

COM 156
Rāmāyaṇa
MWF
10-10:50 AM
108 Hoagland

Instructor: Archana Venkatesan

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Office Hours: *Tuesday*: 11 a.m.-12 noon; *Wednesday*: 3-4 p.m. and by appointment*

* I am usually in my office during the day on teaching days (MWF). If you are unable to make my office hours, please feel free to stop by my office. If I am in my office *and* my office door is open, I am happy to talk with you. You are also welcome to make an appointment to meet with me.

I. Course Description

This course examines *Rāmāyaṇa* story traditions with a primary focus on its many literary and oral variants.

II. Course Texts

All texts are required. You **must** have a copy of the text(s) with you in class.

1. *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. Trans. Arshia Sattar. Penguin Classics, 2000.
2. Paula Richman. ed. *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.
3. Mandakranta Bose. Ed. *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
4. Pudumaipittan. *Narada Ramyaṇam*. Trans. S.Ganesan.
5. A course reader: Pick-up at **Davis Textbooks** (236 A Street) Ph: 530-758-2311.

III. Breakdown of Course Requirements

1. Discussion Questions (25%)
2. Two Essays (10% and 15%)
3. Final Essay (30%)
4. Participation and Student Professionalism (20%)

IV. Course Requirements

1. Discussion Questions (25%)

Students will post brief commentary and discussion questions for every class session. These summaries (100-200 words) and questions must be posted by 8:00 pm on the day prior to class session (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday by 8:00 pm). All students must read through the comments and the questions before class session, and students must bring copies of the same to class. If there is more than one assigned source for the class session, you need respond to only one. In other words, you only have to post one response *per* class session.

You will receive a grade midway through the quarter that reflects your contributions on the forum. This will be worth 10% of the allotted 25% of the grade. The remaining 15% will be allotted at the end of the quarter.

I will look for the following elements in your contributions:

- a. Postings that reflect an engagement with the source(s)
- b. Postings that demonstrate a comprehensive and cumulative understanding of the material. By this I mean that your forum postings reflect what we read and discuss in class. In a sense, I expect you to build your own narrative about the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the course develops.
- c. Postings that engage (in a courteous, respectful and professional manner) the thoughts and contributions of your peers.
- d. Your ability to engage with the postings in class discussions.
- e. Posting clear, well-thought out responses. Don't post something at the last minute. Consider what it is you want to say about the text. You may use the forum posting to also ask questions about material that you did not understand, or arguments in secondary sources that you wish to critique.

All students may miss **four** forum contributions for the entire quarter—two in the first half and two in the latter half of the quarter. You will lose 1 point for every posting missed beyond the four that are allowed.

There is a forum created on Smartsite for this purpose, and I will create specific threads for each topic.

V. Essays (25%)

In your first essay (10%), you will develop one of your forum postings using a secondary source. (500 words)

Your second essay (15%) will further develop your first essay from a comparative perspective. (1000 words)

All students will be expected to meet with at least once before the papers are due.

Details on the paper topics will be posted on Smartsite in time for your essay.

VI. Final Paper (30%)

Your final essay will engage secondary sources and an alternate *The Rāmāyaṇa* we have discussed in class. There is no outside research required for this class. You may also develop the ideas of your second paper. Further details on the final paper will be posted on Smartsite.

I will post excerpts/short stories based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* on Smartsite. You may use these sources for your final paper.

All students will be expected to meet with me at least once before the final papers are due.

VII. Participation and Student Professionalism (20%)

Attendance is not mandatory in this class, but it is expected. This is a discussion-heavy (and reading heavy) course, so it is imperative that you are present in class and are prepared.

I expect you to come to class having completed the assigned readings. Come prepared to ask and answer questions, and to discuss them. I do not want you to be passive learners, who simply listen to me. I encourage you to engage both the material and me in dialogue. This is what will make for a fruitful and productive class.

In order to facilitate discussions and questions, we will begin discussion on the Smartsite forum.

During class time, I ask that you place your cell-phones on silent. Please do not text, facebook, or engage in other kinds of social media in class.

You are required to bring your readings to class.

VIII. Plagiarism and Cheating

I will report any form of plagiarism and cheating to the SJA immediately. So, please do not engage in plagiarism and/or cheating. If you have doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please talk to me. Purchasing papers online, having someone else write your papers, copying off a website, and using someone else's research without proper acknowledgment and/or citation are some of the most common forms of plagiarism.

IX. Grading

A+	98-100	B+	85-90	C+	70-75	D+	55-60
A	95-98	B	80-85	C	65-70	D	50-55
A-	90-95	B-	75-80	C-	60-65	D-	45-50
						F	45 and below

X. Extra Credit Options

I will announce extra credit opportunities in class and via email. You may earn up to 6 extra credit points by attending lectures or participating in events. In order to receive the credit, you must attend the announced event and submit a short written statement about it. Each extra credit assignment is worth 2 points.

These brief write-ups are due 1 week after the event, and must be submitted to me in class as a hard copy.

XI. Assignment Due Dates

- a. Discussion posts on the Smartsite forum every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday by 8:00 p.m. Students may miss four posts over the course of the quarter without penalty.
- b. First Essay: Tuesday, May 1 by 12 noon as a hard copy in the box outside my office, 813 Sproul
- c. Second Essay: Tuesday, May 22 by 12 noon as a hard copy in the box outside my office, 813 Sproul
- d. Final Essay, Tuesday June 12 by 12 noon.

Reading Schedule

Readings are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Readings are to be completed **prior** to the date for which they are assigned.

