

RL353

BUDDHISM: PAST AND PRESENT (SPRING '08)

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DESCRIPTION

An in-depth introduction to Buddhism, focusing on its history, literature, ideas, practices, and diverse manifestations

BUDDHISM AND THE LIBERAL ARTS

The liberal arts tradition, as I understand it, is premised on the assumption that a true education requires more than the mere mastery of trade-specific data, but also the cultivation of a variety of valuable cognitive and social abilities. Among the cognitive skills a teacher in the liberal arts tradition assays to nurture are the capacity to think and learn independently, and to critically assess one's own presuppositions, perspectives, and biases, as well as those of others (including teachers and the authors of course texts). In addition, the liberal arts tradition seeks to foster academic facility in formulating, evaluating, and expressing arguments, as well as in seeking, classifying, and organizing information. The liberal arts tradition, however, is not merely about cognitive skills, but also entails the development of certain social qualities, the most noble among them being respect, an empathetic imagination, and counter-conventional thinking (i.e., the ability to envisage how, in the words of a Buddhist text, it "might be otherwise"). Challenging students to wrestle with the viewpoints, values, and worldviews of other people is one of the most efficient ways to achieve these goals of a liberal education. RL353 exposes students to one of these worldviews in a sustained fashion. If it is successful, the course will do more than just purvey information about Buddhism, but will also facilitate a sincere, thorough, and reorienting *encounter* with the Buddhist tradition and those who adhere to it.

PURPOSE

If all goes well, upon completing this course you should be better equipped than before to:

- understand—*historically* and *critically*—the aggregate of texts, traditions, events, persons, practices, and institutions that together constitute what we in the West have come to call "Buddhism";
- appreciate—*empathetically* and *experientially*—that Buddhism (like every religion) is a living, empirical reality, not a neutered abstraction, a reality embodied culturally and socially in a variety of contexts around the world, including our own;
- encounter—*sensitively* and *profoundly*—Buddhism as a religion that brings meaning to millions around the world.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Lucien Stryk, *World of the Buddha: An Introduction to Buddhist Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1982)—**purchase online**
- John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, 3rd edition (United States: Wadsworth, 2008)
- Robert Buswell, Jr., *The Zen Monastic Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)
- Paul Reps, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994)

*In reading schedule (below), required course texts are indicated only by the author's last name.

**Unless otherwise noted, all assigned texts not listed above are available on Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE

The following four components will comprise the grade for this course:

- **Participation (25%):** Students will be expected to attend the class regularly, to ask informed questions, and to respect each other, the professor, and guest lecturers. Students will also participate in periodic small-group discussions. If these discussions are to be successful, students will need to have carefully read the assigned texts. A large portion of the participation grade will be determined by the extent to which the student's participation in these discussions demonstrates his or her engagement with and understanding of the assigned texts. Students can increase their participation grade by visiting their lonely professor in his office for informal conversation or help with/conversation about the course.
 - **A portion of your participation grade will be determined by your participation in the visits to local Buddhist institutions (Indianapolis Zen Center, 2/10; An Lac Temple, 2/17, Dromtonpa, 2/21).** These visits will take up either half a Sunday (morning until early afternoon) or most of an evening. You are expected not only to attend, but to *linger* afterwards, to eat food if it is offered to you, and to spend time with practitioners and leaders at the institutions. You should therefore clear out your schedules ahead of time to make room for this required part of the course. **Finally, Entering an unfamiliar environment is often initially uncomfortable and confusing (and dealing with this discomfort and confusion is part of the assignment's challenge). Nevertheless, students are expected to be respectful, sensitive, and careful participant-observers at these events.**
- **Indy Buddhist Biography Paper (25%):** Anytime up until March 6th at class time, students will submit a brief (4-5 page) biography of a local Buddhist (over the age of 18). Contacts with local Buddhists will be arranged through leaders at the three institutions students will be visiting. Within each group, students should pair up with another student for this project. The pair of students is entirely responsible, after their visit to the institution, for making arrangements with the person they will interview. They should do so in person, at a time convenient to them and the person to be interviewed. The student pairs are responsible for devising interesting questions and recording (with notes, not with any recording device) the gist of what is said in the interview. Some obvious questions would be, Could you provide a brief overview of your life? How did you become a Buddhist? What

are the most important aspects of your practice? What are the central beliefs of [your kind of] Buddhists? Students should not, however, limit themselves to these questions. The student pairs will then cooperate on the drafting of a biography of the person, focusing on their religious practices (but not neglecting other aspects of their life). These biographies will be posted on the internet, at our “Sects in the City” website (www.butler.edu/cfv/religions), and so students are responsible for sending a copy of the biography to the person they interview and getting their suggestions for revision as well as a signature indicating the person’s willingness to have the biography posted on the internet. The biographies will be posted anonymously, but you should provide a name and contact information for the person you interview in the copy you turn in to me.

