

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION

COURSE OUTLINE – Fall 2017

Course RELS 373
Embodied Texts & Disembodied Selves: An Introduction to Sikhism
Time MWF 2-3 PM
Instructor Harjeet Grewal
Office Hours Wednesday 12-2 PM, or by appointment.
Office SS502
E-mail
Telephone 403-220-5612
Required Text(s):

(1) *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed*
Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair
Bloomsbury Academic (2013)
ISBN: 1441102310

(2) *The Sikhs of the Punjab*
J.S. Grewal
Cambridge (2003)
ISBN: 0521637643

Optional Text(s):

Shackle, Christopher and Arvind-pal Singh Mandair. *Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Selections from the Sikh Scriptures*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Oberoi, Harjot Singh. *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Course Description:

Sikhism is one of the world's most recent religious systems, with its beginnings in the late fifteenth century. It is a vibrant and expanding faith that has transplanted itself into many multicultural systems across the globe. In Canada, in just a century, Sikhs have settled, acculturated, and are active across a broad spectrum of the nation's society, culture, and politics. The recent phenomenon of migration and diaspora has presented unique opportunities and challenges for the tradition and nations they inhabit. It also provides a context to know about Sikhism outside of its beginnings in the Panjab region of South Asia.

This course approaches Sikhism as a living undulating religious system that is shaped by keystone texts and responds to contingent historical events through altering interpretations of those texts. We will examine how texts and events shape cultural and intellectual approaches to Sikhism. First conceptual frameworks, ideas about cosmology, textuality, and notions of religious phenomenon will be introduced. Next, we consider central practices, rituals, and constructions of religious space. This is followed by a brief history from the lineage of Ten Sikh-Gurus to the contemporary global reality of Sikhism. In doing so, we will connect contingent events to political, tribal, ethno-

nationalism, and religious trends. This allow us to consider how translation, at times, works against Gurū Nānak thought by attempting to codify key ideas to create a system of identification.

**Online elements for this course:
(if any)**

Readings that are not from the required texts will be accessed through D2L.

Student will submit a weekly response to the assigned readings which identifies the key argument of the reading and poses a discussion in school.

Core Competencies:

This course teaches students to speak about key historical moments in the history of the Sikh tradition. They will also familiarize themselves with important concepts, practices, and rituals that are important to Sikhs. Students will learn to critically and ethically assess religious phenomenon and texts from the Sikh tradition.

Students will learn how to read and assess discourse by identifying key arguments to consider how they are supported. These skills will be applied by writing a critical analysis of a topic within the confines of the course material as their final written assignment.

Course Requirements:

Date	Assessment	Weight (%)
	Facilitate Discussion	15%
Weekly	Reading Responses	15%
TBA	Reading Spot Quiz 1	2.5%
TBA	Reading Spot Quiz 2	2.5%
October 11	Annotated Bibliography	15%
October 30	Exam 1	15%
November 27	Research Paper	20%
December 8	Exam 2	15%

This course will not have a Registrar-scheduled final examination

Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme, usually used within the Department of Classics and Religion:

A+	100 - 96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Policy with regard to missed assignments/assessments:

Late assignments will be docked one letter grade for each day they are late. A week after the due date, assignments will no longer be accepted.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

Timely regular attendance, participation in discussion, and completion of course assessments. Adherence to the Electronic Device Policy. Respectful attitude toward alternate perspectives. Ensuring safe, open, and hospitable classroom environment for fellow classmates to express opinions and ask questions during class.

Electronic Device Policy:

Students will be able to use their laptops to take notes and to access readings during discussion sessions.

Out of respect for classmates and to reduce distraction, it will be expected that students refrain from accessing websites or applications that are not necessary for lecture or discussion.

Syllabus:

A complete syllabus will be made available the first week of class.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar (section K, which can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>). If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor, or librarian staff.

Student Accommodations

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library.

Freedom of Information and Privacy

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP): <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act indicates that assignments given by you to your course instructor will remain confidential unless otherwise stated before submission. The assignment cannot be returned to anyone else without your express permission. Similarly, any information about yourself that you share with your course instructor will not be given to anyone else without your permission. As one consequence, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number on each subsequent page.

