Classics, 2004)
Dimmitt, C., and Van Buitenen J. A. B. *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Temple University Press, 1978)
Coburn, T. *Encountering the Goddess: Translation of the Devi Mahatmya and Interpretation of its Meaning* (Sri Satguru Press, 1992)

Fees

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is a non-profit institution supported entirely by the goodwill of its patrons. Its mission is to disseminate wider understanding and appreciation of Hindu culture. As such it aims only to cover its costs in making the Hindu Studies courses available, and the fees charged are almost certainly the lowest for any such Higher Education course.

As a consequence, the fee structure varies according to the needs of each centre, but fees have been maintained at £60 per module, with a bursary system in operation to ensure that no one is prevented from joining the course for financial reasons.

Contact us

Students' first port of call to make enquiries concerned with administration of CED, to acquire and submit application forms, or to make payments, should be the designated Student-Secretary for each Centre.

Students may also contact the OCHS CED staff directly.

For matters of an administrative nature, such as enrolment and submission of coursework, students should contact:

The CED Administrator
Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
13–15 Magdalen Street
Oxford, OX1 3AE
Phone: 01865 304300
Fax: 01865 304301
Email: jfrazier@ochs.org.uk

For matters concerning payment of fees students should contact:

The CED Financial Administrator
Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
13–15 Magdalen Street
Oxford, OX1 3AE
Phone: 01865 304300
Fax: 01865 304301
Email: secretary@ochs.org.uk

For matters concerning the teaching and learning or academic content of the course please contact

The Academic Director
Dr Nicholas Sutton
37 Cotton Lane
Moseley
Birmingham
B13 9SB
Phone: 0121 689 4612
Email: nsutton@ochs.org.uk

Regularly updated information concerning the course is also available from the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies website: www.ochs.org.uk.