

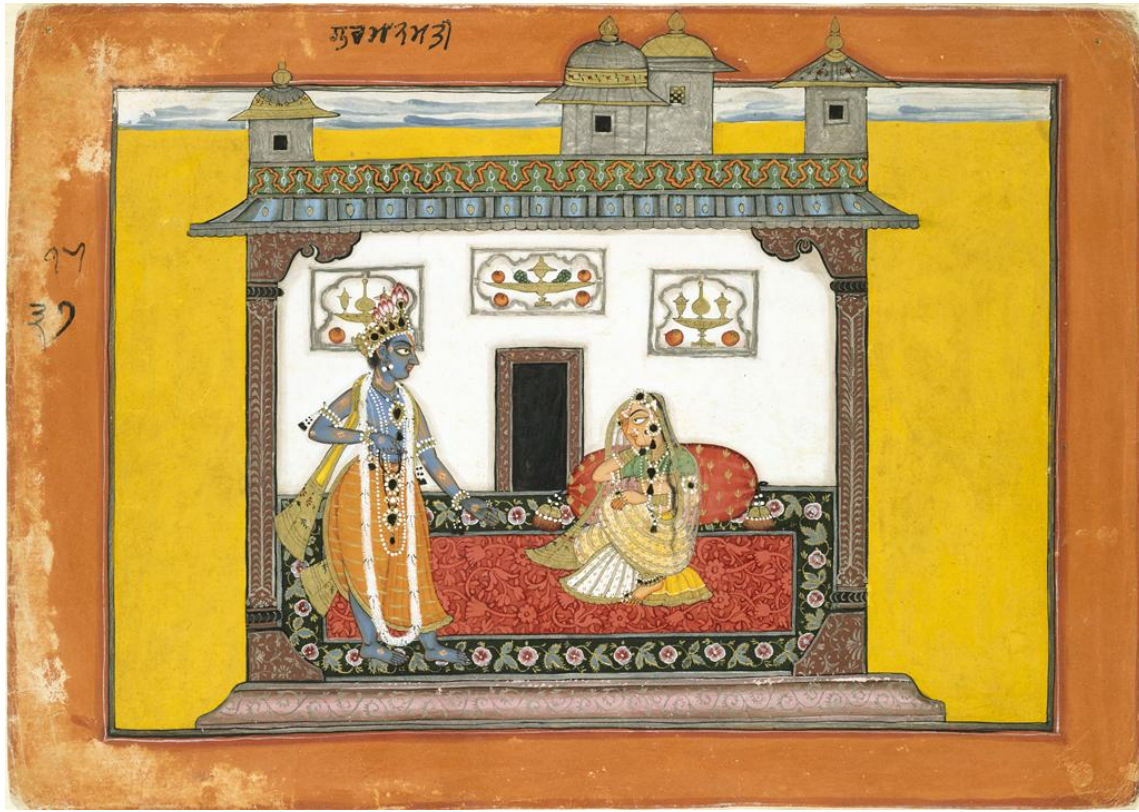
Sense and Sensuality in South Asia

General Education Arts and Letters, ARLT 100g, 35257R

TTh 3:30-4:50 THH 214

Updated January 7 2010

Professor James McHugh



Various sophisticated perfumes are celebrated as eminent inflamers of lust. The best lover should be carefully instructed at the start from perfume texts...

The Complete Man-about-town (a medieval Indian Buddhist text on erotics)

The technologies of pleasure in medieval India are unsurpassed by those of any other culture. The virtuous pursuit of wealth and pleasure was a religiously sanctioned aim of life, especially for the elite: for royalty, international merchants, and so on. Numerous technical manuals of how to experience pleasure were produced, and the literature of the period, itself a source of pleasure, abounds in descriptions of lavish and sophisticated sensuality. The pursuit of pleasure was not restricted to humans, but also gods enshrined in beautiful temples were served with many of these very same delights, and literary representations of the divine, both in heavens and on earth, abound in sensual descriptions. The lifestyle of nuns, monks, and other ascetics was also often defined as a perfect negation of particular luxuries.

In this course, we will explore this culture of pleasure, divine and secular in part by examining the senses, and also by a sustained reading of selected great works of Sanskrit literature.

To set the scene, we shall first examine the nature of the senses in Indian philosophical thought, and also read texts that explain the theory of the goals of human life. We will then move on to examine the arts of pleasure as they apply to the senses one by one, considering the role of the senses in religion. For each sense we will study one or more of the cultivated pleasures appropriate to that sense.

