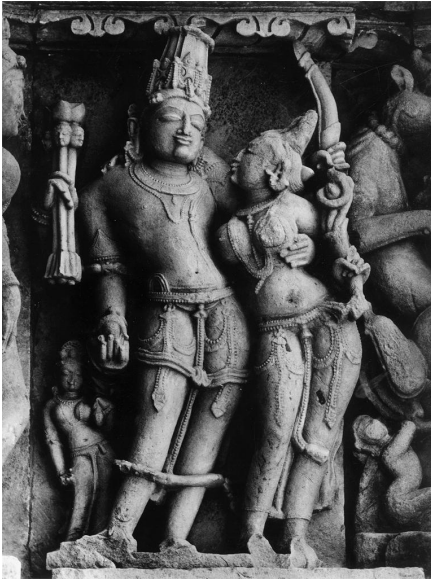


HH4091: Interdisciplinary History
Topic: Love, Sex and Politics in Early India



When the woman needs help moving furniture, and she does not ask the man, but instead hires the local teenager, and the teenager takes off his shirt in front of the woman, and the man watches her watching the boy with a look in her eyes that he has not seen in years, it is called "the wounded hippopotamus."

In this course we will examine one of the most (in)famous Indian texts: The *Kama Sutra*. Although widely assumed in the West to be nothing more than a catalogue of highly acrobatic sexual positions, this 4th Century text is actually a sophisticated guide for the courtly 'man about town' to the intricacies of ancient Indian social relationships and the art of living well. Through a detailed study of this text and its key concerns - finding a partner, maintaining power in a marriage, committing adultery, living as or with a courtesan, using drugs—and of course, the positions in sexual intercourse, this course will open a window onto the social, political and cultural history of early India, in which *kama*, or desire, was one of the four goals of human life. We will supplement our reading of this text discussing other primary sources from the period – inscriptions, Sanskrit dramas, perfume recipes, legal and medical textbooks, art and architecture – and by drawing on approaches from art history, the histories of emotions, medicine and literature, as well as insights from historical anthropology.

Required Book

There are many weird and wonderful translations of the Kama Sutra, including several illustrated and pop-up versions. We will be using the following scholarly version, which all students should acquire:

Vātsyāyana, Wendy Doniger, and Sudhir Kakar. *Kamasutra: a new, complete English translation of the Sanskrit text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

NB. Do not buy the abridged, miniature hardback version of this translation by mistake!

Assignments:

- 1) Research Essay (2000 words, 30%) on a topic connected with **one** of the seven books of the Kama Sutra to be worked out in consultation with the instructor (a list of sample paper topics will be provided along with a list of some

- recommended books and primary sources, but each student needs to formulate a specific question). In writing your essay you should consider how insights from different disciplinary perspectives may enhance your interpretation of the evidence. The essay should be 2000 words (+/- 10%), including footnotes but excluding bibliography.
- 2) Research Essay (2000 words, 30%), on a topic connected with **one** of the seven books of the Kama Sutra (you must choose a different book from that used in your first essay), or on *kama* more generally, to be worked out in consultation with the instructor (a list of sample paper topics will be provided along with a list of some recommended books, but each student needs to formulate a specific question). In writing your essay you should consider how insights from different disciplinary perspectives may enhance your interpretation of the evidence. The essay should be 2000 words (+/- 10%), including footnotes but excluding bibliography. The point of both these essays is that in any course, students will develop their own set of questions and interests, and this essay shall serve as a means by which to explore those in a constructive, purposeful way.
 - 3) Video presentation (15%): In week 13, students will present 10-minute videos summarizing the findings of one of their research essays. The point here is to get used to presenting your work to different audiences and through different means of communication. In the video you can talk, act, perform, use clips from relevant films, music, tv shows etc – whatever seems an effective way to demonstrate your argument.
 - 4) Pre-class question (15%). This assignment encourages you to keep up with the reading, enlivens class discussions (since most students will have actually read the assignment), and offers a forum to record your questions about the readings, in this way personalizing the course and, at the same time, sharpening your skills in thinking critically and writing fluidly. Here are the details:
 - Format: Questions should be submitted on the weekly forum of the NTUlearn site.
 - Due dates: questions are due at 5pm on the day before our class meets. These cannot be submitted after the due date. There is no way to make up for lost work in this project.
 - Content: Each question should connect (compare/contrast) the reading to some other concept or topic relating to the course (for example, another reading we have done, an item in the news, something you have studied in another course, or a concept or theory to which the text can be related).
 - Grading: These questions will be graded as either acceptable or unacceptable. If you do not follow these instructions, there will be no credit given for the journal.
 - 5) Participation (10%): This means more than just being present in class – to do well you need to actively participate in class discussions. You are expected to ask and

answer questions, and discuss seminar questions with your colleagues in the group

Format of the Course:

This course is organized around a mixed format of mini-lectures, discussions, reading assignments, group work and research projects. Class meetings will feature some of these; you will be responsible for the others with guidance from me and your classmates.

Readings: Students should come to class having done the assigned reading and assimilated it well enough to discuss it. **Please bring the text(s) with you to class.** Our discussions will be much more stimulating if students have substantive ideas, spurred by the reading material, to contribute. Readings will be mainly drawn from the *Kama Sutra* and from additional primary sources (in translation) which will be posted on the NTUlearn site.

