Finding God in a Lovely Place: 
Comparative Theology in a South Indian Context 
HDS 3393 / Religion 1604 
Monday-Wednesday 1030-1145

Professor Francis X. Clooney, SJ  
fclooney@hds.harvard.edu

This new course in Hindu-Biblical/Christian comparative theology steers away from Sanskrit philosophical and theological texts. It learns instead from a vernacular tradition, the 2000-year-old literary archive of Tamil south India, so rich in lovely poems, dramas, proverbs, epics and devotional hymns, Jain, and Hindu and more, vividly alive in an ancient land blessed with a non-Indo-European language and culture that flourish even today. Older poetry and drama, from before 1000 CE, are the focus of this introductory course which, however, still asks theological questions:

How can 21st century spiritual and religious people in the West learn from a culture that is brilliant not because it is universal, but because it is local, particular, immediate? How might Tamil literature change how we — in the mostly non-Tamil and mostly non-Hindu West — think of God, the human, the world? What can this beautiful tradition tell us about bodies, desire, love, and God? How ought we to learn religiously and theologically from the poetry of another tradition, even in translation? What happens when we read such texts along with the Song of Songs, Book of Proverbs, Psalms, Book of Judith, and other Biblical classics?

No special background required, only a willingness to read carefully and an imagination. This is not a course that teaches or presupposes knowledge of the Tamil language, but will be of interest to students who do have such background.

Full syllabus and description of course texts available at the course site in Canvas. Be in touch with Professor Clooney if you have any questions.