



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# Spiritual Transformation through Hindu Texts

Course Code	G_BATRSAL091
Credits	6
Period	P1
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	dr. P.K. Bindlish
Examiner	dr. P.K. Bindlish
Teaching Staff	dr. P.K. Bindlish
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Seminar

## Course Objective

### Introduction

This course is designed to provide a foundational knowledge of key Hindu texts and traditions, including an overview of Hindu epistemology, Sanskrit and relevant concepts for hermeneutics. Participants will also learn about categories of texts, including Śruti and Smṛti, and explore themes from selected illustrations from various scriptures, including Vedas, Itihāsa, Purāṇas, Kāvya, Darśanas, Śāstras, and Samhitas.

Participants will be introduced to the importance of Sanskrit in the study of Hindu texts and traditions, as well as the various categories of texts and their religious significance. In the course, we will also discuss the relevance of studying Hindu texts and traditions for understanding Indian culture, philosophy, and spirituality. This course will provide a background of Hindu texts and traditions, tracing their origins and development over time and significance in Indian society, culture, and politics.

### General aim

The course aims to provide participants with a foundational understanding of key Hindu texts and traditions, including their religious and spiritual significance. Participants will gain an appreciation for the complexity and diversity of Hindu texts and traditions.

### Learning goals

The course aims to achieve the following learning goals

The participants will be able to define key terms and concepts related to Hindu texts and traditions

The participants understand the philosophical background of Hinduism

The participants will be able to identify and analyze categories of Hindu texts

The participants will be able to analyze themes from selected illustrations from Hindu scriptures.

The participants develop an understanding of the relevance of Hindu texts and traditions in Indian culture, philosophy, and spirituality

The participants learn how to approach indigenous research with Hindu worldviews

The participants acquire knowledge and understanding of the complex content, conceptual development and religious role and significance of texts in Hinduism.

The participants will be able to communicate their understanding of the complex content and conceptual development of Hindu texts and traditions through effective academic writing and presentations.

## Course Content

## Course topics

In this course we will therefore focus on the following themes:

Unit 1: Introduction to Hindu epistemology

Hindu worldview

Key ontological classifications and philosophical concepts of existence and living

Knowledge trinity: Knowable, Knowledge and Knower

Unit 2: Knowable, Knowledge and Ways of Knowing:

Ways of knowing (pramāṇa)

Organization of Knowledge in texts and traditions;

Classifications of Hindu Texts (Śruti, revelation texts; and Smṛti, other non-revelation texts; Other Śāstras and Samhitas)

Oral traditions and their inbuilt preserving mechanisms

Hindu hermeneutic traditions - Typical structure of a Śāstra (text) and its tradition

Unit 3: Knower

Issue of non-translatables (for e.g. Īśvara - God, ātmā - soul, dharma - religion)

Preparation for Hindu epistemology and importance of embodied knowing

Samṣkrta: overview; its relevance to the study of Hindu texts and traditions; basic concepts - samṣkrta paricaya - varṇamālā, maheśvara sūtra, śabda rūpa vibhakti (subanta), dhātu rūpa (tiṅganta), lakāra dṛśā, saṃdhi, samāsa, kāraka, vācyama (karṭ, karma, bhāva), pratyaya, avyaya, upasarga, saṃkhyā;

Unit 4: Vedas and Vedāngas

Vedas: Introduction to the four Vedas (R̥gveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaveda), their significance and organization.

Vedic literature: Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, and Upaniṣad; their main themes and teachings.

Vedic language and grammar: the role of Samṣkrta in the Vedas and its unique features.

Vedic rituals and sacrifices: the significance of fire rituals, and other Vedic practices. (Optional - a demonstration of a vedic fire ritual (yajña) to provide an experiential understanding of vedic practices.)

Excerpts from the Vedas, Upaniṣad, and Brāhmaṇa to illustrate key themes and teachings.

Vedāngas: an introduction, their significance, and interrelationship with the Vedas.

Śikṣā: the study of vedic phonetics, pronunciation, and meter.

Vyākaraṇa: the study of Samṣkrta grammar and syntax.

Nirukta: the study of vedic etymology and semantics.

Chandas: the study of vedic poetic meter and rhythm. Examples of Vedic hymns in different meters to illustrate their role in vedic literature.

Jyotiṣa: the study of Vedic astronomy and astrology. A discussion of its application in vedic ritual and its significance in Hindu astrology. The influence of Vedic astrology (Jyotisha) on Indian culture and society

Unit 5: Itihāsa and Puranas

Itihāsa: Definition, origin, and significance.

The Rāmāyana: An overview of the story, characters, and themes.

Yoga-vāsiṣṭham (Vasiṣṭha Rāmāyana): An overview of the story, characters, and themes.

The Mahābhārata: An overview of the story, characters, and themes.

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā: An overview of its importance, teachings, and relevance in contemporary society.

Purāṇa: An introduction and their significance.

Nārada Purāṇa: An overview of the story, characters, and themes.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa): An overview of the story, characters, and themes.

Itihāsa and Purāṇa as sources of knowledge: A critical analysis of their role in shaping Hindu philosophy and worldview; their contemporary relevance.