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at arts1@ucalgary.ca.

Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints. Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

Safewalk

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.

Lecture and Readings Schedule:

Week and Themes	Class Dates	Lecture Topic Covered	Readings for Discussion
1 General Scope of Course	Sept. 11	Introduction Syllabus and Discussions	No Readings
	Sept. 13	Ideas and Thought	No Readings
	Sept. 15	Politics of Religion-Making: Brief History of an Idea of “Religion”	In class reading & Prep for First Response
2 Textuality, Language, Thought	Sept. 18	Central Texts and Textuality in Sikhism: A Sacred Language?	SGFP pp.1-7 Secularism & Religion-Making pp. 3, 4, 16-24
	Sept. 20	Cosmology & Language as a Living Thing	Dutton, Michael (2005). “The Trick of Words” pp. 89, 98-109
	Sept. 22	Central Ideas in Gursikhī	Godlove, Terry (2010). <i>Religion in General, not in Particular.</i>
3 The Gurū Lineage Part I	Sept. 25	Historicizing the Sikh Religion: Narrative of Development	Grewal. <i>TSP</i> . Chapter One, “Turko-Afghan Rule” pp. 9-27
	Sept. 27	Gurū Nānak and Gurū Angad	<i>TSP</i> . “Introduction” pp. 1-8 <i>SGFP</i> pp. 17-27
	Sept. 29	Gurū Amardās to Gurū Arjan	Singh Pashaura (2006). <i>The Life and Work of Guru Arjan</i> . pp. 64-83 <i>TSP</i> 1 st paragraph of p. 42 and pp.47-57
4 The Gurū Lineage Part II	Oct. 2	Gurū Hargobind to Guru Harkrishan	<i>SGFP</i> pp.47-51 <i>TSP</i> pp. 62-69
	Oct. 4	Gurū Tegh Bahādur	<i>SGFP</i> pp. 51-54 <i>TSP</i> 69-73
	Oct. 6	Gurū Gobind Singh and Creating the Khālsā	<i>SGFP</i> pp. 55-69
5 The Khālsā & Predestined Rule?	Oct. 9	THANKSGIVING MONDAY (NO CLASS)	No Class = No Readings.
	Oct 11	The Khāslā and the East India Company: A Connected History	<i>TSP</i> pp. 82-98 <i>SGFP</i> pp. 69-72
	Oct. 13	Ranjīt Singh’s Kingdom: Rule of Khālsa	Singh, Nikky (2005). Chp 1 “Pregnant text and the Conception of the Khalsa”, <i>Birth of the Khalsa: A Feminist Re-memory of Sikh Identity</i> . pp. 1-34
6 Popular Practices, Rite, and Rituals	Oct. 16	Nām-simran, Recitative Text-Speech, and the Sangat	McLeod, W.H. (1980). <i>Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janamsākhī</i> . pp. 237-239 & 248-267.
	Oct. 18	Life-cycle Rituals, Sant Veneration, and Popular Belief	<i>SGFP</i> 107-130

