



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current Summer Seminars and Institutes guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at

<https://www.neh.gov/program/summer-seminars-and-institutes-higher-education-faculty>

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title:	The Bhagavad Gita: Ancient Poem, Modern Readers
Institution:	Bard College
Project Director:	Richard Davis
Grant Program:	Summer Seminars and Institutes (Seminar for Higher Education Faculty)

The Bhagavad Gita: Ancient Poem, Modern Readers
Summer Seminar for College and University Teachers
Director: Richard H. Davis, Bard College

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The Bhagavad Gita: Ancient Poem, Modern Readers
Summer Seminar for College and University Teachers
Director, Richard H. Davis, Bard College

II. Narrative description

This proposal seeks NEH support for a three-week Summer Seminar for sixteen college and university teachers, to study intensively the Indian religious classic, the *Bhagavad Gita*. It will be held from July 9 to July 27, 2018, on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, CT. The seminar will bring together teachers in many disciplines of the humanities to explore the interpretation and the pedagogy of this ancient text. We will focus both on the work in its original historical context and on how it has continued to live for modern readers. We will consider also how best to integrate this Indian work into general humanities courses in modern American colleges and universities. As director, Richard Davis brings twenty-nine years of undergraduate teaching experience in Asian studies and religious studies to the seminar. His research in the reception history of the *Gita*, supported by a 2011-2012 NEH Fellowship (FB-55821-11), led to a book publication, *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography* (Princeton, 2014), which will serve as a connecting thread throughout the seminar. The collaborative work of participants in this seminar will advance the historical study of this seminal work beyond that initial study.

A. Intellectual rationale

Works break through the boundaries of their own time. They live in centuries, that is, in *great time*, and frequently (with great works always) their lives are more intense and fuller than are their lives within their own time.

(Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 4)

In our era of instant news and information that is both ubiquitous and disposable, it is important to reflect on Ezra Pound's well-known definition of literature: "news that stays news." What enables certain works of the past to break across the boundaries of their own times? How do they engage new listeners and new readers, speak in new languages, and address new

concerns in radically different historical and cultural settings? Are there intrinsic qualities that give some works this longevity? What are the values, the reading and interpretive practices, by which audiences enable themselves to enter into dialogue with a text of another time and place? How do we find common values and understandings with works of others who lived long ago?

A religious work of undoubted longevity, the *Bhagavad Gita* and its history of readings provide an excellent vantage point to consider these broad questions. Composed two millennia ago, it has continued to speak to readers both within its own community of faith and to those outside Hinduism. Readers both in modern India and the United States have looked to the *Gita* and found teachings that address their own questions. The work forms a vital topic in contemporary Indian public discourse, and in the United States it is by far the most often read Hindu text. In “great time,” as the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin would have it, the *Bhagavad Gita* continues to be news. This NEH Summer Seminar will explore how this has come to be and why it continues to be so.

Set on a battlefield just as a great war is about to commence, the *Bhagavad Gita* consists of a seven hundred verse dialogue between the leading warrior on one side, Arjuna, and his charioteer, Krishna. The warrior expresses his deep distress over the upcoming battle, and Krishna persuades him that it will be his duty to fight. In the course of their conversation, the charioteer also reveals himself to be God. Written in the early centuries C.E., this brief Sanskrit work took shape within the massive Indian epic poem *Mahabharata* and offered a profound reflection on the moral, philosophical, and religious issues at the heart of the epic. More broadly, the teachings of the *Gita* sought to encompass the many existing schools of religious thought and practice in classical India, and to offer a new theistic synthesis. The *Bhagavad Gita* offers a concise and attractive point of entry for the study of Hinduism.

Though composed in classical India, the *Bhagavad Gita* has become an indisputably modern work of global range. From its first English rendering in 1785 by the British colonial official Charles Wilkins, the *Gita* has circulated widely throughout the world. It has been translated well over three hundred times into English alone, and into over seventy-five non-Indian languages (as well as every Indian language). American intellectuals as different as Henry David Thoreau, T. S. Eliot, and J. Robert Oppenheimer have engaged deeply with the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna. Thoreau contemplated it during his two-year retreat at Walden Pond, and Oppenheimer quoted it upon viewing the first atomic detonation in New Mexico. For European and American readers, the *Gita* has provided a bridge between the thought-worlds of the West and of India, both past and present. And thanks to its brevity, historical importance, accessible translations, and interpretive challenges, the *Gita* is frequently used as the first, or even the only, primary Hindu text in introductory courses on Hinduism or world religions. In American high school and college classrooms, the *Gita* acts as the bridge upon which students have their first direct encounter with a Hindu religious way of thinking.

