

# Introduction to Indian Philosophy

Summer 2023

Sonam Kachru, Religious Studies

*Session B on M,W at 9 am - 12:15 pm*

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## Course Description

Philosophy in India has a venerable history: analytically demanding and conceptually innovative; rigorous, daring, theoretically exciting and potentially transformative—its ongoing story involves some of the oldest traditions of thought in the world while somehow remaining cutting edge: Is there consciousness in deep sleep? Do humans admit of distinctions of natural kinds (as some have maintained with categories such as “caste” (cf. with “race”)? Are absences a true part of the furniture of the world and can we *see* them? Are we nothing but bodies? Can it be possibly true that ultimately nothing exists? What, if anything, makes literary language distinctive? By exploring questions such as these, this course introduces students to some of the practices, concepts, and arguments necessary to take up further study in this exciting subject. No background knowledge is presupposed, though the virtues of curiosity and delight in puzzling out problems are invaluable. At the end of the course, students will also get to use a philosophy textbook prepared for premodern students in a premodern Indian Buddhist university. Throughout, they will gain access to concepts and practices that will enable them to pursue further work in this area or other relevant areas of contemporary philosophical debate.

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## Assignments

Participation in Class	10 x 1% = 10%
Weekly Pro / Con Argument Summaries	5 x 15% = 75%
Contribution to our Culminating Debate	15%

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### *More Details on Assignments*

The Weekly Pro/ Con Argument Summary is a one-page document summarizing an argument for and against any position discussed that week. The argument is prepared in either contemporary standard form or in the classical format of an anumāna, an argument from signs, favored in Indian debate traditions.

The Culminating Debate is a classroom exercise in which some students will pair off into teams to debate two issues: is there philosophy in premodern India, and a second issue drawn from classroom discussions and voted on by the class. While some students will serve on pro / con teams, other

students will serve as the jury—we will recapitulate the structure of a premodern public philosophical debate in India.

- Note: *there will be no unexcused absences permitted.*

### Academic honesty

Any work submitted as part of your evaluation in this course, at any stage of the writing process, must be your own; else, document the source properly. Which is to say, avoid plagiarism. Please familiarize yourself with the University policies here: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism>; and here: <http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/wr-instructor-resources/addressing-academic-integrity-and-plagiarism>. Ignorance of these policies will not be considered a valid excuse.

Note: ChatGPT is not trustworthy when it comes to surveying or producing texts on Indian philosophy. There is just not enough high quality work to draw on. It's very apparent if you do try to make use of it. *Don't use it.*

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

### Week One

#### Monday

The shocking thesis: Can it be True that Nothing Exists?

##### *Part One*

- Nāgārjuna's *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (translation by Bhattacharya)
- Listen: [It All Depends: Nagarjuna on Emptiness](#) (from the History of Philosophy w/o any Gaps)

##### *Part Two*

- Allison Aitken, "No Unity, No Problem" (pages 1-11)

#### Wednesday

*Part One: There is No Evident Self*

- Listen: <https://historyofphilosophy.net/upanisads-self>
- Read: Sean Smith, "The Negation of Self in Indian Buddhist Philosophy"

*Part Two: Body Snatching and Thought Experiments from Antiquity*

- Jing Huang & Jonardon Ganeri, "Is This Me? A Story about Personal Identity..."
- Jonardon Ganeri, "Emergentisms: Ancient and Modern"

## Week Two

### Monday

*Part One: Can women experience sexual pleasure?*

- Kamasutra (transl. by Doniger and Kakar), pp. (2.1.10-2.1.35) 30-36; 3; 7-16.
- Laura Desmond, *Disciplining Pleasure*, 112-149.

*Part Two: Is there pleasure?*

- From Chapter Six of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Metaphysics*: Did the Buddha mean to deny the existence and value of pleasure?

### Wednesday

*Part One: Draupadi and Agnes Callard on Anger*

- Draupadi (Mahabharata From the Book of the Assembly Hall); van Buitenen: pages 139-154,
- Agnes Callard, [The Philosophy of Anger](#)

*Part Two: Antidotes to Anger*

- Emily McRae, *Equanimity*
- Maria Heim, *The Phenomenology of Love*

## Week Three

### Monday

Readings TBD: On figuralism, infinite sentences, and impossible sentences

### Wednesday

*Part One*

- James Reich, "Ānandavardhana and the Metaphysics of Literature" and "Mahīmbhaṭṭha on Literary Being: The Pragmatic Use of Illusion"

*Part Two: On Injunctions, Rules, and Verbal Force*

- Andrew Ollett, "What is bhāvanā?"

## Week Four

### Monday

*Part One: Caste (and Race) and universals*

- Selections from Eltschinger, Caste and Buddhist Philosophy
- Debate with Assalāyana, [Assalāyanasutta](#) (from the Pali Buddhist Canon)

*Part Two: Gender and Beyond*

- Zwilling and Sweet, “Like a City Ablaze”: The Third Sex and the Creation of Sexuality”

### Wednesday

*Part One: For and Against a God as a Philosophical Concern*

- Medathithi, on verse 4 of Manu’s Laws
- Richard Hayes, “Principled Atheism”
- Mark Siderits, “On Parts / Wholes

*Part Two: Concepts of Agency: Gods and Premodern Automata*

- Aleksandar Uskakov, Chapter Four, *The Philosophy of the Brahmasutra*, pages 89-105.
- You Zhou, “Oneself as Another”

## Week Five

### Monday

When Mind and Consciousness Came Apart

*Part One: The Argument for Reflexivity Reconstructed*

- Dreyfus and Thompson, “Asian Perspectives: Indian Theories of Mind,” *Buddhist Epistemology*, 101-109.
- Anna Giustina, “A Defense of Inner Awareness: The Memory Argument Revisited.” (Very technical!)

*Part Two: The Argument Recovered*

- A textbook presentation of the classical argument for reflexivity from Mokṣakāragupta’s *Tarkabhāṣā*

## **Wednesday**

### *Part One*

Evan Thompson, “Dreamless Sleep, The Embodied Mind, and Consciousness”

### *Part Two*

Anand Jayprakash Vaidya, Purushottama Bilimoria, Jaysankar L. Shaw, “Absence: An Indo-Analytic Inquiry”