

THEO 1432
The Religious Quest: Seeking Understanding in Christian and Hindu Traditions
MIDTERM EXAMINATION
 Spring 2026 • Dr. R. Brad Bannon • Boston College

Name: _____

Date: _____ **Score:** _____ / 75 = _____ %

INSTRUCTIONS: This exam has 75 questions worth 1 point each. You have 75 minutes. Record ALL answers on the Answer Sheet (this page). Use pencil or blue or black ink only (not red, please). Good luck!

#	Ans	#	Ans	#	Ans	#	Ans
1		21		41		61	
2		22		42		62	
3		23		43		63	
4		24		44		64	
5		25		45		65	
6		26		46		66	
7		27		47		67	
8		28		48		68	
9		29		49		69	
10		30		50		70	
11		31		51		71	
12		32		52		72	
13		33		53		73	
14		34		54		74	
15		35		55		75	
16		36		56			
17		37		57			
18		38		58			
19		39		59			
20		40		60			

Bonus Question 1 (+5): Explain Prabhākara's Tripuṭīpratyakṣavāda in six words.

Bonus Question 2 (+5): Brad's stipulative definition of theology is:

Bonus question 3 (+5): In Valli 3 of the Katha Upaniṣad, Yama gives an allegory of a chariot. The allegory has five parts. In 1-2 words, describe each part (horses = _____, reins = _____, etc). Write your answer on the BACK of this answer sheet.

Section I: Vocabulary Matching

Directions: Match each term on the left with the correct definition on the right. Write the letter in the corresponding box on your answer sheet. Not all definitions will be used. Each correct answer is worth 1 point.

	Term	Definitions
	1. <i>Karma</i>	A. Liberation from the cycle of rebirth; the supreme goal of life
	2. <i>Jñāna Mārga</i>	B. The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth
	3. <i>Samśāra</i>	C. Righteousness, moral duty, cosmic order; "that which upholds"
	4. <i>Vānaprastha</i>	D. The fourth state of consciousness; pure non-dual awareness
	5. <i>Kāma</i>	E. "That which is remembered"; authored tradition of lower authority than Śruti
	6. <i>Brāhmaṇa (text)</i>	F. Action; ritual work; law of cause and effect
	7. <i>Itihāsa</i>	G. Trace; impression; karmic residue affecting future births
	8. <i>Samśkāra</i>	H. Forest texts; proto-theological reflections for hermits
	9. <i>Mokṣa</i>	I. Renunciant stage; total renunciation of worldly life
	10. <i>Bhakti Mārga</i>	J. Path of knowledge; liberation through wisdom and understanding
	11. <i>Turiya</i>	K. Pleasure, desire, aesthetic enjoyment, sensory fulfillment
	12. <i>Dharma</i>	L. Forest-dweller stage; gradual withdrawal from domestic life
	13. <i>Smṛti</i>	M. "Thus indeed it was"; epic narratives (e.g. Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata)
	14. <i>Āraṇyaka</i>	N. Ritual texts within the Veda; instructions for performing sacrifices
	15. <i>Sannyāsa</i>	O. Path of devotion; liberation through loving devotion to a deity
		P. "That which is heard"; revealed scripture of highest authority
		Q. Collection of ancient hymns and mantras

Section II: Vocabulary Multiple Choice

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question. Each correct answer is worth 1 point.

16. Which puruṣārtha represents material prosperity, wealth, and economic security?
 - A. Mokṣa
 - B. Kāma
 - C. Artha
 - D. Dharma
17. In the Puruṣasūkta, the Brāhmaṇa (priestly) class originates from which part of the Cosmic Person?
 - A. Arms
 - B. Feet
 - C. Mouth
 - D. Thighs
18. Which of the following is NOT one of the four Vedas?
 - A. Atharva Veda
 - B. Sāma Veda
 - C. Bhagavad Veda
 - D. Yajur Veda
19. What is the correct chronological order of the four āśramas (stages of life)?
 - A. Gṛhastha, Brahmacarya, Vānaprastha, Sannyāsa
 - B. Brahmacarya, Gṛhastha, Vānaprastha, Sannyāsa
 - C. Sannyāsa, Vānaprastha, Gṛhastha, Brahmacarya
 - D. Brahmacarya, Vānaprastha, Gṛhastha, Sannyāsa
20. In the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, the deep sleep state (suṣupti) corresponds to which syllable of AUM?
 - A. A
 - B. U
 - C. M
 - D. The silence after AUM
21. Which mahāvākya means "I am Brahman" and comes from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad?
 - A. Tat tvam asi
 - B. Prajñānam brahma
 - C. Aham brahmāsmi
 - D. Ayam ātmā brahma
22. The term ṣaḍdarśana literally means:
 - A. Six sacred texts
 - B. Six viewpoints/perspectives
 - C. Six stages of life
 - D. Six forms of meditation
23. The opening sūtra of the Mīmāṃsā school is:
 - A. Now, an inquiry into Brahman (athāto brahma jijñāsā)
 - B. You are that (tat tvam asi)
 - C. Now, an inquiry into Dharma (athāto dharma jijñāsā)
 - D. I am Brahman (aham brahmāsmi)
24. The term Vedānta literally means:
 - A. The beginning of the Veda
 - B. The ritual of the Veda
 - C. The end of the Veda
 - D. The god of the Veda