Over the past 150 years, the *Bhagavad Gita* has assumed a central role in Indian public discourse. Starting in the late nineteenth century, modern Indian political and religious leaders—Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi, and many others—have taken the *Gita* as an interpretative touchstone to reflect on and articulate their varied agendas. During the Indian battle for freedom from British colonial control, the *Gita* offered applicable teachings. Leaders in the movement viewed it both as a rationale for their struggle and a guide for forming citizens for a new independent nation. The *Gita* continues to play a public role in contemporary India. Controversies have recently erupted over proposals to make the work compulsory reading in public schools, and over a suggestion that it be deemed an

Indian “national treasure.” At the same time, Hindu teachers throughout India and the world regularly utilize the *Gita* as a point of departure for religious explication and commentary.

In this three-week seminar for teachers in the humanities, we will study the *Bhagavad Gita* in two ways, as suggested in the seminar subtitle: Ancient Poem and Modern Readers. First we will look at the *Gita* as a historical work, a religious poem of classical India. We will see how it addressed questions and issues of great concern to its original Hindu audience. Second, we will consider the *Bhagavad Gita* as a modern work. We will consider how modern readers, from the late eighteenth century to the present, have read, interpreted, and acted upon the teachings of this classical Indian poem. And together seminar participants will explore how this work may be brought to life for new modern readers, our own undergraduate students.

Ancient Poem (and Its Contexts): The *Bhagavad Gita* is both a literary unit within the epic *Mahabharata* and a philosophical discourse engaging religious ideas and practices prevalent at its time of composition.

Within the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita* occurs at a particularly fraught moment. Two massive armies have assembled on the plains of Kurukshetra arrayed for battle. The leading warrior on one side, Arjuna, is suddenly struck with overwhelming remorse. His charioteer Krishna must persuade Arjuna to overcome his qualms and to engage in the impending war. The *Gita* follows a dramatic arc from Arjuna’s initial crisis of grief and indecision on the battlefield, through a rising series of teachings exploring issues of morality and religious salvation, leading to an awesome and frightening vision of Krishna’s divine, all-encompassing form, and concluding with Arjuna’s acceptance of Krishna’s teachings and his determination to fulfill his duties as a warrior. What follows in the *Mahabharata* is a war of truly devastating proportions, leading to the death of nearly the entire warrior class of India. Even the

victors never recover from their grief over the catastrophic carnage of battle. Indeed, the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna in the *Gita* is an attempt to provide a new religious and philosophical perspective within which the moral dilemmas and emotional grief of the *Mahabharata* war could be comprehended. As many Indians have argued, the *Gita* places itself at the ideological heart of the *Mahabharata*.

As a philosophical work, the *Bhagavad Gita* is both critical and tolerant. Composed at a period of vigorous intellectual debate, it engages with many of the existing forms of religious belief and practice of its time: Vedic sacrifice, Upanishadic speculation, Samkhya ontology, psychophysical disciplines associated with Yoga, Buddhist and Jain renunciatory movements, advocates of Dharma or social morality, theistic devotional groups, and Carvaka materialism. Throughout the dialogue, Krishna describes, evaluates, and selectively incorporates these other viewpoints. While accepting a plurality of possible spiritual paths, he sets out an innovative synthesis that would prove enormously influential within subsequent Indian religious life.

The *Bhagavad Gita* was read and commented on in medieval India, but this seminar will not cover the medieval commentarial literature in any detail. These commentaries are complex and deal with often-abstruse issues of metaphysics and theology, a subject for Sanskrit specialists.

Modern Readers (and Their Situations): The second half of the seminar will take up the *Bhagavad Gita* as a modern work. A turning point in its life came in 1785 when the East India Company in London published Charles Wilkins's translation, *The Bhagavat-geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon*. This was the first direct translation of a classical Sanskrit work into a Western language, and it caused a sensation among the European intelligentsia of the time. From this point on, the *Gita* circulated widely in translations throughout Europe and North America. In nineteenth and twentieth century South Asia, the *Gita* was also translated into every

vernacular Indian language, and it was disseminated in printed form far more extensively than had ever before been possible. One publisher alone, the aptly named Gita Press of Gorakhpur, has brought out translations in fourteen major Indian languages, and has sold some seventy-one million copies of the work.

This seminar will employ a case study organization during the second half, to allow a more thorough exploration of particular situated readers and their engagements with the *Bhagavad Gita*. We will examine a series of modern readers (Indian, British, and American) who themselves are important historical or literary figures, and who exemplify a variety of interpretive approaches to the *Gita*. In each of these cases, their dialogues with this work were deep, thoughtful, and in some cases life-changing.

