

University of California, Santa Barbara  
Department of Religious Studies  
RGST 161D: Yoga, Tantra and Alchemy: Three Paths to Power in Medieval India

Professor David Gordon White  
Fall 2010

HSSB 3041  
W 6:00 – 8:50 PM

*Course Requirements and Grades:* Students are required to prepare for lectures by fulfilling reading assignments prior to attendance. Starting on October 13, teams of two-three students will lead discussion on the readings for that week. Each member of that week's team will send an email to everyone in the class, *by no later than the Sunday before class*, with an attachment containing the following elements:

- 1) a five-page analysis of the readings, linking the week's "text" to the "context" of that week's readings as well as, where appropriate, readings from prior weeks
- 2) a list of at least five questions about the readings, which will serve as the basis for our in-class seminar discussion.

Grades will be calculated as follows: three in-class quizzes (30%); student papers/presentations (30%); final take-home examination (40%).

**Books for Purchase:**

David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Kiss of the Yogini: "Tantric Sex" in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

**Excerpted chapters and articles in course reader:** many of these readings will also be accessible through eRes (<http://eres.library.ucsb.edu>) password: drive

J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).

\_\_\_\_\_, "Two Tales of Destiny," in *Tales of Ancient India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959)

Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Dennis Hudson, "Madurai: The City as Goddess," in *Urban Form and Meaning in South Asia: The Shaping of Cities from Prehistoric to Precolonial Times*, ed. Howard Spodek and Doris Meth Srinivasan (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1993)

- Gwendolyn Layne, tr., *Banabhatta. Kadambari, A Classic Sanskrit Story of Magical Transformation* (New York: Garland, 1991).
- David Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas, Two Lost Saivite Sects* (New Delhi: Thomson, 1972).
- Dan McDougall, "Indian cult kills children for goddess," *The Observer*, March 6, 2006
- Barbara Stoler Miller, *Yoga, Discipline of Freedom. The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- Olle Qvarnström, tr., *The Yogasastra of Hemacandra, A Twelfth Century Handbook on Svetambara Jainism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- Valerie Roebuck, tr., *The Upanisads* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
- Arsha Sattar, tr., *Somadeva. Tales from the Kathasaritsagara* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1994).
- Mary Sheperd Slusser, *Nepal Mandala, A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
- Frederick Smith, *The Self Possessed* (Columbia University Press: 2006).
- David Gordon White, "The Ocean of Mercury: An Eleventh-Century Alchemical Text, in Donald Lopez, ed., *Religions of India in Practice* (Princeton University Press: 1995)
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition," in David Gordon White, ed., *Tantra in Practice* (Princeton University Press: 2000)
- \_\_\_\_\_, "The Wonders of Sri Mastnath," in Donald Lopez, ed., *Religions of India in Practice* (Princeton University Press: 1995)

**Readings accessible via email from Professor White:**

- David Gordon White, "At the Mandala's Dark Fringe: Possession and Protection in Tantric Bhairava Cults," in David Haberman and Laurie Patton, eds., *Notes from a Mandala: Essays in Honor of Wendy Doniger* (University of Delaware Press: 2010), pp. 200-15.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Rasarnava*, chap. 18 (translation typescript)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Siddha-siddhanta-Paddhati*, chapter 3 (translation typescript)

Schedule of Class Meetings

Sept. 29                      Introduction

Oct. 6                      Narrative Accounts of Indian Yogis

text:    Van Buitenen, *Tales of Ancient India*, pp. 128-38

context:    White, *Sinister Yogis*, pp. 1-37; 198-217  
               Layne, *Banabhatta Kadambari*, pp. 223-27  
               Smith, *Self Possessed*, pp. 286-94  
               White, "The Wonders of Sri Mastnath," pp. 399-411  
               McDougall, "Indian cult kills children for goddess"

Oct. 13                      Origins of Yoga

text:    White, *Sinister Yogis*, pp. 141-51

context:        White, *Sinister Yogis*, pp. 48-78; 135-41  
                  Roebuck, *Upanisads*, pp. 364-83; 471-78  
                  Miller, *Yoga, Discipline of Freedom*, pp. 60-73  
                  Van Buitenen, *Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 85-121

Oct. 20                      Siddhas, Yogis, Tantrikas and Alchemists

text:    White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 48-51; 114-18

context:        White, *Tantra in Practice*, pp. 3-38  
                  White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, pp. xi-xv, 1-22; 160-73  
                  White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 1-14; 90-110

Oct. 27                      Tantra, Polity, and Society in Medieval South Asia  
                                    QUIZ #1

text:    White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 1 [first paragraph], 118-22, 304-12

context:        Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 121-44  
                  White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, pp. 123-59  
                  White, *Sinister Yogis*, pp. 198-205; 217-34

Nov. 3                        Bhairava, God of Power

text:    Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*, pp. 31-48

context:        Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 211-17  
                  Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*, pp. 84-95  
                  Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, pp. 213-39  
                  White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 174-79  
                  White, "At the Mandala's Dark Fringe," pp. 200-15

Nov. 10                      Yoginis and other Goddesses of Power

text:    Sattar, *Tales from the Kathasaritsagara*, pp. 92-103

context:        Hudson, "Madurai: The City as Goddess," pp. 125-42  
                  White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, pp. 35-66; 188-218

Nov. 17        Tantra and Alchemy/Power Substances  
                  QUIZ #2

text:    White, "Ocean of Mercury," pp. 281-87

context:        White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 171-217  
                  White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, pp. 67-122

Nov. 24        Body Mapping in Yoga, Tantra and Alchemy

text:    White, *Siddha-siddhanta-Paddhati*, pp. 1-6

context:        White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 218-62  
                  White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, pp. 219-57

Dec. 1         Alchemical and Yogic Transformations  
                  QUIZ #3

text:    White, *Rasarnava*, pp. 1-6

context:        Qvarnström, *Yogasastra.*, pp. 101-10; 139-46; 180-86  
                  White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 263-302  
                  White, *Sinister Yogis*, pp. 161-77

Dec. 11        take-home FINAL EXAMINATION due at midnight