	Oct. 20	Light & attributing wordfulness: nām, sabd, joti, and hukam in bānī Last Lecture Covered on Exam #1	LaBrack, Bruce. “Sants and the Sant Tradition in the Context of Overseas Sikh Communities”, in <i>The Sants: Studies in the Devotional Tradition of India</i> . pp.265-279
7 Constructions of Space, Objects, and Relics	Oct. 23	Constructing Spaces and Institutions for teaching Gursikhī	Murphy, Anne (2012). <i>The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition</i> . pp.20-40
	Oct. 25	Texts and Language: Objects Subjecting Space	Murphy, Anne (2012). <i>The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition</i> . pp. 69-94
	Oct. 27	Figurative Relics: Narrating Cognitive Breaks	Murphy, Anne (2012). <i>The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition</i> . pp. 40-66
8 Bodily Symbolology: Gendering through Archetypes	Oct. 30	Exam #1 Covers Sept 11. To Oct. 20 Inclusive	Richard D. Mann (2016). Media framing and the myth of religious violence: The othering of Sikhs in The Times of India , Sikh Formations, 12:2-3, 120-141
	Nov 1	Religion as Symbology of the Body Archetypes, Identity, and the Body in Sikhism	Kristina Myrvold (2016) Sketches of Sikhs in the 1880s, Sikh Formations, 12:1, 1-27
	Nov. 3	Embodied Symbols: Masculating the Feminine	
9 Religious Violence: The Embrace of Martial Race Theory	Nov. 6	Martial Race and Creating Colonial Armies	Gavin Rand & Kim A. Wagner (2012) Recruiting the ‘martial races’: identities and military service in colonial India, Patterns of Prejudice, 46:3-4, 232-254
	Nov. 8	A Slow Embrace and Blowback: Ethnonationalism and Fundamentalism	Gurharpal Singh & Giorgio Shani (2015) Rethinking Sikh Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century, Sikh Formations, 11:3, 271-282
	Nov. 10	FALL READING BREAK – NO CLASS	
10 Equality: Views on Caste, Class, and Communalism	Nov. 13	FALL READING BREAK – NO CLASS	
	Nov. 15	Equality and Oneness: Difference and Identity I will accept drafts of Research Paper for my comments.	Gurnam Singh (2006) Sikhism’s Emancipatory Discourses: Some critical perspectives, Sikh Formations, 2:2, 135-151
	Nov. 17	Caste, Class, and Communalism: Forms of Distantiation	Himadri Banerjee (2010) Sikh Dalits From North-East India: Experiences From Shillong and Guwahati, Sikh Formations, 6:1, 3-30

11 Traditions of Learning & Intellection	Nov. 20	Schools of Gursikhī & Their Contentions Commented Drafts Returned for Re-write	Birinder Pal Singh (2016): Mazhabi Sikhs of Shillong and Guwahati (India), Sikh Formations, 12:1,1-20
	Nov. 22	Gursikhī as Method	Janice Protopapas (2011) Kirtan Chaunki: Affect, Embodiment and Memory, Sikh Formations, 7:2, 339-364
	Nov. 24	Performing Gursikhī as Text-speech: Kīrtan and Kathā	Gurminder Kaur Bhogal (2017) Listening to female voices in Sikh kirtan, Sikh Formations, 13:1-2, 48-77
12 Domination by Translation	Nov. 27	Translation and Colonizing a Sikh Mentality	Balbinder Singh Bhogal (2015). The Facts of Colonial Modernity and the Story of Sikhism, Sikh Formations, 11:1-2, 243-265.
	Nov. 29	Translation, Religion, and Anglophone Consciousness	Puninder Singh (2014) Translation between Linguistic Worlds, Sikh Formations, 10:3, 299-312
	Dec. 1	Translated Texts and Salvation	Bhogal, Balbinder. Ghostly Disorientations: Translating the Adi Granth as the Guru Granth, Sikh Formations, 3:1, 13-31
13 Ontological Language and Relational Thought in Gursikhī	Dec. 4	Ontological Language and Loss	Shackle & Mandair (2005). Introduction, in <i>Teachings of the Sikh Gurus</i> . SGFP pp. 159-172
	Dec 6	Thinking about textuality in Gursikhī Consequences of Living Language and Truth	SGFP pp. 172-187
	Dec 8	Exam 2 – From Oct 12 to Dec 6 Inclusive	

Suggested Essay Topics:

As the title indicates, I have suggested topics. If you would like to come up with your own or modify one below, I would welcome that. Please confer with me so that I may assist in that if you so choose.

