Leader:

Deane Curtin, Department of Philosophy,

Dates: Jan 3-27

Estimated Cost: $5,980; Application Cost: $60; Additional Costs: $350 (books, passport, immunizations, etc.)

Are you curious about the spiritual practice of the Buddha, who was awakened while meditating under a bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, India? Perhaps you would like to know more about the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

This course is designed for open-minded and adventurous students who want to experience historical and contemporary Buddhist practice in the place where it was born 2500 years ago. We will visit the most important historical sites where the Buddha taught: Bodhgaya, where he experienced enlightenment, as well as Rajgir and Sarnath where he delivered his most famous talks. We will also experience the contemporary practice of Buddhism in a variety of forms. Many Buddhist sects—Japanese, Burmese, Thai, Sri Lankan, Tibetan—have established temples surrounding the historical courtyard in Bodhgaya. In one place it is possible to experience many forms of contemporary Buddhism and speak with contemporary practitioners.

The trip culminates with a journey to the Himalayas and the city of Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama lives. There, we will visit important Tibetan Buddhist monks and experience the traditional Tibetan arts of thangka painting and sculpture.

Other features of the trip are visits to the Taj Mahal, to Varanasi, the famous Hindu pilgrimage town on the Ganges River, and to the narrow market streets of Old Delhi.
2009 participants said:

"India will challenge everything you think you know about the world. This is a trip that will change your life. If you want an intellectual, emotional and physical adventure, this is the trip for you -- a J-term educational extreme sport. Deep mountain gorges fringed with ten feet tall poinsettias and wild monkeys; rural villages with palm trees and dung covered walls separating fields of mustard, lentil and rice; urban race track roads where rickshaws join ox carts, bicycles piled ten feet high with bundles, and buses with passengers perched on top in a chaotic dance; monastery entrances that infiltrate all senses with prayer flags kissing the breeze, the deep resonating chants of monks and aromatic drifting incense. And all this in just a couple of days! Just when you think you’ve seen it all, there is so much more. You will not find a trip that exposes you to more. India is a land of extremes and on this trip you experience them all."

“India was an opportunity I could not pass up. India is simultaneously beautiful, heartbreaking, and illuminating. Our travels provided some of the most educational and enlightening lessons of all my time at Gustavus. It took three years, but finally going to India was more than I could have supposed.”

“This course was so informative and meaningful to me that it completely changed my perception of the world and my personal focus in life. India is all you hoped to see and all you never wanted to see.

India is: an enormous crush of humanity, multiple religions coupled with the intense spiritually of the people, the daily jolting visibility of people living ancient history and practices side by side high technological advancements... you cannot possibly comprehend what India is

Buddhist India

January Term 2011