COM 180S
Palaces of the Gods: Texts and Temples in India

COM 198/RST 198/MESA 198
Directed Study

Sunday, July 6–Wednesday, Aug 6
Summer Abroad in India

Sites Covered:
Chennai, Pondicherry, Mamallapuram, Kancipuram, Chidambaram, Swamimalai and the Kumbakonam-Tanjavur Region

Class Sessions:
9:30–12:00 and 2:00–4:00 pm

Archana Venkatesan
avernkatesan@ucdavis.edu
Mobile in India: 988-493-8311

French Institute of Pondicherry
http://www.ifpindia.org/
Mr. M. Kannan
cannan.m@ifpindia.org

Course Description
This course looks at the relationship between the text and image in India, with a particular focus on Tamil Nadu. The course will pay attention to the development of the “verbal icon” in medieval Indian literature, and the ways in which iconographic forms of gods, kings and devotees, in textual forms were realized in visual form. Approaches will include historical method and emic aesthetic theories. In addition, the course will discuss issues of contemporary relevance, including (but not limited to), the politics of heritage and the influence of tourism and globalization on local artisanal communities. Issues concerning museums, preservation and temples as archaeological sites will be key components of this class. These issues will be raised and discussed on site, at the temples we study and visit, and in the homes of the hereditary artisans and performers that we meet.

Course Goals
1. To familiarize students with the major genres of Indian poetry in which the verbal icon dominates
2. To engage students in emic ways of analyzing texts and images
3. To enable students to identify and analyze the major iconographic forms of the most important deities, devotees and kings in India.
4. To engage students with viewing practices in India
5. To think critically about notions of “heritage” “tradition” and “authenticity”

**Required Texts**

   
   *This book can be purchased online or will be available at the University bookstore*

2. A Course Reader which you will receive on the orientation day

   *** Please see the end of this document for a list of recommended readings. ****

**Course Requirements**

The most important requirements for this class are that you show up and are open-minded. Your classroom is set amidst the monuments of South India, and your texts are these monuments. In order to get the most out of this experience, be prepared to be challenged—academically and culturally.

I expect you to attend all classes at the French Institute (unless you are ill or otherwise indisposed) and all field-trips. You will have plenty of time to explore on your own. However, class-time is precisely that, and you are expected to be prepared to discuss, question, and participate what you read, experience and encounter.

The formal requirements are as follows. *These requirements apply to COM 180S.*

1. **Daily Travel Journal (20%)**

   Use this journal to reflect on the material that you read in class, the monuments that we study, and your experiences traveling and living in India. Feel free to include photographs, diagrams, poems or any other way of articulating your experiences.

2. **Site Reports and Class Presentations (40%)**

   Students will be required to write a **700-word** site report after every field trip. The report will require you to reflect on at least **one monument per field-trip**. The site-report will require you to use your readings as well as your experiences at the site. You will present the gist of the site report in class, and will contribute to a retrospective discussion of the site based on your write-up. Please see the syllabus for due-dates on site-reports.

   If you do not have a computer in India, the site-reports may be hand-written. Further details on the site-report will be provided during the first day of class.

3. **Final Exam (20%)**

   You will have a final exam in this class. It will be cumulative. This exam will be written exam. Students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of
   
   A. sites
   B. identification of poetry
   C. grasp of the assigned course readings

   Further details on the final exam will be provided during the first day of class.

4. **Attendance and Participation (20%)**
Attendance and participation are weighted heavily, because this course will not succeed without your
regular attendance and enthusiastic participation. You are required to be in class and to engage with the
material. I understand that much of this material is new to you. Do not let this intimidate you into
silence. The class will be livelier and your experience richer when you bring all your questions to class.
No question is too trivial or insignificant.

The above four components will constitute your grade for the graded portion of the course (COM 180S)

5. Final Project

Your final project will be a reflection on the interface of text and image in India. This reflection can take
any form—it can be photo-essay, a travelogue, a narrative poem. I encourage you to be creative. This
final essay is a means for you to express what you learned about texts, images and visual culture in India.

The above (Final Project) will constitute your P/NP grade for the second portion of the course
(COM/RST/MESA 198).

Further details will be provided on the first day of class.