- ***Harp of Burma* Paper (25%):** By class time on April 10th, students should turn in (by e-mail) a 5-page paper on *The Harp of Burma*, by Michio Takeyama (and translated by Howard Hibbett). Students may take the paper in any direction, but should focus on how the novel engages the themes of the course. Also, unless the format you choose prohibits it, you should provide a thesis/central argument around which you will organize the essay. As part of this assignment, students are expected on the third day of class to show the professor a copy of their receipt of purchase (the bookstore has not ordered the book).
- **Final Examination (25%):** Students will take a final examination ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Paper Submission:

All papers should be submitted as a Microsoft Word (.doc) or, for Mac users, a Rich Text Format (.rtf) document attached to an e-mail to the instructor. *Please do not turn in hard copies of any assignment.*

Lateness Policy

Extensions will generally be granted without question to those who request them *before the assignment is due*. Extensions will *not* be granted after the fact. Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of two percentage points per day.

E-mail Policy

All students are expected to check their Butler e-mail account daily (when school is in session) for class updates and reminders.

Rough Drafts:

The professor will read and comment on complete rough drafts of student papers, provided they are submitted at least one week in advance of their due date.

Student Disability Accommodation

It is the policy and practice of Butler University to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification from Student Disability Services is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one week advance notice. Otherwise, it is not guaranteed that the accommodation can be received on a timely basis. If you have questions about Student Disability Services, you may wish to contact Michele Atterson, JH 136, ext. 9308

Academic Integrity:

Students will be expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity as outlined in the Butler University Student Handbook, as well as to the highest standards of honesty, good faith and fair dealing. Students discovered violating those standards will **fail the course**, and may face additional sanctions which could include expulsion from the University. Violations include (but are not limited to) cheating, collaborating improperly on assignments assigned individually, and plagiarizing (turning in another person's work as one's own, copying text from any source, *including the internet*, books, articles, or magazines, without acknowledgement, etc.). Students should consult Butler's statement on academic integrity, posted on the course's Blackboard site under "Course Documents," for more detailed information on the University's expectations and policies. The library provides a tutorial on plagiarism for those needing more instruction: www.butler.edu/library/instruction/tutorial/index.html.

Statement on Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop an understanding of the community in which they live. Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action (Butler University Rules of Conduct #2) and/or removal from class. Some specific examples include talking during lecture or the use of cellular phones, pagers, etc.

SCHEDULE

T 1/15 – Introduction

- In-Class Video: *The Simpson's*, “She of Little Faith” episode
- Gethin, pgs. 1-6
- Donald Lopez, *The Story of Buddhism*, pgs. 1-18

R 1/17 – Introduction Cont’d/Historical Context

- Gethin, pgs. 7-34

T 1/22 – Life of the Buddha

- Purchase *Harp of Burma* (receipt required in class)
- Stryck, pgs. 1-46 (Jataka Tales, Buddha-Karita, The Great Retirement, The Great Struggle and the Attainment of Buddhahood, The Death of the Buddha)
- Strong, pgs. 11-17, 24-36 (The Great Departure and Enlightenment, Remembering Past Lives)

R 1/24 – NO CLASS

T 1/29 – Buddhist Scriptures

- In class video: Excerpts from *Footprints of the Buddha*
- Gethin, 35-58

R 1/31 – Four Noble Truths/Karma/Dharma

- Gethin, 59-84
- Strong, pgs. 42-45 (Realizing the Four Noble Truths)
- H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translation*, pgs. 226-32, 264-267 (Good and Bad Karma, How to Obtain Wealth, Beauty, and Social Position, The Round of Existence, The Devoted Wife)

T 2/5 – Buddhist Cosmology

- Strong, pgs. 36-42 (Viewing the Cosmos)
- Gethin, pgs. 112-132

R 2/7 – Impermanence/Self

- Gethin, pgs. 133-162
- Stryck, pgs. 47-53, 89-124, 143-149 (The Going Forth, The Sermon at Benares, Questions of Milinda, Questions Which Tend Not to Edification)
- Strong, pgs. 104-110 (The Buddha’s Silence, Channa is Taught the Middle Way, The Man Who Lost His Body, The Arising of Suffering, Interdependent Origination)

2/10 (Sunday) – Visit to Indianapolis Zen Center, 3703 Washington Blvd. (Group will leave Irwin Library parking lot at 8:10 am and will return around 1:00 pm.)

T 2/12 – Early Buddhist Women

- Alan Sponberg, “Attitudes Towards Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism,” in Jose Ignacio Cabezon, ed., *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Society*, pgs. 3-36
- Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Portraits of Buddhist Women*, pgs. 109-116, 150-154, 184-189

R 2/14 – The Sangha

- Gethin, pgs. 85-111
- Strong, pgs. 56-91, 241-44 (Tales of Conversion, Rites of Passage, The Regulation of the Sangha, Sangha Situations, The Laity and the Sangha, Magical Rites: The Chanting of Pirit)
- Stryck, pgs. 219-23, 236-37 (Rhinoceros Discourse, Duties of Lay Followers)

2/17 (Sunday) – Visit to An Lac Temple (Group will leave Butler at 9:00 am from the Irwin Library parking lot. The service begins at 10:00. We will return around 1:30 pm)

T 2/19 – The Buddhist Path

- In-Class Video: Excerpts from *Making of a Monk*
- Gethin, pgs. 163-201

R 2/21 – *Abhidharma*/Mahayana

- Gethin, 202-223; 56-59 (review); 224-52

2/21 (THURSDAY): Visit to Dromtonpa Buddhist Center, 1052 Woodlawn Avenue (Group will leave from the Irwin parking lot at 6:00 pm and will return around 9:30. Questions at 6:30, service at 7:00.

