VL The Making of a World Religion: Introduction to the History of Sikhs and Sikhism (c. 1500-2000)

*Nihang-Sikhs during a religious ceremony, c. 1980.*

**TIME:**
THURSDAY 15:15-16:45
(19.02.; 05.03.; 19.03.; 02.04.; 23.04.; 07.05.; 28.05.)

**PLACE:**
IFW D 42

**INSTRUCTOR OF RECORDS:**
Prof. Dr. Harald Fischer-Tiné
**ABSTRACT**

The primary aim of this course is to enhance the cultural sensitivity of the participants by introducing them to the richly diverse cultural and religious landscape of the Indian subcontinent while at the same time pointing to similarities and commonalities with more familiar western settings. Steering clear of exoticism or rigid cultural relativism, the course is designed to make students reflect on the interrelations between religion and politics and the processes of homogenisation and exclusion that go in tandem with religious community building. It provides a history of the Sikh religion that emerged as a distinct religious tradition between the early 16th and late 19th century in the north Indian Punjab and is now widely accepted as a “world religion”. This exemplary case study is used to illustrate a broader phenomenon, namely the kind of transformations religious communities undergo when faced with the challenges of modernity. The first part of the course offers a glimpse of the theology and liturgy of Sikhism, and explains why this particular Indian faith that was long perceived as part of Hinduism. The following sessions put the historical development of a religiously distinct Sikh community under scrutiny — from the days of founder Guru Nanak in the 15th to the multifaceted effects of the global migration of Sikhs in the 20th century and the rise of Sikh separatist terrorism in the 1980 and 90s.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- Regular presence (minimum: 80%) and active participation in the discussions.
- Regular reading of the mandatory texts (a course reader with the selected texts listed below will be provided online).
- Final exam (28 May) and 1000 word summaries of two of the readings from sessions 2-6.
- Link to online reader: [http://gruppe.elba2.ch/12619/GmdkvAPkUq](http://gruppe.elba2.ch/12619/GmdkvAPkUq)
Contact to the teaching assistant: cornelia.rueegg@gmw.gess.ethz.ch

**SESSION PLAN**

(✪ = mandatory readings available in the online reader)

Session 1 (19.02.2015)  
   a) Introduction to the course  
      b) Glimpses on the lived practice of Sikhism  

Session 2 (05.03.2015)  
   The pen and the sword: From the teachings of Guru Nanak to the militarisation of the Sikhs (16th-18th century)  
Guru Nanak the putative founder of Sikhism and his nine successors (miniature painting, Punjab c. 1820).

Session 3 (19. 03. 2015) External Pressures and Reform: Transformations under British colonial rule and the Sigh Sabha Movement (1849-1920)

Session 4 (02. 04. 2015) The end of colonial loyalty (1913-1947): Sikh migration and political conflict

Session 5 (23. 04. 2015) From linguistic (sub)-nationalism to Civil War: Militant Sikh Politics in independent India (1948-1992)
- Purewal, Shinder, Sikh Ethnonationalism and the Political Economy of the Punjab, New Delhi 2000, pp. 119-63.
**Session 6 (07.05.2015)**  
**New fields and debates in Sikh Studies: Diaspora and Gender**  

**Session 7 (28.05.2014)**  
**Final Exam**

### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


*Ballantyne, Tony*, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora, Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World*, (Repr.) New Delhi 2007.


—, *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order*, New Delhi 1996.

—, Guru Nanak in History, Chandigarh ²1979.
—/BANGA, I. (Eds.), History and Ideology. The Khalsa Over 300 Years, Delhi 1999.
LAFONT, Jean Marie, Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Lord of the Five Rivers, New Delhi 2002.
MAHMOOD, Cynthia Keppley, Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants, Philadelphia 1996.
MAJOR, Andrew J., Return to Empire. Punjab Under the Sikhs and British in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, New Delhi 1996.
—, Historical Dictionary of Sikhism, Delhi ²2002.
—, Popular Sikh Art, Delhi 1991.
—(Ed.), Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism (Textual Sources for the Study of Religion), Chicago 1990.


O’CONNELL et al. (Eds.), Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century, Toronto 1988.


PUREWAL, Shinder, Sikh Ethnonationalism and the Political Economy of Punjab, Delhi 2000.


—, Encyclopaedia of Sikhism. Religion and Culture, 2 Vols. New Delhi


— (Ed), Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs, New Delhi 1978.


SINGH, PRITAM /SHINDER SIKH THANDI (Eds.), Punjabi Identity in a Global Context, New Delhi [u.a.] 1999.