READING AND CLASS SCHEDULE

This is a tentative schedule, and is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.
All assigned readings must be completed prior to the class session for which it is assigned.

WEEK 1: Arrival

Sunday, July 6

On-site orientation in Chennai
Departure for Pondicherry

Monday, July 7

• Morning Session:
Walking Tour of Pondicherry
Introductions and Orientation at the French Institute

• Afternoon Session:
No Class. Recover From Jet Lag!!

Tuesday, July 8

• Morning Session:
Introduction to South India (Lecture)
Topics covered: Brief History of South India

• Afternoon Session:


Wednesday, July 9

• Morning Session:
Introduction to Hinduism (Lecture)
Topics covered: The gods of Hinduism
• **Afternoon Session:**

**Thursday, July 10**

• **Morning Session:**
  Introduction to Hinduism (Lecture)
  Topics covered: Hindu philosophy

• **Afternoon Session:**

**Friday, July 11**

• **Morning Session:**
  2. Selected translations from *Grow Long, Blessed Night.*

• **Afternoon Session**

(Read the article below prior to the Sunday field-trip!!!)


**Saturday, July 12**

• **Morning Session**

  Field Trip: Mamallapuram

  Halt: Mamallapuram

• **Evening Session**

  Visit to DaksinaChitra

**Recommended Reading:**

**Sunday, July 13**

Field Trip to Kāñcipuram

Return to Pondicherry
Monday, July 14

- **Morning Session:**
  Work on Site-reports

- **Afternoon Session:**
  1. Discussion of Māmallapuram/Kāñcīpuram Site Reports

*Week 2: Temples and Temple Worship: Chidambaram and Swamimalai*

Tuesday, July 15

- **Morning Session:**
  1. Introduction to Bhakti (Lecture and Discussion)

- **Afternoon Session:**

  **Site-reports due by 5pm**

Wednesday, July 16

- **Morning Session:**

- **Afternoon Session:**
  1. Directed Group Study: Poems to Śiva on Nataraja (Reading on the divine body in *Tevaram*)

Thursday, July 17

- **Morning Session:**

*Afternoon Session*
1. Lecture: On Temple Conduct

**Friday, July 18**

*Field Trip Chitampar, Cīrkāli and Svāmimalai**

**Friday Halt: Swamimalai**

**Saturday, July 19**

- **Morning Session:**
  The Bronze Casting Workshop

**Sunday, July 20**

- **Morning Session:**
  Kumbakonam: Nagesvara Temple. Return to Pondicherry

**Monday, July 21**

**Free Day!**

*Please work on your site reports. We will discuss them on Tuesday!* 

**Week 3: Political and Religious Hubs: Tanjavur and Tiruvarur**

**Tuesday, July 22**

- **Morning Session:**
  Discussion of Site-Reports

- **Afternoon Session**

  Library Work: Read in preparation for Tuesday’s class

**Wednesday, July 23**

- **Morning Session**


- **Afternoon Session:**

  On the Tanjavur Region/Continue discussion of morning session materials

**Thursday, July 24**

- **Morning Session**

  1. George Michell and Indira Peterson. From *One Thousand Years of the Great Temple.* (pages assigned on site)

- **Afternoon Session**

  1. George Michell and Indira Peterson. From *One Thousand Years of the Great Temple.* (pages assigned on site)
Friday, July 25

• **Morning Session**


• **Afternoon Session**

No class. Prepare for Tanjavur

Saturday, July 26

Travel to Tanjavur

Evening Trip: The Great Temple

Sunday, July 27

• **Morning Field Trip**

  The Great Temple

• **Evening**

Lecture by Dr. P.Perumal
(Topic: Sarasvati Mahal Library: Preservation and Heritage)

Monday, July 28

*Morning Field Trip*

Visit to Sarasvati Mahal Library

*Evening Field Trip*

Tanjavur Bronze Museum
Discussion: Viewing Practices (Museum vs. Temple)

**Week 4: Looking Back**

Tuesday, July 29

• **Morning**

  1. Tiruvarur

On Site Discussion: Preservation of the Mucukunda Murals by INTACH

• **Evening**

  1. Tiruvaiyaru

On Site Discussion: Performance of caste-identity, music and nationalism
Wednesday, July 30

Return to Pondicherry.
En route halt in Darasuram

Thursday, July 31

Free Day.
Work on Site Reports

Friday, Aug 1

- No Morning Session
- Afternoon Session
  1. Discussions of Site-Reports

Saturday, Aug 2

- Morning Session
  1. Field Trip to Auroville
- Afternoon Session
  No afternoon session.

