



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](#).

Spirituality and Sustainability

Course Code	G_BATRSAL088
Credits	6
Period	P2
Course Level	300
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	dr. P.K. Bindlish
Examiner	dr. P.K. Bindlish
Teaching Staff	dr. G. Joshi, dr. P.K. Bindlish, dr. R. Geaquinto Rocha MSc BA, prof. dr. S.S. Nandram
Teaching method(s)	Seminar, Lecture

Course Objective

General aim

The general aim of this course is to provide participants with an understanding of the relationship between spirituality and sustainability, as well as the role of spirituality in shaping individual and collective well-being.

Learning goals

The course aims to achieve the following learning goals:

- To promote an analytical understanding of the Hindu worldview. This includes to understand the foundational concepts of spirituality, mind, and self from Hindu psychology in Vedānta, Upaniṣads, and Śrīmadbhagavadgītā.
- Practice comparing ideas about reality and life in the Western context through informed judgments and conceptualisation through the Hindu worldview.
- Participants will acquire knowledge to further look for Hindu wisdom in the context of sustainability and green practices.
- The participant learns to apply the gained knowledge and insight to trace personal intellectual and spiritual development. Further, adopts moral leadership (coexisting with nature).
- To examine the relationship between spirituality and sustainability, with a focus on Hindu beliefs and practices towards sustainable development goals (UN-SDGs), Fourth industrial revolution, and Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity (VUCA) challenges.
- To reflect on alternative approaches and new paradigms for the society at both micro and macro levels.
- To develop self-awareness and discover potential towards achieving sustainable well-being for all.
- Develop academic skills, intellectual courage, and the academic self-confidence needed to appreciate the Hindu way of life. To be able to communicate the newly acquired knowledge, insight and applications in the form of academically adequate writing and presentation.

Course Content

Introduction

The engagement with nature is an integral part of Hindu worldview. In this course, we aim to take the participants through the Hindu worldview's view on the sacredness of nature and peaceful co-existence with nature. This will be illustrated with the help of selected Hindu texts, traditions, beliefs and practices. This course provides an overview of spirituality and its potential to contribute towards sustainability. The course introduces foundational concepts of spirituality, mind and self, primarily from Hindu psychology in Vedānta, Upaniṣads and Śrīmadbhagavadgītā. The course focuses on gaining conceptual knowledge relevant to reflect upon contemporary environment issues from the lens of the Hindu Worldview.

This course provides a background of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its potential impact on the human mind, society, and the environment. It examines the relationship between spirituality and sustainability, with a focus on Hindu beliefs and practices towards sustainable development goals (UN-SDGs), Fourth industrial revolution, and Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity (VUCA) challenges. It discusses the role of spirituality in addressing

the challenges posed by VUCA and the need for a sustainable future.

Participants will reflect on the human mindset as one of the major factors behind global risks and challenges and significance of studying the human mind and spirituality in addressing contemporary issues. Subsequently, they will examine alternative approaches and new paradigms for the society at both micro and macro levels. The course introduces participants to the concept of spirituality, its different dimensions, and its role in shaping individual and collective well-being. It aims to support participants in developing self-awareness, discovering their potential towards achieving sustainable well-being for all.

The course engages with spiritual ecology which has potential to address contemporary environmental issues holistically for a flourishing economy. The spiritual practices can give insight and future directions for solutions both at the individual level as well as at the leadership and corporation level oriented towards Green Economy. Several multinational companies and companies globally seem to be open to spiritual practices. The course will make the participant familiar with Hindu views on spiritual engagement with nature, or spiritual ecology to nurture the thinking towards potential application to sustainability and Green Economy.

Course topics

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

Unit 1: Introduction to Spirituality

- Understanding Spirituality: Definitions, Dimensions
- Significance of spirituality in contemporary world
- Mind and Self in Spirituality
- Spirituality and sustainability

Unit 2: Understanding the human mind and self

- Role of the mind in creating global risks and challenges
- Mind and self in Hindu psychology: Introduction to Vedānta, Upaniṣads and Śrīmadbhagavadgītā; Analysis of concepts of mind and self in Hindu psychology; Implications of Hindu psychology on spiritual practices and sustainability

Unit 3: Spirituality and the World Around Us

- The Concept of Interconnectedness
- Understanding connectedness: Living and Non-living; Nature and the Artificial
- Significance of spiritual practices in fostering connectedness
- Case studies on spiritual practices and sustainability