1. What are Gurū Nānak's central teachings? Why were they important during his lifetime? What is their relevance in multicultural societies like Canada?
2. State and describe some important institutions in modern Sikhism. What are their functions? To what extent are they relevant and operative in societies at large? What impact could they have if they can enter the broader public sphere?
3. Why has Sikh Studies been a divisive and controversial field of study? Does this reflect a strand of anti-intellectualism amongst groups of Sikhs? If so, why is this prevalent? Illustrate using examples of scholars from the field of Sikh Studies, their works and reception from a vocal antagonist from amongst the "Sikh community."
4. How can religion and gursikhī define one another? What are the ramifications of such a relational, or mutually reconfiguring theoretical exercise?
5. How did Ranjīt Singh establish the Kingdom of Lāhore? To what extent can this be thought of as a period of "Sikh rule"? Is it possible to disambiguate the misl zamīndārs and the Khālsā army? Does let us analyze the rule of Ranjīt Singh differently?
6. What is the role of the *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* in everyday Sikh practice? How do Sikhs today perceive this text? How does Sikh clergy understand this text? Can we define this as scripture? Feel free to visit a local gurdwārā to interview people for this essay. The essay should include engagement with written studies of the *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* as well.
7. What are the resonances that Sikhism has with other religions? To other revealed religions? Are these resemblances natural to Gursikhī or a product of the act of comparison? You may select two religions to facilitate this discussion.
8. Write a critical book review. Please discuss with the instructor beforehand.
9. Consider the following statement: "Gurū Gobind Singh gave the Sikhs a new vision of their religion and transformed it into a political religion" alongside the following: "Gurū Gobind Singh followed a logical sequence of contingent engagement with the teachings of Gurū Nānak. Thus, there is no appreciable difference between their thinking and no significant alteration to the relation of the political and the religion in Gursikhī during Gobind Singh's lifetime."

10. What are the impacts and legacies of colonialism on the modern Sikh community? Consider things like the British administration of Panjāb, British notions of socio-religious reform, and martial race theory in creating a Sikh self-understanding.

Describe the Sikh concept of God through a study of Gurū Nānak's *japjī*. What type of conception is this, if any?

11. Describe the Sikh concept of God through a study of Gurū Gobind's *jāp sāhib*. What type of conception is this, if any?
12. What was the role of prominent early Sikhs, like Bhāi Gurdās, regarding the Sikh Gurus' teachings? To what extent is this reflected in Bhāi Gurdās's writings?
13. Were the Sikh Gurus opposed to caste? Where can this be seen in Sikh practices or the writings of the Sikh Gurus? How effective was their opposition? What did it mean to create a societal change toward greater equality? Does thinking about caste as *varan* or *zāt* alter one's position on this topic appreciably?
14. If we consider that it is difficult to construct a single notion of the term "Sikh," albeit a historically changing or evolving notion, how do we speak of equality in Sikhism? Can there be ethical positions that are Sikh on issues like human rights, government, gender, abortion, GMO, etc. without the need resort to an anthropocentric "ethnic" notion of the sociocultural group? Give examples.
15. Gurdwara project. Go to a local Gurdwara during one of the times when the sangat regularly gathers - early morning before sunrise, evenings before sunset, or on a Sunday morning. Select a topic of interest from what you have observed to research and analyze. Read about the issue you are interested. Follow-up by interviewing the members of the Gurdwara's committee, clergy, and sangat.
16. Select a piece of Sikh art, music, or visual culture for analysis using some of the ideas brought forth in class and readings you conduct. What is the role of imagery in the Sikh tradition? How does this relate to the teachings of the Gurus?
17. How did Ranjīt Singh establish the Kingdom of Lāhore? To what extent can this be thought of as a period of "Sikh rule"? Is it possible to disambiguate the misl zamīndārs and the Khālsā army? Does let us analyze the rule of Ranjīt Singh differently?
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21. Consider the following statement: “Gurū Gobind Singh gave the Sikhs a new vision of their religion and transformed it into a political religion” alongside the following: “Gurū Gobind Singh followed a logical sequence of contingent engagement with the teachings of Gurū Nānak. Thus, there is no appreciable difference between their thinking and no significant alteration to the relation of the political and the religion in Gursikhī during Gobind Singh’s lifetime.”
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23. Describe the Sikh concept of God through a study of Gurū Nānak's *japjī*. What type of conception is this, if any?
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