Sunday, Aug 3

- Field trip to Tranquebar (day-trip)

Monday, Aug 4

Free-Day

Tuesday, Aug 5

- Morning
  1. Final Exam
- No Evening Session

Farewells

Wednesday, Aug 6

Departure for Chennai/Airport

Your final projects are due on or before August 8th.
**Recommended Reading: General Hinduism**

All the books listed below are part of the UC system library catalogues. Even if a title is not available at a particular campus library, it can be ordered through Interlibrary loan.


   This book is a brief and accessible introduction to Hinduism. It doesn't cover everything, but it gives you enough of an overview that you won't be completely lost when you get to India.

   This book is available used on Amazon (starting at $7.76)


   While many of Sastri's theoretical assumptions about the history of South India have been challenged in recent scholarship, this is still the book that one refers to for a sweeping history of the region. As we will primarily be dealing with the Pallava and Cola periods, you can focus on this section of the book.

   Used and new copies are available on Amazon (starting at $ 20.23).


   This is a detailed, thorough, sophisticated introduction to Hinduism. It is ideally suited to someone with a working knowledge of Hinduism.

   Used and new copies are available on Amazon (starting at $22.51)


   A basic introduction to some of the major Hindu myths from the Sanskrit.

   Used and new copies are available on Amazon (starting at $10.88)

5. *Ramayana*

   There are several versions available. Prose versions include, R.K.Narayan and William Buck. Swami Venkatesananda’s version is a paraphrase of the Sanskrit *Ramayana* chapters.

6. *Mahabharata*

   There are several prose English versions available, including a fairly lively retelling by William Buck.

7. *Bhagavad Gita*

   This is one of the most translated books from India. Translated versions (in English) include: Swami Prabhavananda, Christopher Isherwood and Aldous Huxley, Barbara Stoler Miller, George Thompson, Juan Mascaro and Simon Brodbeck, Laurie Patton, Graham M.Schweig.

   All of the above are available from Amazon.

**Recommended Reading: Poetry**


**Recommended Reading: Travel Writing and Novels**

Please find below a list of wonderful books on India to help you prepare for your travel. Some of these books are travel writing and some are famous novels in English. Most (if not all) will get into the spirit of what it’s like to live and travel in India.

**Travel Writing**

Nancy Shield. *Birds of Passage: Henrietta Clive’s Travels in South India 1798-1801*.
David Dean Shulman. *Spring, Heat, Rains: A South Indian Diary*.
Geoffrey Moorhouse: *Om: An Indian Pilgrimage*.

**Novels (translated and/or in English)**

*This is just a sample of novels about/set in India.*

U.R Ananthamurthy. *Samskara* (Kannada, but available in English translation).
Kalki. *Ponniyin Selvan* (Tamil, but available in English translation).
Premchand. *Sevasadan* (Hindi, but available in English translation).
Rajam Aiyer. *Kamalamba Charitram* (Tamil, but available in English translation).
Ruswa. *Umrao Jan Ada* (Urdu, but available in English translation).
Yann Martel. *Life of Pi*.
Raja Rao. *Kanthapura*.
Rohinton Mistry. *A Fine Balance*.
Anjana Appachana. *Listening Now*.

**Films**

Michael Wood’s six part series. *The Story of India*.

**Popular Films**

*Parthiban Kanavu* (Tamil)
*Raja Raja Cholan* (Tamil)
*Tiruvilayyadal* (Tamil)
*Tillana Mohanambal* (Tamil)
Vanji Kottai Valiban (Tamil)
Enthiran (Tamil)
Lagaan (Hindi)
Umrao Jan Ada (Rekha version, Hindi)
Parineeta (Hindi)
Mughal-e-Azam (Hindi)
Pakeeza (Hindi)
Guide (Hindi)
Sholay (Hindi)
Utsav (Hindi)