25. Which of the following is NOT one of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu?

- A. Matsya (Fish)
- B. Narasimha (Man-Lion)
- C. Gaṇeśa (Elephant-headed)
- D. Vāmana (Dwarf)

26. The term apauruṣeya, used to describe the Vedas, means:

- A. Authored by Brahmā
- B. Unauthored; not of human origin
- C. Translated from divine language
- D. Written by the ṛṣis (sages)

27. The term Itihāsa refers to:

- A. The priestly class (varṇa)
- B. Sophisticated philosophical texts about Brahman
- C. "Histories"/epic poems like the Mahābhārata
- D. The ritual texts of the Veda

28. The Sāṃkhya school's two fundamental categories of reality are:

- A. Rituals and Ethics
- B. Puruṣa (consciousness) and Prakṛti (matter)
- C. Śreya and preya
- D. Karma and dharma

29. The Vedānta principle sat-kārya-vāda teaches that:

- A. The effect is created from nothing (*ex nihilo*)
- B. The effect pre-exists in the cause
- C. Ritual action alone leads to liberation
- D. God is the sole author of the Vedas

30. Hindu theologians describe the universe as *anādi* and *ananta*:

- A. Created and destroyed by God
- B. Beginningless and endless
- C. Material and spiritual
- D. Conscious and unconscious

Section III: Unit 1 — Theories, Methods, and Historical Context

The following questions cover the opening lecture, phenomenology, Anselm, Clooney, the pramāṇas, the śaḍdarśana, and the concept of myth. Choose the best answer or mark True/False. Each question is worth 1 point.

31. In the opening lecture, the anatomical diagram of the human eye was used to illustrate:

- A. The Hindu concept of darśana
- B. The "cut" — the gap between the thing itself and the phenomenon created by the brain
- C. The difference between śruti and smṛti
- D. The structure of Vedic ritual

32. Husserl's term for the directedness of consciousness — the fact that consciousness is always consciousness OF something — is:

- A. Bracketing
- B. Phenomenology
- C. Intentionality
- D. Theology

- 33.** Anselm defines "theology" as *fides quaerens intellectum*, which means:
- A. God is nothing but a word
 - B. Faith seeking understanding
 - C. I think, therefore I am
 - D. Intelligence should question faith
- 34.** Anselm's concept of *lux inaccessibilis* ("unapproachable light") refers to:
- A. The light of the sun as described in the Rgveda
 - B. The blinding, overwhelming presence of God that Anselm cannot see directly
 - C. The fire of the Vedic sacrifice
 - D. The fourth state of consciousness (*turiya*)
- 35.** Clooney's term "bibliobiography" refers to:
- A. A bibliography of books about the Bible
 - B. The way we are shaped by the sacred texts we read and internalize
 - C. A list of Vedic hymns in chronological order
 - D. The autobiography of a theologian
- 36.** According to Clooney, comparative theology is best described as:
- A. Combining two canons into one hybrid religion
 - B. Proving which religion is correct
 - C. A disciplined practice of going back-and-forth between two different canons, like sojourning in each
 - D. Studying religions from a neutral, non-committed perspective
- 37.** According to WC Smith and the course readings, the goal of studying Hindu texts is NOT to understand some category called "Hinduism" but to learn to see the world through Hindu eyes.
- T. True F. False
- 38.** In class, Brad emphasized that myths are false stories that should be replaced by scientific explanations and logical reasoning.
- T. True F. False
- 39.** The three most important *pramāṇas* discussed in this course are:
- A. Dharma, artha, and kāma
 - B. Pratyakṣa, anumāna, and śabda
 - C. Brahman, ātman, and māyā
 - D. Śruti, smṛti, and itihāsa
- 40.** The *pramāṇa* called *abhāva*, recognized by the Mīmāṃsā thinker Kumārila Bhatta, refers to knowledge gained from:
- A. Direct sensory perception
 - B. Logical inference
 - C. Absence
 - D. A gracious teacher (*guru*)
- 41.** In class, Brad argued that *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* are basically equivalent to scientific observation and logical reasoning, while *śabda* reveals a different kind of knowledge that cannot contradict science.
- T. True F. False
- 42.** Which pair of the *ṣaḍdarśana* is generally theistic and teaches that God is the author of the Vedas?
- A. Sāṃkhya & Yoga
 - B. Mīmāṃsā & Vedānta
 - C. Nyāya & Vaiśeṣika
 - D. Advaita & Dvaita
- 43.** The Mīmāṃsā phrase *śabda mātram devatā* means:
- A. Sound is the highest *pramāṇa*
 - B. The Veda is eternal and unauthored
 - C. "God is nothing but a word"
 - D. "Scripture alone is the path to liberation"