Students will also study the basics of the traditional understanding of Sanskrit poetry, thus learning to appreciate South Asian Sanskrit literature as many educated South Asians would have done in the past. Using primary sources in translation (prose, poems, epics, and story literature), we will explore both the technical literature of pleasure, as well as other genres of Indian literature that describe (approvingly and disapprovingly) the pleasures of the senses. We will relate the technology of pleasure to the nature of ritual, the life of the ascetic, and also to many genres of religious text. Wherever possible, we will also explore this sophisticated culture with our own senses - we will study some South Asian art, listen to devotional music, and so forth, and also consider theoretically the ways in which exploring cultural phenomena through the senses differs from exploring them via texts.

Throughout the course we will also bear in mind larger questions, such as the ways in which western scholarship has depicted India historically; the role of gender and social class in Indian discourses of pleasure; the historical impact of the international trade in luxury commodities; the relation between the categories of ethics and aesthetics, and so on. Students will also at all times *compare* the manner in which the diverse religious traditions of South Asia articulated their identity in the manner they approached the senses.

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Bibliography:

Ashvaghosha, *Life of the Buddha*, trans. Patrick Olivelle, Clay Sanskrit Library.
 -Literary biography of the Buddha.

Jayadeva. *Gitagovinda: Love Songs of Radha and Krishna*, Clay Sanskrit Library.
 -Very sensuous poetic poem on the love between the Hindu god Krishna and the cowherdess Radha.

Valmiki, *Ramayana III, The Forest*, trans. Sheldon Pollock, Clay Sanskrit Library.
 -One of the most dramatic parts of this important literary Indian epic.

Vatsyayana, *Kamasutra*, trans. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, Oxford University Press.
 -The *Kamasutra* is about far more than “sex”, and vital to understanding the contexts of many of the other texts, especially as regards the senses.

Vidyakara, *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyakara’s Treasury*, ed. and trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
 -Excellent anthology and translations of sophisticated classical poetry.

Assignments

Approximately one third of each class will be given over to discussion.. You will write three papers in total for this class. Early in the semester, you will write one short paper based on an assignment I will provide. On the basis of my comments you will revise this paper, and also add more source material from texts we have since covered. Before rewriting this paper, the students will be required to attend one (friendly) “supervision” with me to discuss their work. The final paper will be longer, and will be based on a topic and argument of your choice that I have approved. There will also be a final examination. Grades will be assigned as follows:

10%	Class preparation and attendance
10%	Discussions in class – note that this is by definition linked to your attendance.
10%	Paper 1 (four pages)
15%	Paper 2 (six pages)
25%	Paper 3 (eight pages)
15%	Take-home midterm exam
15%	Final exam (Tues May 11, 2-4)

Attendance policy

Your absence diminishes the quality of our discussions and the atmosphere of the class in general. One absence will be excused without affecting your preparation grade. If you have a good reason to be absent more than once please notify me of your situation by email.

Midterm and final exams

This class is required to have a midterm and final exam. You will be able to take the midterm exam home to complete. The exam will be distributed in class and will be due at the beginning of the following class period. Please do not be late to class that day; exams turned in late will be marked down. All midterm exams must be submitted in hard copy and in person by you. An emailed exam will not count as having been submitted.

You are encouraged to use all your own notes and your own books in preparing your own answers. However: all materials you use must be your own and be written individually by you alone. You may not work with other people on the exam. All the university policies against cheating and plagiarism apply.

The final exam will cover all the materials on the syllabus. It will be a timed, written essay exam. Prior to the exam, I will give you an example of the type of questions I will ask, together with guidelines on how best to approach such questions.

The exam will be held on Tues May 11 at 2-4 pm.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as

early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Use of course materials

In SCampus 2000-2001 (page 91 under Academic Policies) there is a policy which reads: "Notes or recordings made by students based on a university class or lecture may only be made for purposes of individual or group study, or for other non-commercial purposes.... This restriction also applies to any information distributed, disseminated or in any way displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email or otherwise on the Internet, or via any other medium. Actions in violation of this policy constitute a violation of the Student Conduct Code, and may subject an individual or entity to university discipline and/or legal proceedings."

Course Outline:

THE READING LISTED UNDER A CERTAIN CLASS DAY IS THE READING *TO BE DONE FOR THAT CLASS*

Week 1. Introduction to Course

T / Jan 12 Introduction to syllabus and course.

Th / Jan 14 Introduction to Sanskrit and South Asian literature.

Reading on Blackboard:

Selections of a wide variety of early and medieval texts from India: prayers, poems, elephants, medicine etc.

i.e. Read these things on Blackboard prior to this class on Thurs Jan 14th.

Week 2. A Short Introduction to Medieval Indian religion, history, and culture.