Week 1: Introduction

M: April 2

Introductions

W: April 4

1. Arshia Sattar. "Introduction." *The Rāmāyaṇa*. pp. xvii-lviii

F: April 6

1. A.K.Ramanujan. "Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation." *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Traditions in South Asia*. pp. 22-49.

Week 2: Beginnings

M: April 9

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Childhood." pp. 1-98
2. Sally Sutherland Goldman. "Gendered Narratives: Gender, Space, and Narrative Structures in Vālmīki's *Bālakāṇḍa*." *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. pp. 47-86.

W: April 11

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Ayodhya." pp. 99-191

F: April 13

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Ayodhya" pp. 192-226

Week 3: Wilderness

M: April 16

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Wilderness." pp. 227-303

W: April 18

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Wilderness." pp. 227-303 [Discussion Contd.]

F: April 20

1. Hart, George and Hank Heifetz. Trans and ed. "*The Forest Book of The Rāmāyaṇa of Kampaṇ*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, Press, 1988. pp. 84-116. **(Reader)**

2. Kathleen Erndl. "The Mutilation of Śūrpanakhā." *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. pp. 67-88.

Week 4: In Between Lands

M: April 23

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Kiṣkindha." pp. 303-402.

W: April 25

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Kiṣkindha." pp. 303-402.

F: April 27

1. Goldman, Robert P. "Resisting Rāma: Dharmic Debates on Gender and Hierarchy and the Work of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. pp. 19-46.

Week 5: Lanka

M: April 30

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Beauty." pp. 403-508

Paper 1 due Tuesday, May 1 by 12 noon

W: May 2

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "Beauty." pp. 403-508 [contd.]

F: May 4

1. Goldman, Sally J. Sutherland. "The Voice of Sītā in Vālmīki's *Sundarakāṇḍa*." *Questioning Rāmāyaṇas: A South Asian Tradition*. Ed. Paula Richman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp. 223-238. (**Reader**)
2. Rao, Narayana Velecheru. "A Rāmāyaṇa of Their Own: Women's Oral Traditions in Telugu" *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. pp. 114-136.

Week 6: War

M: May 7

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "War." pp.509-658

W: May 9

1. Arshia Sattar. Trans. "War." pp.509-658 [Discussion contd.]
2. Sundaram, P.S. "Yuddha Kāṇḍam-Part II" pp. 337-351.

F: May 11

1. Hill, W.D.P. Trans. "Lanka." "The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rāma." (Tulasi Dās's *Rāmacaritamānasa*). Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1952. pp. 414-423.
2. Hess, Linda. "Lovers' Doubts: Questioning the Tulsi *Rāmāyaṇa*." *Questioning Rāmāyaṇas*. Ed. Paula Richman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp.25-47.

Week 7: The Never-ending Story

M: May 14

1. Arshia Sattar. "Epilogue."
2. Lutgendorf, Philip. "Hanumān's Adventures Underground: The Narrative Logic of a *Rāmāyaṇa* 'Interpolation.'" *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. pp. 149-163.

W: May 16

1. Seely, Clinton. Trans. Michael Madhusudhan Dutt. "Canton 9: Funeral Rites." *The Slaying of Meghanāda*. pp. 218-230
2. Seely, Clinton. "The Raja's New Clothes: Redressing Ravana in the *Meghanādavadha Kāvya*." *Many Rāmāyaṇas*.

F: May 18

1. Pudumaipittan. *Narada Ramayaṇam*
2. Paula Richman. "E.V.Rāmaswami's Reading of the *Rāmāyaṇa*." *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. ed. Paula Richman. pp. 175-201.

Week 8: More Retellings and Variants

M: May 21

1. Lutgendorf, Philip. "Dining out at Lake Pampa: The Shabari Episode in Multiple *Rāmāyaṇas*." *Questioning Rāmāyaṇas: A South Asian Tradition*. Ed. Paula Richman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp. 119-136.

Paper 2 due, Tuesday May 22 by 12 noon

W: May 23

1. Lutgendorf, Philip. "All in the Raghu Family: A Video Epic in Cultural Context." *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*. eds. Lawrence A. Babb and Susan S. Wadley. New Delhi: Motilal Banarasisdass, 1997. pp. 217-253. **(Reader)**

F: May 25

1. Velecheru Narayana Rao. "When Does Sītā Cease to be Sītā? Notes toward a Cultural Grammar of Indian Narratives." *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. pp. 219-242.
2. Film: Sita Sings the Blues

Week 9: The Rāmāyaṇa and the Political Imagination

M: May 28 (Memorial Day)

No class

W: May 30

1. Pollock, Sheldon. "The Rāmāyaṇa and the Political Imagination." *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol 52. No. 2 (May 1993) pp. 261-297.

F: June 1

1. Shulman, David Dean. "Divine Order and Divine Evil in the Tamil Tale of Rāma." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol 38. No. 4 (Aug 1979) pp. 651-669.
2. Shulman, David. "The Testing of Sītā in Kampan's *IRāmavataram*." *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. pp. 89-113.

Week 10: Reinvention and Beyond

M: June 4

1. Sears, Laurie. "Mysticism and Islam in Javanese Rāmāyaṇa Tales." *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. ed. Mandakranta Bose. pp. 275-292.
2. Vasudha Narayanan. "The Rāmāyaṇa and its Muslim Interpreters." *Questioning Rāmāyaṇas*. pp. 265-281.

W: June 6

1. Review and discussion of final papers

Final Paper Due: June 12th by noon