- 44.** Within Vedānta, which school (and teacher) teaches strict non-dualism?
- Dvaita (Madhva)
 - Viśiṣṭādvaita (Rāmānuja)
 - Advaita (Śaṅkara)
 - Yoga (Patañjali)
- 45.** According to the ṣaḍdarśana as taught in class, Sāṃkhya provides the THEORY while which school provides the PRACTICE?
- Nyāya
 - Vedānta
 - Mīmāṃsā
 - Yoga
- 46.** The Mīmāṃsā school emphasizes the karma mārga (path of ritual action), while the Vedānta school emphasizes the jñāna mārga (path of knowledge).
- True
 - False
- 47.** Āstika schools are those that accept the authority of the Vedas. Which of the following is a nāstika tradition?
- Nyāya
 - Vedānta
 - Buddhism
 - Mīmāṃsā

Section IV: Unit 2 — A Taste of the Veda

The following questions cover the R̥gveda hymns, the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, and the Hebrew Scripture readings. Each question is worth 1 point.

- 48.** The Nāsadiya Sūkta (RV X.129) is famous for its:
- Detailed ritual instructions for the fire sacrifice
 - Radical epistemological humility — questioning whether even the gods know the origin of creation
 - Description of the four varṇas
 - List of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu
- 49.** In the Puruṣasūkta, the creation of the universe is described as:
- God speaking the world into existence from nothing (*ex nihilo*)
 - The sacrifice and dismemberment of the Cosmic Person
 - A battle between gods and demons
 - The dreaming of Viṣṇu
- 50.** The Hiranyagarbha Sūkta describes creation through the image of:
- A cosmic battle
 - A golden embryo — the seed containing the blueprint for the Many within the One
 - A divine potter molding clay
 - A spider spinning a web
- 51.** The "milk to curd" analogy, discussed repeatedly in class, illustrates that:
- Creation is impossible
 - The material cause transforms into the material effect — the cause may cease to exist in its original form as it becomes creation
 - Kumarila Bhatta was lactose intolerant
 - God creates the world from nothing (*ex nihilo*)
- 52.** The name Śunaḥśepa literally translates as:
- Golden embryo / Golden egg
 - Dog's tail / Dog's penis
 - The tenth person
 - "Three fires"

- 53.** In the course readings, the character Śunaḥśepa is connected to the North Star / Ursa Minor because:
- He travels by starlight to escape the sacrifice
 - The three bonds on his body correspond to the three stars of the constellation, and he is the fixed axis (axis mundi) around which the drama revolves
 - He prays to the star gods for liberation
 - His name means "Star of the North" in Sanskrit
- 54.** Śunaḥśepa liberates himself from the sacrificial stake by:
- Breaking the ropes with physical strength
 - Bribing Varuṇa with one hundred cows
 - Reciting Vedic hymns (mantras) from memory — liberating himself through Vāc (sacred speech)
 - Waiting for his father to rescue him
- 55.** In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, Naciketas' father "gives" him to Yama (Death) because:
- Naciketas has committed a grave sin
 - Naciketas questions his father's sincerity in sacrifice — the father is giving away worthless possessions
 - Naciketas has failed his Vedic studies
 - It is a ritual requirement for the firstborn son
- 56.** Naciketas' third and most important boon from Yama concerns:
- A hundred years of material wealth and pleasure
 - The secret of immortality through ritual
 - Knowledge of what happens after death — the nature of the Ātman (Self)
 - The correct construction of the fire altar
- 57.** The distinction between *śreya* and *preya* in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad refers to:
- Knowledge vs. ignorance
 - The good vs. the pleasant
 - Sacred vs. secular texts
 - Knowledge vs. ethics
- 58.** In the Chariot Allegory from the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, the Ātman (Self) corresponds to:
- The chariot
 - The horses
 - The charioteer
 - The passenger sitting in the chariot
- 59.** The Kaṭha Upaniṣad is a "keystone text" that bridges earlier Vedic rituals with the later teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā, which takes place in a chariot.
- T. True F. False
- 60.** The correct chronological order of the four types of texts within each Veda is:
- Upaniṣad, Āraṇyaka, Brāhmaṇa, Saṃhitā
 - Brāhmaṇa, Saṃhitā, Upaniṣad, Āraṇyaka
 - Saṃhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, Upaniṣad
 - Saṃhitā, Āraṇyaka, Brāhmaṇa, Upaniṣad
- 61.** The Hebrew term for the story of Abraham binding Isaac for sacrifice is:
- The Passover
 - The Akedah
 - The Suffering Servant
 - The Puruṣasūkta
- 62.** In the Passover narrative (Exodus 12), the central theological principle is:
- God creates the universe from nothing
 - A lamb is sacrificed as a substitute to avert the death of the firstborn son
 - Faith in God is more important than sacrifice
 - Jesus is the lamb of God

