

HIST 398.004

Dr. Emma Flatt

KAMA SUTRA: LOVE & POLITICS

TR 9:30AM – 10:45AM

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.