**WEEK 11: WRITING AND DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENT**

CASTE AND RELIGION

The Indian caste system, as we learned a few weeks ago, is perhaps the most ancient and long-lasting social hierarchy (other than gender-based ones) in world history, stretching back thousands of years. The caste system places people on a social ladder, depending entirely on the accident of birth. Those at the top are considered superior to those beneath them. To those of us today (including many modern-day Indians), raised in a more egalitarian era, the caste system seems inherently unfair. But as this week’s website reading selections—two from the holy Hindu scripture known as the Upanishads and one from the The Life of the Buddha—the two great religions of the East—Hinduism and Buddhism, both emerging in caste-dominated India in the first millennium BC—also challenged the caste system. After reading these selections, explain in about 150-200 words how each challenged—or failed to challenge—the caste system.

**Please submit the assignment via Blackboard by the beginning of class on Tuesday, April 13.**

Be prepared to discuss your answer in class.