

Relg385: Buddhist Traditions

Fall Semester, 2001.

Instructor: [Dr. James S. Dalton](#).

Office: The Clare Center, 2nd Floor.

Office hours: TT 8:30-9:30

Wed 8:30-11:30

and by appointment.

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Course Description

This course concerns the history, development and structure of the religious traditions of [Buddhism](#). It is an introductory and survey course which will examine the roles of these traditions in shaping both individual and communal experience as well as their interaction with various cultures and peoples. Special attention will be paid to the three Jewels, consisting of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Samgha within the traditions of [Buddhism](#). The course will also raise issues surrounding the specifically Buddhist experience of the Sacred and, consequently, its religious character. The relationship of Buddhism to modern societies and the impact of Buddhism upon Euro-American culture will also be considered.

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to give the student an appreciation of the major forms of religious experience exhibited within Buddhism. Special attention will be paid to the ways in which the various Buddhist traditions contribute to an understanding of the religious dimension of the human situation in history and in the contemporary world. Thus, the objectives of this course are three fold:

1. to introduce the student to a religious and cultural tradition possibly differing from his or her own.
2. to examine Buddhism as a *religious* tradition in its cultural and historical settings.
3. to observe the situation of Buddhism in the modern world and its presence in Euro-American culture.

Course Requirements

- A. All students will be required to have computer accounts on Siena's Vax computer and will be expected to utilize electronic mail, word processing and the [World Wide Web](#). Since we will be utilizing the class e-mail lists and some students have non-Siena e-mail addresses, [click here](#) for instructions on how to forward your Siena e-mail to another address.

- B. During the semester there will be a quiz and two examinations. The quiz will be held on Thursday, September 27. The mid semester examination is scheduled for Thursday, October 18. Final examinations are to be held during the week of December 14-20.
- C. *The Snow Leopard* by [Peter Matthiessen](#) should be completed in a preliminary first reading by the mid semester examination.
- D. Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* will be read and discussed as one entry to the practice of Buddhism in the modern world. Periodically, we will discuss parts of the book in class. Students will prepare brief response papers to facilitate this discussion.
- E. All students will be expected to go beyond the materials presented in class through a [research project](#) which will be submitted to the professor one week prior to the last class. Projects will be due on Thursday, December 6. A preliminary progress report will be due, via e-mail on Thursday, November 15. For information on the project see the [attached criteria](#).
- F. Students will be required to attend classes on a regular basis. If the student is unable to attend, he or she will still be responsible for what occurs during that class period. As a general guideline, any more than four absences will be considered excessive. Further absences might effect the student's final grade.
- G. The instructor presupposes that every student will do his or her own work according to accepted academic standards. Any student who copies someone else's work or is in any other way guilty of [cheating or plagiarism](#) will be subject to the penalties outlined in the Siena College [Statement on Academic Integrity](#). At a minimum, the student will receive a grade of "F" for the course.

Textbooks

Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

[Matthiessen, Peter](#). *The Snow Leopard*. Penguin Nature Classics. NY: Penguin Books, 1996.

Sogyal, Rinpoche. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993.

Course Outline

1. Introduction: [Buddha](#), [Buddhism](#) and the [study of Buddhism](#).
Film: "[Why Has Bodhi Dharma Left for the East](#)"

A. [Religious experience](#) and Sacred Realities.

B. Buddha and the Study of Buddhism.
Reading: Harvey, 1-8; Sogyal, ix-xiv.

2. [The Buddha in India](#): Turning the Wheel of the Dharma.

Reading: Sogyal, 3-101.

Video: "[In the Footsteps of the Buddha](#)"

A. India at the [time of the Buddha](#).

Reading: Harvey, 1-8.

B. The [Biography](#) of the [Buddha](#).

Video: "[Little Buddha](#)" (excerpts)

C. Early Buddhism: [Rebirth](#) and [Karma](#).

Reading: Harvey, 32-46.

D. [Preaching the first sermon](#): the [Four Noble Truths](#).

Reading: Harvey, 47-72.

E. The rise of the Sangha and early Buddhism.

Reading: Harvey, 73-89.

3. The Southern Tradition: [Theravada](#).

A. Emergence of the Theravada.

Reading: Harvey, 139-144.

B. The [Dhamma \(Dharma\)](#) in Theravada.

C. The Sangha (Samgha) in Theravada

Reading: Harvey, 217-243.

D. Living as a Buddhist: the Five Precepts.

Reading: Harvey, 196-216.

E. Meditation in Theravada: [Calming \(Samatha\)](#) and Insight (Vipassana).

Reading: Harvey, 244-257.

F. Buddhism and the Political Order in [Theravada](#).

4. The Northern Tradition: [Mahayana](#).

Reading: Sogyal, 102-169.

A. [The Emergence of Mahayana](#).

Reading: Harvey, 89-94.

B. [Buddhas and Bodhisattvas](#) in Mahayana.

Reading: Harvey, 121-133.

C. The Dharma and [Emptiness \(the Void\)](#).

Reading: Harvey, 95-120, 280-282.

D. Buddhist devotion (puja) in the Mahayana.

Reading: Harvey, 170-195.

E. The [Chinese](#), [Korean](#) and Japanese traditions of Buddhism.

Reading: Harvey, 144-169, 258-260.

5. **The Diamond Vehicle** (Vajrayana, Mantrayana, Tantric, Shingon, Tibetan).

A. **Buddhism in Tibet and Central Asia.**

Reading: Harvey, 133-138, 257-258, 260-270; Sogyal, 173-256.

Video: "**The Tibetan Book of the Dead**"

B. **Buddhism and dying:** Sogyal Rinpoche.

6. **Zen Buddhism:** Nirvana in the events of life.

Film: "**The Scent of Green Papaya**"

A. From Dhyana to Chan to Zen: India to Japan.

B. Satori and Emptiness: Presence and Meditation.

Reading: Harvey, 270-276.

C. **Zen** Buddhism and the Arts.

Reading: Harvey, 277-279.

7. Dissent and the challenges of modernity.

Reading: Harvey, 280-299.

8. **Buddhism in the West.**

Reading: Harvey, 300-321; Sogyal, 259-366.

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