

SPRING 2016
REL 3077 / RLG 5937 (TR 2:00-3:15):
Sacred Image, Sacred Space in Indian Religions



Course Description:

This course introduces the symbols, images, and architecture of four major Indian religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam. Beginning with images of the divine in each of the major traditions, we will examine the formal iconographic elements that allow devotees to recognize each deity, and explore the ritual context of mutual “seeing” as key to understanding the forms that divinities take on in their images. The second half of the course looks specifically at architecture. We will investigate the classical symbolic meanings of the forms of temples and trace these ideas through the archaeological record to see how they developed and changed into the temples we recognize today. From the earliest ritual spaces in South Asia, the Vedic fire altar, to Buddhist *stūpas*, to the emergence of ornately (and often erotically) adorned Hindu and Jain temples, and culminating with a uniquely Indian Islamic architecture, we will seek to understand the symbolic elements of these monuments and interrogate the connections between form and meaning.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the symbolic meanings of images and sacred architecture in South Asia from the earliest evidence to modern forms.
- To understand the ritual contexts in which objects and spaces are encountered in each major South Asian tradition—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam
- To show the historical trajectories in the development of sacred art and architecture in South Asia.
- To build a visual vocabulary of architectural and iconographic terms in order to identify and “read” images and built forms.

FMI: Contact Prof. Steven Vose at svose@fiu.edu. Extra Graduate session: T 3:30-4:45