

Reading a Hindu Classic:

Sankara on the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad

HDS 3928/Religion 1660

Tuesdays 3-530pm



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This seminar offers a close reading of just one big book, the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (“Great Forest Teaching), possibly the oldest (parts as early as 1000 BCE) and greatest of Vedic Hinduism’s Upanisads — that is, sacred words, arguments, teachings grounded in ritual and debate, and opening into philosophy, theology, and mysticism. The Brhadaranyaka offers a powerful exposition of the deep meaning of sacrifice; the identity of the self (and Self); Brahman as the absolute reality beyond words yet powerfully articulated in failing words; the challenge of world renunciation then and now. At its core are the teachings of Yajnavalkya, one of the most intriguing sages of ancient India.

We read it first on its own, but very much with the classic commentary of Sankara, the great 8th century Nondualist Vedanta theologian. This course is meant for students interested in closely reading Indian/Hindu texts, but all serious readers will benefit. We read in translation, so Sanskrit, while useful, is not required.

The One Required Book: *The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad with the Commentary of Sankaracarya*, translated by Swami Madhavananda (Advaita Ashrama Press, originally 1934). **Copies available from professor, at \$15.00, available first to students registered for the course.** The pdf may also be found on the web.

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.