T 2/26 – Compassion and Skillful Means

- Strong, pgs. 145-162; 173-181 (The Parable of the Burning House, Nagarjuna: Verses on the Noble Truths and on Nirvana, The Necessity of Compassion, Developing the Thought of Enlightenment, The Practice of the Perfections)
- Stryk, 256-260 (The Lost Son)
- Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, chapters 2 and 16, pgs. 22-47; 237-44
- Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti*, pgs. 10-19

R 2/28 – Chinese Buddhisms

- In-class video on Kuan-yin pilgrimage
- Luis Gomez, *The Land of Bliss*, pgs. 15-59

T 3/4 – Pure Land Practice

- Daniel Stevenson, “Pure Land Worship and Meditation in China,” and “Deathbed Testimonials of the Pure Land Faithful,” in Donald Lopez, *Buddhism in Practice*, pgs. 359-379, 592-603.

R 3/6 – No Class

- **Indy Buddhist Biographies due**

SPRING BREAK (3/10-14)

T 3/18 – Guest lecture: Li-Chun Lee-Thompson

- Stryk, pgs. 334-42 (Platform Scripture of the Sixth Patriarch)
- John McRae, “The Story of Early Ch’an,” in Kenneth Kraft, ed., *Zen: Tradition and Transition*, pgs. 125-39

R 3/20 - Early Ch’an/Zen/Son

- Reps, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (come to class prepared to read one koan/kung-an and discuss what you think it “means”)
- Start reading Buswell, pgs. 3-20; 37-48 (Introduction, Chapter 2)

T 3/25 – Ch’an Buddhism

- In-Class Film, *Amongst White Clouds*
- Buswell, 69-106 (Chapter 4)

R 3/27 – MEET AT FRONT ENTRANCE TO IMA

- Tour led by John Teramoto, Curator of Japanese Art at the IMA
- Robert Sharf, “The Scripture on the Production of Buddha Images,” in Donald Lopez, ed., *Religions of China in Practice*, pgs. 261-267

T 4/1 – Zen Buddhism

- Excerpts from *Land of the Disappearing Buddha*
- Buswell, pgs. 107- 48; 161-202 (Chapters 5 and 6)

W 4/2 – Evening viewing of Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring, 6:00 JH174

R 4/3 – Zen/Ch’an/Son Monasticism

- Buswell, pgs. 161-202, 217-223 (Chapters 8 and Conclusion)

T 4/8 – Modern Japanese Buddhism

- Eiki Hoshino and Dosho Takeda, “Mizuko Kuyo and Abortion in Contemporary Japan,” in Mark Mullins, et. al, eds., *Religion and Society in Modern Japan*, pgs. 171-190
- William LaFleur, “Buddhism and Abortion: ‘The Way to Memorialize One’s Mizuko,’” in George Tanabe, ed., *Religions of Japan in Practice*, pgs. 193-196

R 4/10 – Tibetan Buddhism

- **Book Paper Due**
- Donald Lopez, “Introduction,” in Lopez, ed., *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, pgs. 3-36
- Final Exam Questions Distributed

T 4/15 – Tibetan Views of Death and Dying –

- Elisabeth Benard, “The Tibetan Tantric View of Death and the Afterlife,” in Hiroshi Obayashi, ed., *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives on World Religions*, pgs. 169-180
- Shaw, “Worship of Women in Tantric Buddhism,” in King, ed., *Women and Goddess Traditions*, pgs. 111-136

R 4/17 – Socially Engaged Buddhism

- Sallie King, “Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Buddhist Church,” in Sallie King and Christopher Queen, eds., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, pgs. 321-364
- Christopher Queen, “Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation,” in Sallie King and Christopher Queen, eds., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, pgs. 45-72

T 4/22 – American Buddhism

- Thomas Tweed, “Who is a Buddhist,” and Richard Seager, “American Buddhism in the Making,” in Charles Prebish and Martin Baumann, *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*, pgs. 17-33, 106-119 (Available on NetLibrary, under “databases” on Irwin’s website)
- Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, pgs. 3-9, 30-34, 241-46
- Strong, pgs. 342-358 (Mythic Histories: Smokey the Bear Sutra, Divisional Issues, Regulation and Reform, Rituals and Festivals Meditational Endeavors)

R 4/24 - Final Take-Home Exam Due