By addressing the *Bhagavad Gita* both in its own compositional setting, and also as a work of ongoing relevance and reinterpretation in the modern world, participants will gain a rich sense of a key Hindu scripture as both historical and contemporary. We will discuss the shared readings together in seminar fashion, and engage in group workshops that will encourage full participation. Brief lectures by the director and presentations by guest speakers will provide valuable supplementary materials. Participants will research and present materials pertinent to the ongoing life of the *Gita* and examine the work's most significant modern readers. Together we will discuss ways to incorporate the *Bhagavad Gita* into college and university curriculums, and discuss pedagogical methods for teaching this work most effectively.

More broadly, this double approach to an important classical work, both locating it historically and studying its later readings, is pertinent to the teaching of other great humanistic works (whether Indian, Asian, or others) that speak in what Bakhtin calls “great time.” In the humanities, we often proclaim that great works of literature, addressing perennial human

concerns, live on through centuries. As an ancient work of a culture outside the Western humanistic tradition, the *Bhagavad Gita* provides an excellent opportunity to examine just how this occurs.

A three-week seminar meeting every weekday, for fifteen class sessions in all, will provide an optimum length for this subject. The seminar revolves around a core text, and expands outward from it by exploring its many readers and their interpretations. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a brief text, but it requires explication, best accomplished through close reading and shared discussion. To understand its literary and cultural contexts, it is necessary to consider its location in the *Mahabharata*, and to examine the relation between the *Gita* and its social and religious setting in classical India. To envision the *Bhagavad Gita* as a work of significance in the modern world, the seminar will look at various readers, not simply as interpreters of the text, but as situated readers engaging in dialogues with the work. Combining class discussion on shared readings, background lectures, participant presentations, talks by visiting experts, and ancillary activities, this seminar will provide an intense, varied, and meaningful collegial learning experience that is both focused and broad in reach.

B. Program of study

The seminar will be conducted over three weeks during July 2018, with sessions held three hours each weekday morning. This will leave afternoons and evenings free for group activities and for participants to read and do research in the library. The central activity of the seminar sessions will be group discussion of shared readings. This will be supplemented with brief background lectures intended to facilitate discussion, three workshops around shared activities, three guest lectures, and presentations by participants. Viewing adaptations of the *Gita* and the *Mahabharata* in theatre, film, television and opera will illuminate another aspect of

the ongoing life of these works. Field trips to three museums and to an active Hindu temple will expand our understanding of the role of the *Gita* within Hinduism. The seminar will involve sustained interaction among all members of the group over the three-week period.

First half: During the first eight sessions, the seminar will focus on a close reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*, viewed historically as a Hindu religious work of the early centuries C.E., and its place in the epic *Mahabharata*. (See Appendix 1, Class Plan.) As a core reading, we will use Barbara Stoler Miller's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Among over three hundred English translations, this one offers the best combination of accessibility and scholarly accuracy. Throughout the seminar participants will compare numerous other translations. We will devote one workshop to the complexities of translating the Sanskrit text into English, while another will focus on practical recitation of the Sanskrit verse of the *Gita*. A third workshop will analyze the "paratextual" materials surrounding seventeen *Gita* translations. These workshops offer an opportunity for close interaction of all participants in shared activities. For a concluding view of the work, guest lecturer **Hugh Flick** will present a talk on "Krishna's Practical Mysticism." Former Assistant Professor of Folklore and Mythology at Harvard, former Dean of Silliman College, Lecturer in the South Asian Studies Program and the Religious Studies Department at Yale, Flick has recently completed a significant monograph on the *Bhagavad Gita* along with a full translation. He will make this new study digitally available for the seminar.

To understand the *Gita*'s literary setting, the seminar will look at the *Mahabharata*, the vast epic of which the *Gita* forms a small but key portion. We will read and discuss the narrative summary by C. V. Narasimhan, which offers the best available overview of the main plot. We will also read two full books of the eighteen-book composition, the "Massacre at Night" and the "Book of the Women." These portions, which take place during and immediately after the

eighteen-day battle, dramatically convey a sense of the stakes of war, as depicted in classical India. The director will provide additional background, through brief lectures, on the intellectual and religious milieu in which the *Gita* was composed. To gain a fuller appreciation of the epic, we will watch the extraordinary six-hour production of the “Mahabharata” by Peter Brook, and we will look at excerpts of modern Indian adaptations of the *Mahabharata* in film and television. Seminar participants will visit the South Asia galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to view its outstanding collection of classical Indian art, and receive a tour hosted by **John Guy**, Curator of the Arts of South and Southeast Asia. To conclude the first half of the seminar, we will examine the development of devotional religion centered on Krishna in medieval India.