## Unit 6: Darśanas and Kāvya

Darśanas - Six systems of Indian Philosophy (Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta Darśanas), importance of Darśanas and Kāvya in Hindu Texts and Traditions, Relationship between the six systems

Kāvya - Definition and types of Kāvya, Overview of Saṃskṛta Literature (Major genres and themes), Role of Kāvya in Indian literature and culture, Literary conventions and techniques,

Love, heroism, and moral values in epics and romances

Nature, aesthetics, and symbolism in poetry and drama

Religion, philosophy, and social critique in philosophical works

Comparison with other literary traditions and genres

## Unit 7: Other Śāstras and Samhitas

Dharmaśāstras and their relevance in contemporary society

The relationship between the Arthaśāstra and the Mahābhārata

The significance of the Śilpa Śāstras in Hindu art and architecture

The relationship between Ayurveda and modern medicine

The relevance of the Nāṭya Śāstra in contemporary Indian theater and dance.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

### Methodology

The course will use a blended approach to learning, consisting of synchronous and asynchronous elements. It will include a combination of lectures, discussions, group activities, debates, reading texts, interpretation of text, case studies, reflective writing assignments and experiential practices. Participants will be encouraged to engage in critical thinking, analysis, and reflection in order to develop a deeper understanding of Hindu texts and traditions. They are expected to do self-study, participate actively in class discussions, contribute to group activities, demonstrate their understanding of concepts through presentations and a term paper.

### Method of Assessment

#### Assessment

Flip learning Classroom presentations by the participant (20%). In these flip learning presentations the participant reveals their reflective insight to various specific aspects of Hindu texts and traditions. The participant can also opt for a write-up of about 600 words giving personal reflections on a particular topic related to the content of this module.

The paper (80%). The paper is supposed to discuss a subject of personal interest to the participant and should include some independent research in libraries and / or online. In the paper the participant shows academic writing skills and the ability to make a deeper investigation independently of a particular aspect of Hindu Texts and Traditions. The size of the paper should be within 3000 words.

## Literature

The following texts will be used as sources for this course. Additional articles, videos, and online resources will also be provided to supplement the course materials.

### Unit 1 & 2

Epistemology in Classical Indian Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-india/>

Kapoor, K. (2005). Indian knowledge systems. A. K. Singh (Ed.). Indian Institute of advanced study.

Galewicz, C. (2006). Fourteen Strongholds of Knowledge: On Scholarly Commentaries, Authority, and Power in XIV Century India. *Texts of Power, The Power of the Text: Readings in Textual Authority Across History and Cultures*, 141-164.

Nandram, S. S., Bindlish, P. K., Purohit, H., Joshi, A., & Hingorani, P. (2019). Foundations for social entrepreneurship: An integrative Indian perspective. *Servant Leadership, Social Entrepreneurship and the Will to Serve: Spiritual Foundations and Business Applications*, 161-186.

### Unit 3

Bender, E., & Leidecker, K. F. (1978). *Sanskrit Essentials of Grammar and Language*.

Bindlish, P. K., Nandram, S. S., Gupta, R., & Joshi, A. (2018). How to prepare the researcher for indigenous context: an integrative approach. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 17(2), 221-237.

### Unit 4

Dalal, R. (2014). *The Vedas: An introduction to Hinduism's sacred texts*. Penguin UK.

Jamison, S. W., & Brereton, J. P. (Eds.). (2014). *The Rigveda: the earliest religious poetry of India (Vol. 1)*. South Asia Research.

Olivelle P (1992), *The Samnyasa Upanisads: Hindu scriptures on asceticism and renunciation*. Oxford University Press.

Frawley, D. (1990). *Astrology of the Seers: A Guide to Hindu/Vedic Astrology*.

### Unit 5

Nadkarni, M. V. (2019). *The Bhagavad-gita for the modern reader: History, interpretations and philosophy*. Taylor & Francis.

Bhawuk, D. (2011). *Spirituality and Indian psychology: lessons from the Bhagavad-Gita*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Bindlish, P. K., & Nandram, S. S. (2019). Manifestation of worldview in a metaphor. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 23(3), 464-474.

### Unit 6

Bijlert, V.A. van. *Nyaya Sutra*. Unpublished excerpts

Dasti, M., & Phillips, S. (2017). *The Nyaya-sutra: Selections with early commentaries*. Hackett Publishing.

Holloway, M. R. (1963). "Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey," by Chandradhar Sharma.

Hamilton, S. (2001). *Indian philosophy: A very short introduction (Vol. 48)*. OUP Oxford.

Larson, G. J. (2001). *Classical Sāṃkhya: An interpretation of its history and meaning*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ..

### Unit 7

Frawley, D. (2005). *Ayurveda and the mind: The healing of consciousness*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ..

Hiltebeitel, A. (2011). Dharma: Its early history in law, religion, and narrative. Oxford University Press.

Michell, G. (1988). The Hindu temple: An introduction to its meaning and forms. University of Chicago Press.

Olivelle, P., & Davis, D. R. (Eds.). (2018). Hindu Law: A New History of Dharmaśāstra. Oxford University Press.

## Additional Information Target Audience

This module is part of the Minor Hindu Spirituality. Religion and Society.

In addition to the students who have opted for the minor(s) in which this course is included, students from following discipline may find this course useful:

- Religious studies & Theology

- Psychology

- Business

- Students who have followed the previous modules of the Minor on Buddhism, Yoga and Spirituality or related minor(s)

## Explanation Canvas

- Some reading material which is free from copyrights will be made available through Canvas.

- The students are encouraged to use the discussion forum of Canvas for posing questions and for interaction with the teacher and with each other.

- Presentations must be uploaded on the Canvas before presenting in the class.

## Recommended background knowledge

It may help to study some introduction to Hinduism.