

PHILOSOPHY 300

History of Indian Philosophy

Fall 2023

2nd Mid-Term Assignment

Due Monday, November 20

Write a 5-6 page response to one of the following topics.
Turn in by uploading to Laulima as either a Word file or pdf file.

The Bhagavad Gītā and the Teachings of Yoga

What is meant by the “field of dharma” (*dharmakṣetre*) in the opening line of *The Bhagavad Gītā* and what is Arjuna’s dilemma that he faces upon that field? What is Krishna’s response to Arjuna’s dilemma? Explain the difference between the different types of yoga taught by Krishna. Are all of these forms of yoga necessary to attain enlightenment or is any one of them sufficient to achieving this goal? To what extent do you find Krishna’s teaching concerning yoga an adequate response to Arjuna’s dilemma?

Hindu Devotionalism

What are some of the similarities and differences between the three main forms of Hinduism: *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Śaivism*, and *Śaktism*? In your response explain some of the important points in the stories about Krishna, from his development from the divine child to the amorous youth, and the depictions of Kali in Śaktism and Shiva in Śaivism. In what sense is Hinduism polytheistic, monotheistic, or monistic?

Mahāyāna Buddhism

Explain the distinguishing features of Mahāyāna Buddhism and how these teachings either develop or contrast with the teachings of Theravāda Buddhism. In your response explain the three bodies of the Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and also the importance of the notion of the bodhisattva. What is the central teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*? How is this teaching expressed in the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Diamond Sūtra*?

Mādhyamika and Yogācāra Buddhism

What is the main difference between the two schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Mādhyamika school founded by Nāgārjuna and the later Yogācāra school? How did Nāgārjuna explain the central teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* as following from the central doctrine of Buddhism? How is it that Nāgārjuna argues that there is no difference between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*? What did he mean by this and what are the implications of this view for the understanding of enlightenment? What is the *Vijñānavāda* doctrine taught in Yogācāra Buddhism? Explain what is meant by the process known as *viññaptimātra*? How did they understand different levels of consciousness and what did they mean by the form of consciousness called *ālaya-vijñāna*?