Second half: The following seven sessions of the seminar will explore the *Bhagavad Gita* as it has continued to live and speak to readers in the modern world. From the time of its first English-language translation, it was no longer simply a Hindu scripture, but an Indian work available to the world. Our seminar will examine fifteen religious, literary, and scientific thinkers from England, the United States, and India, who have engaged in dialogue with the *Gita* during the modern era.

We will begin with the British translator Wilkins and his work with a traditional Brahmin pandit, Kasinatha Bhattacharya. This will provide an opportunity to reflect again on issues of translation and to consider how translation into new cultural settings transforms the meaning of a text. While we are examining Wilkins’ work during the early phase of British colonialism in India, the seminar will visit the remarkable collection of colonial-period prints at the Yale Center for British Art. These prints present a vivid sense of the “picturesque” landscape that British observers like Wilkins found in India. Wilkins’ translation circulated around the world and reached post-colonial New England, where Ralph Waldo Emerson acquired a copy and lent it to

Thoreau. We will examine Thoreau's active engagement with the *Gita* and other Indic works, and their contribution to American Transcendentalism. At this point, the seminar will also feature a guest lecture by **Matthew Mutter**, Assistant Professor of Literature at Bard College, whose research centers on issues of religion and secularism in American literary modernism. His presentation will focus on T. S. Eliot's use of the *Gita* and other Indic sources in developing Eliot's modernist poetic vision.

Starting in 1880, Indian literary and political figures began to reframe the ancient poem as a key scripture for modern India. In this seminar, we focus on three major figures in this interpretive transformation. More than any single writer, the Bengali intellectual Bankim Chandra Chatterjee pioneered the reinterpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* in the new circumstances of British colonialism and emerging Indian nationalism. In novels, historical writings, and moral tracts he sought to demonstrate how Krishna's life and teachings present relevant models of righteous struggle and ethical responsibility. Aurobindo Ghosh began his political career as a nationalist spokesman for the extremist faction opposing British rule, but after a jailhouse vision of Krishna, he remade himself a guru for Integral Yoga with an international following. Through every phase of his life, the *Gita* was a central source. For Mahatma Gandhi likewise, the *Gita* was indispensable. Gandhi called it his "mother" and his "dictionary of conduct," and he sought to integrate its teachings into his own life, the lifestyle of his ashrams, and the nonviolent mobilizations of the Indian struggle for independence. However, his insistence on the principle of non-violence posed a major interpretive difficulty in Gandhi's reading of the *Gita*, and a point of contention with others in the Indian National Congress.

While concentrating on these three through shared discussion of their writings and presentations by participants, we will place them in the broader context of modern Indian history

by looking at other contemporary figures, including the neo-Hindu champion Swami Vivekananda, the Theosophist and ardent nationalist Annie Besant, and the Dalit leader and principal author of the Indian constitution, B. R. Ambedkar. Participants will research these and other major figures and present them to the group. At this point in the seminar, **Karline McLain**, Associate Professor of Religion at Bucknell University, will discuss her current research on Gandhi's ashrams in South Africa and India, as places where Gandhi attempted to put Krishna's teachings into practice. We will also take a fieldtrip to the Hindu Temple Society of North America, the large Mahaganapati temple in Queens, New York, which is popularly referred to as the Ganesh Temple, Flushing, to gain an appreciation for contemporary Hindu worship practices.

During the dire events of World War II, notable Americans turned to the *Bhagavad Gita* for advice and solace. We will spend one session considering the wartime reflections of physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and the writers Christopher Isherwood and Aldous Huxley on the teachings of Krishna. The final seminar session will look at several ways the *Gita* is presented and debated in the contemporary world. As part of a final reception for the seminar, we will all watch what happens when Krishna is reincarnated as an African-American golf caddy, played by Will Smith, in the film "The Legend of Bagger Vance." Based on a 1995 novel by Steven Pressfield, this film attempts to bring the spirit and teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* into American popular culture.

All participants in the seminar will research and prepare presentations on select topics. For this discussion-oriented seminar, these projects are designed to contribute to the central concerns of the seminar. The class plan identifies sixteen possible presentation topics. These will be distributed beforehand, to allow participants to consider in advance and communicate with others about their choices. Participants may also select other topics of their own choosing,

in consultation. The director will work closely with the participants in formulating and developing individual projects. Written versions of these presentations will be posted on the seminar website. Seminar participants will work to develop a panel session devoted to the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* and related works in general humanities courses, to be presented at an academic meeting such as the ASIANetwork conference, a consortium that supports the teaching of Asian materials within liberal art colleges.