Unit 4: Spirituality and Sustainable Development Goals

- Overview of UN-SDGs
- Hindu Worldviews: Dharma beyond Religion; Overview of Hindu beliefs and practices related to sustainability
- Examination of potential implications of Hindu beliefs and practices on contemporary issues such as UN-SDGs and VUCA challenges
- Coping with Contextual Challenges

Unit 5: Spirituality and VUCA Challenges

- Issues, Challenges and Opportunities - Impact of previous Industrial Revolutions; Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity (VUCA) challenges;
- Fourth Industrial Revolution: Mega Trends and Issues; Extending Digital Technologies; Reforming the Physical World; Altering the Human Being
- Significance of spiritual practices in addressing these challenges
- Alternative Approaches and New Paradigms for businesses and society

Unit 6: Spirituality in Business and Society

- Managing VUCA through Integrative Hindu Worldviews: Towards Meaningful Holistic Fulfillment; Cultural Coping mechanisms; Selected Communication strategies and practices
- Micro and Macro Approaches
- Future of Work: Work-Life Balance and Work Relationships
- Business Objectives and Sustainability

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

1. 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 spirituality and society. 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.
2. 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 spirituality and society. The size of the paper should be within 3000 words.

Literature

Literature

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

Schwab, K. (2017). *The fourth industrial revolution*. Currency.

Schwab, K., & Davis, N. (2018). *Shaping the future of the fourth industrial revolution*. Currency.

Servaes, J. (Ed.). (2017). *Sustainable development goals in the Asian context*.

Nandram, S. S., & Bindlish, P. K. (2017). *Managing VUCA through integrative self-management* (p. 338). Berlin: Springer.

Selected Readings from : <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdgbookclub/>

Kapto, S. (2019). Layers of politics and power struggles in the SDG indicators process. *Global Policy*, 10, 134-136.

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

Nandram, S., Bindlish, P. K., & Keizer, N. (2018). Integrative Intelligence for a Trust-based Worldview for Business. *The European Business Review* (London, 2005), 2018(September), 38-43.

Nandram, S., & Bindlish, P. K. (2018). What if Business Revisits Pavlov's Kennel? The Case of Buurtzorg Nederland. *The European Financial Review*, 57-60.

Naess, A. (2008). *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson and Bill Duvall (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 82.

Caradonna, J. L. (2014). *Sustainability: A history*. Oxford University Press.

Reference scriptures (Hindu Texts):

Johnson, W.J. (1994). *The Bhagavad Gita*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Olivelle, P. (2008). *Upanishads. A new translation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nikhilananda, S. (1952). *The Upanishads: A New Translation*.

Sankaracharya, S. (1993). Aparokshanubhuti:(Self Realization). Advaita Ashrama (A publication branch of Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math).

Useful Reading (Optional, most of them are common to all course in this minor):

Aiyer, S. (1935). Evolution of Hindu moral ideals. Calcutta University.
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.237098>

Bartley, C. (2015). An Introduction to Indian Philosophy: Hindu and Buddhist Ideas from Original Sources. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bhaskarananda, S. (1994). The essentials of Hinduism: A comprehensive overview of the world's oldest religion. Viveka Press.

Bijlert, V. A. van. A sociological model of Hinduism. Unpublished syllabus

Board of Trustees (1916). Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text-book of Hindu Religion and Ethics., Central Hindu College. (<https://archive.org/details/dli.csl.8138>)

Chatterjee, S., & Datta, D. (2016). An introduction to Indian philosophy. Motilal Banarsidass.

Embree, A. T., & de Bary, W. T. (Eds.). (2011). The Hindu tradition: Readings in oriental thought. Vintage.

Flood, G. (Ed.). (2008). The blackwell companion to Hinduism. John Wiley & Sons.

Flood, G. D. (1996). An introduction to Hinduism. Cambridge University Press.

Frazier, J. (2017). Hindu worldviews: theories of self, ritual and reality. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Klostermaier, K. K. (2007). A survey of Hinduism. Suny Press.

Knott, K. (2016). Hinduism: A very short introduction (Vol. 5). Oxford University Press.

Michell G. (2000), Hindu Art and Architecture. Thames & Hudson.

Radhakrishnan, S. (1927). The Hindu view of life.

Additional Information Target Audience

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

In addition to the students who ave 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.