Course policies

- Attendance is compulsory.
- More than 3 unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by half a letter grade for each additional class that you miss.
- Extensions, excused absences, etc. will only be given in cases of documented personal/medical emergencies.
- Essays that are submitted late will be penalized by half a letter grade. For example an A- that is one day late will be a B+.
- Late journal entries will not be accepted and there is no way to make up for lost work in this project.
- If you are experiencing any difficulty with your assignments, please speak to me immediately, preferably before the assignment deadline.
- If you need special classroom accommodations, please see me as soon as possible.
- **Plagiarism is a serious offense in the historical profession, and is unacceptable at this university.**

Course schedule

Week 1 – Introductions: Ancient South Asia

Watch:

- *The Story of India –Ages of Gold*

Reading:

- Thomas Trautmann, *India: Brief History of a Civilisation*, pp. ...
- Daud Ali, "Hindu World," in Ninian Smart and Fredrick Denny, *Atlas of the World's Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Optional (for greater understanding of the period)

- Thapar, Romila. 2004. *Early India : From the Origins to a.d. 1300*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. ...
- A.L. Basham, *Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp 51-68 and 98-110.

Week 2 – Reading the Kama Sutra in the West: Translations and Popular Culture

Reading:

- Daud Ali, "Kāma Sūtra." *Encyclopedia of India*. Ed. Stanley Wolpert. Vol. 3. Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006. 2-3. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 3 Jan. 2014.
- James McConnachie, *The Book of Love: The Story of the Kama Sutra*, (Picador, 2009) extracts.
- Richard Burton, trans, *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana*, (London: The Kama Shastra Society, 1883), preface and introduction

Week 3 –The History of Sexuality

Reading:

- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge*, (London: Penguin Books, 1998) extracts.
- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 14-32

Week 4 – Courts and Courtliness

Reading:

- Daud Ali, *Courtly culture and political life in early medieval India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 29-60 and pp. 103-140.
- Daniel Ingalls, *Sanskrit Poetry, from Vidyākara's Treasury*. 1968. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Week 5 – Why a book about love?

Reading:

- *Kama Sutra* – Book 1: General Observations
- The Allahabad Rock inscription (on NTUlearn)
- Dezső, Csaba, Somadeva Vasudeva, Śyāmilaka Śyāmilaka, Vararuci Vararuci, Śūdraka Śūdraka, and Īśvaradatta Īśvaradatta. 2009. *The Quartet of Causeries*. 1st ed. New York, NY: New York University Press : JJC Foundation. selections

Week 6: Pleasure and the Senses

Reading:

- McHugh, James. 2013. *Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Premodern Indian Religion and Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Laura Desmond, 'The Pleasure is Mine: The Changing Subject of Erotic Science,' *J Indian Philos* (2011) 39:15–39.

Week 7 – Courtship

Reading:

- *Kama Sutra* – Book 3: Virgins
- Harṣavardhana, Harṣavardhana, and Wendy Doniger. 2006. "the Lady of the Jewel Necklace"; and, "the Lady Who Shows Her Love." 1st ed. New York: New York University Press : JJC Foundation. selections.

- Kālidāsa, Kālidāsa, Dániel Balogh, and Eszter Somogyi. 2009. *Mālavikā and Agnimitra*. 1st ed. New York: New York University Press : JJC Foundation., selections.

Week 8 - The Duties and Privileges of the Wife

Reading:

- *Kama Sutra* – Book 4: Wives
- Manu, and Wendy Doniger. 1991. *The Laws of Manu*. London, England: Penguin. selections
- Gupta sati stone (on NTUlearn)
- Haksar, A. N. D. 2000. *Shuka Saptati : Seventy Tales of the Parrot*. New Delhi: HarperCollins. selections.

Week 9 – Other Men’s Wives

Reading:

- *Kama Sutra* – Book 5: Other Men’s Wives
- Daṇḍin, and Isabelle Onians. 2005. *What Ten Young Men Did*. 1st ed. New York: New York University Press : JJC Foundation. selections.
- Olivelle, Patrick, and Mark McClish. 2012. *The Arthashastra Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- *Laws of Manu*, selections.

Week 10: Courtesans

Reading:

- *Kama Sutra* – Book 6: Courtesans
- Śūdraka, Śūdraka, and Diwakar Acharya. 2009. *The Little Clay Cart*. 1st ed. New York, NY: New York University Press : JJC Foundation. selections
- Reading, *The Kick*, in the *Quartet of Causeries*

Week 11: Aphrodisiacs and Occult Practices

- Reading: *Kama Sutra* – Book 7: Erotica Esoterica
- Dandin, *What 10 young men did*, selections

Week 12: Sex, Procreation and Erotic Imagery

Reading:

- *Kama Sutra* – Book 2: Sex
- Michael Meister, “Juncture and Conjunction: Punning and Temple Architecture,” in *Artibus Asiae*, Vol 41, No. 2/3 (1979) pp. 226-234.
- Wujastyk, D. 2003. *The Roots of Ayurveda : Selections from Sanskrit Medical Writings* Rev. ed. London: Penguin Books.

Week 13: Video presentations