C. Project faculty and staff

The subject of this seminar draws directly upon the director's training and experience as a historian of South Asian religions, his recent publication of *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, and his continuing research and writing on notable modern readers of the *Bhagavad Gita*. (See Appendix 3, Resume.) Professor Davis has taught undergraduate-level courses on Hinduism, South Asian religious and cultural history, Sanskrit, and related subjects for twenty-nine years, at Yale University and Bard College. The *Bhagavad Gita* figures regularly in his college courses, and he has frequently read the text in Sanskrit classes with students. In 2007, he was invited to contribute a short volume on the *Gita* for a new Princeton University Press series, Lives of Great Religious Books. The series explores how major works of religious literature continue to live and grow through reception and interpretation. *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography* sets out some of the main periods and directions in the interpretative history of the work, with special attention to its modern life. It demonstrates how diverse and complex the work can be for modern readers, and how the *Gita* can convey very different messages to new readers who approached it with differing premises and distinct agendas. Since that book, highlighted on the NEH web site in 2012, the director has continued to research the dialogues of modern readers of the *Gita*. Focusing on individual figures who have engaged with the *Gita* deeply in their lives, and for whom the work has made a discernible impact on the course of their thinking and their actions,

he has completed published articles on Charles Wilkins and Henry David Thoreau. This NEH Summer Seminar will provide an opportunity for him to continue this work and to share it with participants in the seminar. The collective work of shared discussion of the *Bhagavad Gita* and research on its afterlives in the modern world will provide a great stimulus for the director's ongoing work and will also forge a community of inquiry and further research among all participants.

The seminar will feature presentations by three guest speakers. Hugh Flick's deep work on the *Bhagavad Gita* as setting out a program of "practical mysticism" will provide an important perspective to the seminar's discussion of our central text. Matthew Mutter will explore the role of the *Gita* and other Indic works in the poetry and thought of T. S. Eliot, linking ancient Indian religious literature to American literary modernism. Karline McLain will present to the seminar her current research on Gandhian ashrams. This will contextualize our reading of Gandhi's lectures and writings on the *Gita*.

The seminar will employ a graduate student from the Department of Religious Studies at Yale as a Project Assistant. This assistant will work with publicity and promotion, admissions, contacts with prospective applicants, organization of applications, post-admission contact with participants, and interactions with the various campus offices involved in the seminar.

D. Participant selection

This seminar is directed towards college and university teachers, including non tenure-track or adjunct faculty. Contingent faculty and those who teach in community college humanities programs will be especially encouraged to apply, and spaces reserved for them. The seminar will be suited to faculty trained in any humanistic discipline, such as religious studies, world literature, global history, cultural studies, non-Western philosophy, and classics. We will

be most interested in selecting participants who wish to incorporate the *Bhagavad Gita* or similar classic works of global reach into undergraduate courses, and to reflect on pedagogic methods to bring such works alive for undergraduates. The seminar is not aimed at South Asian specialists, though it would be suitable for them. No prior knowledge of Hinduism or South Asian languages is expected. In our selection, we will aim at achieving a balance in regional representation, in disciplinary training, and in years of classroom experience. We plan to distribute an informational sheet about the seminar at appropriate academic conferences such as those of the ASIANetwork and the American Academy of Religion. We will also publicize the seminar using electronic and postal mail, drawing on mailing lists available through the Institute for Writing and Thinking at Bard, which targets teachers at colleges and universities.

The selection committee will consist of the director and one other member. In the application, applicants will be asked to submit a statement on their teaching goals and their expectations for how this seminar might impact both their own pedagogy and their future research. We will share the applications and prepare initial rankings based on pre-defined criteria, and then hold a meeting at a convenient location to make our final decisions in March 2016.

E. Project website

In collaboration with the seminar director, Bard Information Technology office will design and support a public-access website. Initially, this website will serve to publicize the seminar. It will describe the seminar's central concept and primary topics, schedule of sessions, primary readings, dates, location, and facilities for participants. It will also provide information about eligibility and directions for applying. Once participants are selected, a limited-access blog will also be set up, using Google Classroom, to facilitate discussion and to make additional readings and other seminar materials readily available. The website will be maintained during

and after the seminar as a continuing public site, disseminating contributions from the participants, and documenting the modern history of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This site will find a ready audience in the United States, India, and elsewhere, and it will serve as a valuable resource for teachers in the humanities.

