

Religious Studies 260
BUDDHIST THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

Joseph Adler
O'Connor 204
adlerj@kenyon.edu
740-427-5290

Fall 2011
T-Th 1:10-2:30
Ascension 125
Office hours: TTh 2:30-4, WF 3-4
and by appointment

- [Links](#)
- [Selected handouts / readings](#)
- [Paper format guide](#)
- [Paper criteria](#)

Buddhism has been one of the major connective links among the varied cultures of South, Southeast, and East Asia for over two millennia, and in this century it has established a solid presence in Europe and North America. This course will survey the history, doctrines, and practices of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, Tibet, East Asia, and the West. Readings will be in both primary texts and secondary sources, and will be supplemented by films. The format will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

Reading:

Available in Bookstore:

- Donald W. Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 2nd ed.
- Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra*

Buy online:

- John S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, 2nd ed. (2001 or 2002)

There are also several reading assignments on **Moodle**: You must print these out and bring them to class when they are being discussed.



Monumental image of the Buddha at the Yungang caves, China.

Course Requirements and Grading:

- **Participation (15%).** Regular attendance, timely completion of reading assignments, active participation in class discussions, and one short conference with me in my office no later than **Thursday, Sept. 15**. Grading criteria are as follows:

- A: Regular attendance (no more than 3 unexcused absences), regular contribution to discussion (at least once a week)
- B: Regular attendance, occasional contribution
- C: Too many absences OR too little contribution
- D: Too many absences AND too little contribution
- F: Other serious problems

Option: To supplement the *class discussion* portion of your participation grade for any week, you may turn in a written "reaction paper" (1-2 pages, typed, maximum one per week) containing your reactions to, reflections on, and/or questions about course readings, films, and lectures. These will be graded 1 (credit), 2 (good), or 3 (excellent) and will be returned within a week with comments. The best times to turn these in would be on Tuesdays, after we have completed a section.

- **Three quizzes (10% each),** consisting of short-answer questions. You will have 15 minutes for each. A study sheet will be distributed one week in advance.
- **One take-home essay (15%),** 3-5 pages. Topic will be distributed in class one week in advance.
- **Final exam (20%).** The exam will consist of short answer questions like the quizzes and one or two essay questions, and will be given the last day of class.
- **Research paper (20%):** 8-12 pages, double-spaced, plus bibliography; due **Wednesday, Dec. 14**. You must discuss your topic with me by **Wednesday, Nov. 30**, and turn in a preliminary bibliography by **Monday, Dec. 5**. The paper will make use of at least three books or articles outside of assigned class readings, and must follow the [Paper format guide](#); see also the [Paper criteria](#).

Notes:

- *Personal computers* are not allowed in class. Readings that are online must be printed out and brought to class. The reason for this is that I want you to engage with the readings by marking them up with notes. *Cellphones*, of course, must be turned completely off.
- If you have a disability that will affect your work or participation in this class, please contact Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services, at 427-5453 or via e-mail at salvae@kenyon.edu, and speak to me individually, early in the semester, about the arrangements you will need.



Mikaeri Amida Nyorai: "Tathagatha Amida [Buddha] Looking Back." Emphasizing Amida Buddha's infinite compassion, this National Treasure from Zenrinji Temple in Kyoto shows Amida Buddha looking back for any stragglers to bring to the Pure Land.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1-2 Aug 25-Sep 8

**Introduction;
The Buddha and the early Sangha**

Read: Mitchell, Intro, ch. 1
Strong, ch. 1 + pp. 51-70, 76-87

Film: "Footprint of the Buddha"

3 Sep 13-15

The Dharma

Read: Mitchell, ch. 2
Strong, pp. 88-128



4 Sep 20-22

Theravada

Read: Mitchell, ch. 3 + pp. 134-138
Strong, pp. 128-133

5-6 Sep 27-Oct 4

Mahayana

Tuesday, Sep 27: Quiz 1

Read: Mitchell, ch. 4 + pp. 139-159
Strong, ch. 4 + pp. 176-187
Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, pp. 13-16, 60-76
[\[Moodle\]](#)

<< **October Break** >>

7 Oct 11-13

The Lotus Sutra

Read: Stephen F. Teiser and Jacqueline I. Stone, "Interpreting the *Lotus Sūtra*" (from Teiser and Stone, *Readings of the Lotus Sūtra*) [\[Moodle\]](#)
Watson, *The Lotus Sutra*, pp. ix-xxii, chs. 1-5, 7, 10-16, 20-23, 25

8 Oct 18-20

Vajrayana

Film: "The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche"

Tuesday, Oct 18: essay due

Read: Mitchell, ch. 6
Strong, pp. 193-204, 208-209, 276-286

9-10 Oct 25-Nov 3

China

Film: "To the Land of Bliss"

Tuesday, Oct 25: Quiz 2

Read: Mitchell, ch. 7
Strong, ch. 8**Moodle reading:**

- Peter Gregory, "The Vitality of Buddhism in the Sung"
- Paul Swanson, "Truth in T'ien-t'ai Philosophy"
- Martine Batchelor, "Interpenetration"
- Philip Yampolsky, "Ch'an: A Historical Sketch" and Thomas P. Kasulis, "Ch'an Spirituality" (from Yoshinori, *Buddhist Spirituality*)

11 Nov 8-10

Korea

Read: Mitchell, ch. 8

12 Nov 15-17

Japan

Film: "Land of the Disappearing Buddha"

Read: Mitchell, ch. 9
Strong, ch. 9Dōgen, "*Raihai Tokuzui: Paying Homage and Acquiring the Essence*"
(from Cook, *How to Raise an Ox*) [[Moodle](#)]

<< Thanksgiving break >>

13 Nov 29-Dec 1

Modern Asia

Tuesday, Nov 29: Quiz 3

Read: Mitchell, ch. 10
Strong, pp. 231-250

14 Dec 6-8

Buddhism in the WestRead: Mitchell, ch. 11
Strong, ch. 10

Thu., Dec 8: Final exam (in class)

Research papers due:
Monday, Dec 12, 4:30 p.m.

The Bodhisattva Guanyin (Avalokitesvara), in the position of "royal ease."