T / Jan 19 Introduction to Sanskrit literature.

Reading:

Vidyakara, *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyakara's Treasury*, Introduction 1-31, 44-47.

Reading in class: The poems on the moon (**ALWAYS BRING YOUR READING TO CLASS**)

Th / Jan 21 Traditional South Asian literary and dramatic theory.

Reading for class:

Vidyakara, *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyakara's Treasury*, pp.88 – 117.

Reading in class:

Example of complex suggestion.

Week 3. The Goals of Life in South Asian religions

T / Jan 26 The pleasures of Kama.

Reading:

Kamasutra, 3-21.

Vidyakara, 118 – 120, 138-163

Th / Jan 28 Asceticism and the Dangers of Pleasure.

Reading for class:

Vidyākara, *The Cremation Ground*, pp. 282-284.

Bhagavad Gita selections, *Bodhicaryavatara* selection, (both on Blackboard)

Week 4. The Senses in Indian Philosophy

T / Feb 2 The nature of the senses.

Reading on Blackboard:

Philosophical texts dealing with the senses

Th / Feb 4 The senses in poetry.

Reading:

Vidyākara, 175-185, 200-205, 229-231.

Week 5. Smell I: Perfumes

T / Feb 09 Exploration of perfumes

No reading.

FIRST PAPER DUE (4 PAGES)

Th / Feb 11 Describing God in *kāvya* poetry: *Gita Govinda I*

Reading:

Gita Govinda, pp. 6-77: beginning to end of 10th song.

Natyasastra pp.194-195, in class.

Week 6. Smell II: Stinks

T / Feb 16 Stinks, detachment and impurity.

Reading on Blackboard:

Selections from the Buddhist *Path of Purification*, *The Prince Who Loved Sweetmeats* (a humorous Jain story), *Bhagavata Purana* on the demoness Putana.

Th / Feb 18 *Gita Govinda II.*

Reading:

Gita Govinda, pp. 79-191 (11th song to end)

Kamasutra, 45-48.

Week 7. Taste I – Luxury Food

T / Feb 23 Luxury food and food in literature.

Reading on Blackboard:

Readings on food TBA

Th / Feb 25 *The Life of the Buddha I.*

Reading:

The Life of the Buddha, 3-57.

TAKE HOME MID-TERM DISTRIBUTED

Week 8. Taste 2

T / Mar 2 *The Life of the Buddha II*

Reading:

The Life of the Buddha 61 – 157, 187-207.

Th / Mar 4

No class – trip to restaurant to be arranged instead. Details to be announced.

TAKE HOME MIDTERM DUE IN MY MAILBOX (ACB 130) BY 5:00PM

Week 9. Touch I - Pleasure

T / Mar 9 *The Kamasutra*.

Reading:

Kamasutra, introduction and 28 – 54. Also review the texts we have read so far for the various pleasures of touch.

Th / Mar 11 *The Life of the Buddha III*

Reading:

The Life of the Buddha, 279-413.

Week 10

SPRING BREAK

Week 11. Touch II - Pain

T / Mar 23

Lecture at USC: "Sensing the Gods", details TBA

Th / Mar 25 *The Ramayana I*

Reading:

No reading set, I will present the basic story of the epic using images.

REWRITE OF PAPER ONE DUE (6 PAGES)

Week 12. Sight I

T / Mar 30 Medieval religious art and seeing the divine image.

No reading set – **start working on the Ramayana for Thursday**, it's a *much* lighter read the more poet texts we have looked at so far.

Th / Apr 1 *The Ramayana II*

Reading:

Ramayana, Forest Book, 37-237.

Week 13. Sight II

T / Apr 6 *The Ramayana III*

Reading:

Ramayana, Forest Book, 241-413.

Th / Apr 8 Trip to LACMA South Asian art collection.

No reading set.

Week 14. Hearing I – The Divine Sound

T / Apr 13 Sacred sound

Reading:

Start work on *The Seventy Tales of the Parrot*

Th / Apr 15 Humorous Ethical Story Literature

Reading:

The Seventy Tales of the Parrot, extracts on Blackboard.

Week 15. Hearing II - Music

T / Apr 20 Classical Music and Ragamalas – performance/recording.

Reading:

Start on reading for Thursday.

Th / Apr 22 More things you can do with stories

Reading on Blackboard:

Jain Ramayana Story and *Ocean of Streams of Stories* extract.

Week 16. Review of Class

T / Apr 27 Review Session

Th / Apr 30

CLASS CANCELLED – INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE

MAY 5th 5:00 PM, FINAL PAPER DUE (8 PAGES)

EXAM TUES MAY 11th, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.