G. Institutional support

While Professor Davis is a member of the Bard College faculty, the summer seminar will be held at Yale University. The research resources and library collection in the area of South Asian studies are far superior at Yale, and this will be particularly valuable for the seminar participants in pursuing their individual research projects. In 1841, Yale University became the first institution in North America to offer instruction in the Sanskrit language, and it has maintained a strong tradition in Sanskrit and Indian Studies ever since. During this time, it has developed a remarkable library collection in this area of study. Seminar participants will have the opportunity to use Yale library resources during the seminar.

Yale University's Department of Religious Studies will act as host department for the seminar, and **Phyllis Granoff**, Lex Hixon Professor of Religious Studies, will welcome the seminar participants to Yale. The Whitney Humanities Center, which has hosted dozens of seminars and conferences, will provide excellent facilities for discussion groups and media screenings. The Office of Conferences and Events will coordinate affordable housing in one of Yale's newly-built residential colleges, with air conditioning, and assist with all other facility arrangements. Participants will be given Yale welcome packets and identification cards to access campus services, and may subscribe to a Yale gym membership. They may also avail themselves of Yale's landscaped outdoor spaces, scheduled cultural resources and events, with additional optional evening and weekend activities to be arranged by the Project Director.

Appendix A: Class Plan

Part One

Ancient Poem (and Its Contexts)

Sun, July 8

Reception of participants

Mon, July 9

Introduction to the Course, Self-Introduction of Participants The Demise of the Warrior Class

Read: Narasimhan, *Mahabharata*, pp. 1-117

Davis, *Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, pp. 1-9

Davis, “Brief History of Religions in India” (RD)

Lecture: Historical background of *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita*

Afternoon Field Trip: Yale library resources

Tues, July 10

War and Restoration

Read: Narasimhan, *Mahabharata*, pp.

Van Buitenen, *Mahabharata, Book 2*, pp. 91-169 (RD)

Lutgendorf, “All in the (Raghu) Family” (RD)

Lecture: Editions, translations, and short tellings of the *Mahabharata*

Workshop: Oral recitation of the *Gita*: listening and practice

Viewing: Doordarshan “Mahabharat” (excerpts)

Weds, July 11

Arjuna’s Dilemma

Read: Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*, chs. 1-2 (pp. 23-42)

Van Buitenen, *Bhagavadgita*, chs. 1-2 (pp. 65-91) (RD)

Johnson, *Saṃskṛitaparvan*, pp. 6-68

Lecture: Who was Krishna?

Afternoon Field Trip: Asian Art, Yale University Art Gallery

Thurs, July 12

Krishna’s Multiple Paths of Yoga

Read: Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*, chs. 3-6 (pp. 43-72)

Other translations of *Bhagavad Gita* ch. 4 (handouts)

Davis, *Bhagavad Gita: Biography*, pp. 154-177

Larson, “The Song Celestial” (RD)

Lecture: Schools of thought in classical India

Workshop: Sanskrit translation (using handouts)

Fri, July 13

Krishna’s Theophany and Arjuna’s Vision

Read: Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*, chs. 7-11 (pp. 73-108)

Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavad Gita*, chs. 7-11 (RD)

Lecture: Visualizing the *Gita* (in art and popular prints)

Viewing: Doordarshan “Mahabharat” episode of Arjuna’s vision

Sat, July 14

Saturday Field Trip: South Asian Galleries, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

- Mon, July 16 **Dharma, Bhakti, and God's Will**
 Read: Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*, chs. 12-18 (pp. 109-146)
 Prabhavananda & Isherwood, *Bhagavad Gita*, chs. 12-18
 Carriere, "Introduction and Forward," *The Mahabharata* (RD)
 Gennette, *Paratexts*, selections (RD)
 Lecture: Echoes of the *Gita* in the later *Mahabharata*
 Presentation: Peter Brook and the *Mahabharata*
 Workshop: Translations and their Paratexts
 Evening Viewing: Brook, "Mahabharata" (part 1)
- Tues, July 17 **Summing Up the Gita**
Guest presentation: Hugh Flick, "Krishna's Practical Mysticism"
 Read: Davis, *Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, pp. 10-42
 Fitzgerald, "The Great Indian Epic as Rhetoric" (RD)
 Sullivan, "The Religious Authority of the Mahabharata" (RD)
 Smith, *What is Scripture?*, pp. 1-20, 124-145 (RD)
 Evening Viewing: Brook, "Mahabharata" (part 2)
- Weds, July 18 **The Devotional Life of Krishna**
 Read: Hutchins, *Young Krishna* (RD)
 Bryant, *Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God*, excerpts (RD)
 Dimock and Levertov, *In Praise of Krishna*
 Presentation: Swami Prabhupada and Krishna Consciousness in America
 Evening Viewing: Brook, "Mahabharata" (part 3)
- Part Two** **Modern Readers (and their Situations)**
- Thurs, July 19 **The Gita Becomes a Global Text**
 Read: Davis, *Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, pp. 72-114
 Davis, "Wilkins, Kasinatha, and the First English Gita" (RD)
 Wilkins, "Introduction" to *Bhagavat Geeta* (RD)
 Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, selections (RD)
 Bakhtin, "Response to a Question" (RD)
 Presentation: British Orientalists in Colonial India
 Presentation: German Romantics and India
 Afternoon Field Trip: Yale Center for British Art (British Print Collection)
- Fri, July 20 **The Gita in America: Transcendentalists and Modernists**
Guest presentation: Matthew Mutter
 Read: Thoreau, selections from *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *Walden* (RD)
 Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (RD)
 Davis, "Henry David Thoreau, Yogi" (RD)
 Kearns *T. S. Eliot and Indic Traditions*, pp. 3-29 (RD)
 Presentation: Ralph Waldo Emerson and India