- 63.** The Suffering Servant passage (Isaiah 52-53) describes a figure who:
- A. Conquers enemies through military victory
 - B. Suffers vicariously as a substitute to heal the sins of the community
 - C. Refuses to accept his suffering
 - D. Is identified by name as King David
- 64.** Abraham never argues with God; he obediently accepts God's desire to destroy Sodom and Gemorrah and likewise obediently agrees to sacrifice his son.
- T. True F. False
- 65.** The Sanskrit term *upasamhāra*, emphasized throughout Unit 2, refers to:
- A. The skill of sacrificing, as Yama taught Naciketas
 - B. The skill of coordinating texts like the mahāvākya-s, as Śaṅkara taught his students
 - C. The skill of meditating, as Patañjali taught in the Yoga school
 - D. The renunciant stage of life
- 66.** According to Brad, if your interpretation of a sacred text contradicts science and empirical observation, you should check your interpretation rather than reject the text.
- T. True F. False

Section V: Rambachan — "The Nature of the Ātman"

The following questions are based on Chapter 3 of Anantanand Rambachan's The Advaita Worldview. Each question is worth 1 point.

- 67.** According to Rambachan, the basic human problem in Advaita is that:
- A. The gods have abandoned humanity
 - B. The multiplication of desires and secular knowledge leave us with a sense of incompleteness and sorrow
 - C. Vedic rituals are no longer being performed correctly
 - D. Human beings are fundamentally evil
- 68.** The story of the "tenth person" illustrates that:
- A. A new self must be created through meditation
 - B. The self was never actually lost — ignorance merely concealed what was always there
 - C. Only ten people can achieve mokṣa
 - D. Counting is unreliable as a pramāṇa
- 69.** Rambachan explains that "bliss" (*ānanda*), as applied to the ātman, is best understood as:
- A. A specific emotional feeling during meditation
 - B. Limitlessness — the ātman is free from the limits of time, space, and objecthood
 - C. The happiness caused by fulfilling desires
 - D. A temporary mental state
- 70.** According to Rambachan, mokṣa in Advaita is:
- A. Becoming something new through accumulated good karma
 - B. Discovering and owning oneself to be what one already is: self-existent, limitless awareness
 - C. Physical death and merging with a deity
 - D. Achieving permanent dreamless sleep
- 71.** According to Rambachan, the Upaniṣads present Brahman as BOTH the intelligent/efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) AND the material cause (*upādāna kāraṇa*) of the world.
- T. True F. False
- 72.** Rambachan uses the example of the sun illuminating the solar system (from Bhagavad-Gītā 13:33) to illustrate:
- A. That the physical sun is Brahman
 - B. The non-duality of the self — one awareness illumines all bodies and all minds
 - C. That the ātman is located in the sky
 - D. That multiple ātmans exist, one for each body

Section VI: Unit 3 — The Mahāvākyas of Advaita Vedānta

The following questions cover the Chāndogya, Aitareya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka, and Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads, plus class discussions. Each question is worth 1 point.

73. "Tat tvam asi" (That thou art) is taught by the sage Uddālaka to his son Śvetaketu in which Upaniṣad?
- Māṇḍūkya
 - Aitareya
 - Chāndogya
 - Bṛhadāraṇyaka
74. Śvetaketu's spiritual problem at the beginning of Chāndogya VI is that he:
- Is too young to understand the Vedas
 - Has returned from twelve years of study full of intellectual arrogance but lacking true self-knowledge
 - Has been cursed by Varuṇa
 - Refuses to accept his father's teaching
75. In class, Play-Doh was used to model which teaching from the Chāndogya?
- The four states of consciousness
 - The relationship between essence and form — names and forms are "modifications of speech" while the substance remains unchanged
 - The five sheaths (pañca kośa)
 - The difference between śreya and preya

Bonus Question 1 (+5): Explain Prabhākara's Tripuṭipratyakṣavāda in six words.

Bonus Question 2 (+5): Brad's stipulative definition of theology is: (write on your answer sheet)

Bonus question 3 (+5): In Valli 3 of the Katha Upaniṣad, Yama gives an allegory of a chariot. The allegory has five parts. In 1-2 words, describe each part (horses = _____, reins = _____, etc). Write your answer on the BACK of your answer sheet.