Presentation: Walt Whitman's Passage to India

Sat, July 21

Saturday field trip: Maha Ganapati Hindu Temple, Queens, NY

Mon, July 23

The Gita and the Indian Nation

Read: Davis, *Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, pp. 115-153

Vivekananda, "Address to the World Parliament of Religion" (RD)

Lecture: Overview of the Indian nationalist movement

Presentation: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

Presentation: Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta in American

Tues, July 24

Aurobindo: Indian Extremist and International Guru

Read: Heehs, *Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography*

Aurobindo, "Bhawani Mandir," "Uttarpara Speech" (RD)

Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, pp. 3-11 (RD)

Presentation: Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Presentation: Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society

Weds, July 25

M. K. Gandhi's Non-violent Gita and His Opponents

Guest presentation: Karline McLain

Read: Gandhi, *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. xv-xxiv, 3-34, 189-206

Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power*, pp. 1-29 (RD)

Davis, "Gandhi and His Gita" (RD)

Ambedkar, "Krishna and His Gita" (RD)

Presentation: K. B. Hedgewar, the RSS, and Hindu Nationalism

Presentation: Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Thurs, July 26

The Gita at War: Oppenheimer, Isherwood, and Huxley

Read: Hijaya, "The Gita of J. Robert Oppenheimer" (RD)

Prabhavananda and Isherwood, *Bhagavad Gita: The Song of God*

Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, selections (RD)

Presentation: Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda

Presentation: Aldous Huxley and the Perennial Philosophy

Evening Viewing: Operas "Satyagraha" and "Doctor Atomic" (excerpts)

Fri, July 27

The Gita and Gurus of the 1960s

The Gita in India and the World, Today

Read: Davis, *Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, pp. 178-210

Davis, "Gifts of the Gita" (RD)

Presentation: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Transcendental Meditation

Presentation: The *Gita* and Public Education in India

Fri, July 27

Evening: Final Reception for Participants

Viewing: "The Legend of Bagger Vance"

Appendix B: Reading List

A. Primary Readings (Books to be Supplied)

- Davis, Richard H. *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography* Lives of Great Religious Books. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Gandhi, Mohandas K. *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi*. Berklee: Berklee Hills Books, 2000.
- Johnson, W. J. *The Sauptikaparvan of the Mahabharata : The Massacre at Night* Oxford World's Classics. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Miller, Barbara Stoler. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.
- Narasimhan, C. V. *The Mahabharata*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.
- Prabhavananda, Swami and Christopher Isherwood. *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*. New York: New American Library, 1972.

B. Additional Translations of the Bhagavad Gita (Excerpts used for comparison in seminar, and available in library)

- Arnold, Edwin, *Song Celestial, or Bhagavad-gita (from the Mahabharata)*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885.
- Bhaktivedanta Swami, A. C. *Bhagavad-Gita as It Is*. New York: Collier Books, 1972.
- Davies, John. *Hindu Philosophy: The Bhagavad gita, or the Sacred lay, a Sanskrit Philosophical Poem*. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1882.
- Edgerton, Franklin. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Harvard Oriental Series. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1944.
- Ghose, Sri Aurobindo. *The Message of the Gita*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1938.
- Johnson, W. J., *The Bhagavad Gita*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi. *Bhagavad Gita: Chapters 1-6*. London: International SRM Publications, 1967.
- Mitchell, Stephen. *Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000.
- Patton, Laurie. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Penguin Classics. London: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *The Bhagavadgita*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948.
- Sargeant, Winthrop. *The Bhagavad Gita* Suny Series in Cultural Perspectives. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009. Reprint, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition.
- Schweig, Graham M. *Bhagavad Gita: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2007.
- Telang, Kashinath Trimbak. *The Bhagavadgita with the Sanatsugatiya and the Anugita*. Vol. 8, Edited by Max Muller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882.
- Thomson, J. Cockburn. *Bhagavad-gita; or, The Sacred Lay, a Colloquy between Krishna and Arjuna on Divine Matters*. Hertford, UK: Stephen Austin, 1855.
- Thompson, George. *The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*. New York: North Point Press, 2008.
- Van Buitenen, J. A. B. *The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Wilkins, Charles. *The Bhagavat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon, in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes*. London: C. Nourse, 1785.

Zaehner, R. C., *The Bhagavad-Gita, with a commentary based on the original sources*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

C. Additional Readings (on Reserves Direct or at Library)

Adluri, Vishwa and Joydeep Bagchee. *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ambedkar, B. R. *The Essential Writings of B. R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Bakhtin, M. M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Vol. 8, Edited by Caryl Emerson, Michael Holquist and Vern W. McGee. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Carrière, Jean-Claude. *The Mahabharata : A Play Based Upon the Indian Classic Epic*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Chatterjee, Margaret. *Gandhi's Religious Thought*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.

Chatterji, Bankimchandra. *Debi Chaudhurani, or the Wife Who Came Home*. Translated by Julius J. Lipner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Chattopadhyay, Bankimchandra. *Krishna-Charitra*. Translated by Pradip Bhattacharya Classics of the East. Calcutta: The M. P. Birla Foundation, 1991.

Collingwood, R. G. *An Autobiography*. London: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Dalton, Dennis. *Mahatma Gandhi : Nonviolent Power in Action*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Davis, Richard H. "Introduction: A Brief History of Religions in India." In *Religions of India in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., 3-52. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Davis, Richard H. "Wilkins, Kasinatha, Hastings, and the First English Gita." In *Edwin Gerow Festschrift*, edited by Herman Tull. Leiden: E. J. Brill, forthcoming.

Eliot, T. S. *The Waste Land*. Richmond, Surrey: Hogart Press, 1923.

Fitzgerald, James L. "The Great Epic of India as Religious Rhetoric: A Fresh Look at the Mahabharata." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51, no. 4 (1983): 611-630.

Fitzgerald, James L. *The Mahabharata, Volume 7: Book 11, the Book of the Women, Book 12, the Book of Peace, Part One*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin Literature, Culture, Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Ghose, Aurobindo. "Bhawani Mandir." In *Bande Mataram: Early Political Writings--1*, 61-74. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1972.

Ghose, Aurobindo. "Uttarpara Speech." In *Karmayogin: Early Political Writings--2*, 1-10. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1972.

Ghose, Aurobindo. *Essays on the Gita*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2003.

Hawley, John Stratton. *Krishna, the Butter Thief*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Heehs, Peter. *Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Heehs, Peter. *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

- Herling, Bradley L. *The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778-1831* Studies in Philosophy, Edited by Robert Bernasconi. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hijiya, James A. "The 'Gita' of J. Robert Oppenheimer." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 144, no. 2 (2000): 123-167.
- Hiltebeitel, Alf. *Rethinking the Mahabharata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Huxley, Aldous. *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945.
- Inden, Ronald. *Imagining India*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Isherwood, Christopher. *My Guru and His Disciple*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1980.
- Isherwood, Christopher. *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*. London: Methuen & Co., 1965.
- Jackson, Carl T. *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Kearns, Cleo McNelly, T. S. *Eliot and Indic Traditions: A Study in Poetry and Belief*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Laine, James W. *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahabharata*. Vol. 16. Vienna: Gerold & Co., 1989.
- Larson, Gerald James. "The Song Celestial: Two Centuries of the Bhagavad Gita in English." *Philosophy East and West* 31, no. 4 (1981): 513-541.
- Lutgendorf, Philip. "All in the (Raghu) Family: A Video Epic in Cultural Context." In *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*, edited by Lawrence A. Babb and Susan Wadley. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.
- Malinar, Angelika. *The Bhagavad Gita: Doctrines and Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Minor, Robert N. *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita* Suny Series in Religious Studies, Edited by Robert C. Neville. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
- Nagappa Gowda, K. *The Bhagavadgita in the Nationalist Discourse*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Schwab, Raymond. *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, Edited by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Sen, Amiya P. *Bankim's Hinduism: An Anthology of Writings by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2011.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *What Is Scripture?: A Comparative Approach*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden, or, Life in the Woods* Everyman's Library. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* Princeton Classic Editions. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.