

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MISSISSAUGA  
**Course Syllabus:**  
**Introduction to Buddhism (RLG206H5F)**

Course hours: Wednesdays, 9-11 am

Course venue: IB 150

Instructor: Christoph Emmrich

Email: [christoph.emmrich@utoronto.ca](mailto:christoph.emmrich@utoronto.ca)

Office: NE 597A; phone: +416-317-2662 (c), +905-569-4493 (o)

Office hours: Wednesdays, 11-12 am and on appointment

## **1 Course description**

This course is designed to introduce students to Buddhism and Buddhists in Asia. It includes those traditions, which are alive and changing, and those, which have either disappeared or were transformed, radically or subtly, to adapt to new emerging social, political and intellectual conditions. We will look at the contemporary practitioners and their practices and communities, the historical figures, the superhuman beings and deities, the texts, stories, images, objects, the philosophy and the ordinary people, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, who make up Buddhism.

The course starts by introducing three modern-day Asian Buddhists from the major regional traditions, which they refer to as Theravāda, Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna. It explores their environment, their practices and thoughts in the variants in which they can be encountered in the various regions of Asia, the South (Nepal, Sri Lanka), the Southeast (Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Central Asia (Tibet, Mongolia) and East Asia (China, Korea, Japan). To understand the present condition of Buddhist thought and practice as the result of a permanent process of change, we will look at the close relationship of Buddhism and the state and at how it has been reshaped by repeated waves of modernisation. In order to do this the course follows the regional Buddhist traditions back in history, from the first impact European colonizers and missionaries made in Buddhist countries in the 19th and early 20th century and to the developments in Asia which preceded that encounter, to the spread of Buddhist people, texts, ideas and practices across Asia in the centuries before that, along the Silk Route, across the Indian Ocean and the Himalayas, during the first one-and-a-half millennia of the common era, back to its long early history in continental South Asia, where the seeds for Buddhism's later diverging development were sown. The course finally asks what Buddhists have imagined the Buddha to have been like and what we can know about him at all as a historical figure, as a teacher and builder of institutions, and the historical and religious environment in which it all started.

## **2 Readings and written assignments**

### **Textbook and materials**

The following book will have to be bought for this course:

John Strong. *The Experience of Buddhism. Sources and Interpretations*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2008.

The textbook is available at the UTM Bookshop. It includes an excellent bibliography.

All further material required for reading and reference will be made available on the Blackboard course website. Each session's lecture handout will be accessible the evening before each session. It includes the session's structure as well as quotes, terms, definitions and images.

### **Readings**

The first reading will be due for the course's second session. Each week (see Course Calendar below) covers one topic, which includes specific textbook readings and sometimes a topically related source analysis, both to be completed before those sessions. Textbook readings, which will function as background information to the lecture, will have to be completed before the start of the session and may be used as additional source material for the essay.

### **Source comprehension tests**

Over the first half of the course there will be six short tests consisting of a set of 8 multiple-choice questions (e.g. "What is a *bhikkhuni*? A. a saint, B. a monk, C. a nun, D. a deity). The duration of each test is 10 min. Each quiz will require your knowledge of the respective mandatory reading due for that particular session. No auxiliary materials will be allowed during the tests. Tests cannot be made up, even in case of illness. However, there is the possibility to compensate for missed test by taking on one, or more, of the "optional tasks" (see below).

### **Essay - proposal, outline and final text**

Three assignments are aimed at building your essay writing skills.

The essay proposal consists of a summary or preview of the essay you are planning to write. The proposal consists of a 500-800 words long text in which you generally explain what your essay will be about, which sources it will utilize, how you intend to proceed, what you will

want to show. This proposal will be graded and you are expected to use the feedback to eventually make your essay as good as possible.

The essay outline is a detailed map of your emerging essay. You must give it a working title and you must identify the steps and sections of the essay by summarizing briefly what you are going to write about in the “chapters” that will make up your essay. Be as precise as possible, but stop short of actually writing the essay. Bullet point notes are a useful form for this kind of purpose, but you can also write full sentences. You can also give your “chapters” titles. Finally, you must include a bibliography of all the sources you are going to use in your essay.

The third assignment in this group is the final essay itself. It should comprise between 4,000 and 6,000 words, including bibliography and the foot- or endnotes.

All essays should be comparative in nature. They should include multiple sources, pertaining to more than one Buddhist movement or school or region and address issues that unite and distinguish them. Possible fields, which can help you identify your essay theme and choose its sources (given as chapters in Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*) are as follows:

Mythic history: Strong 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1

Divisional issues: 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9.2, 10.2

Regulation and reform: 6.3, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3, 10.3

Rituals and festivals: 6.4, 7.4, 8.4, 9.4, 10.4

Meditational endeavours: Strong 6.5, 7.5, 8.5, 9.5, 10.5

Women in the sangha: 6.6, 7.6, 8.6, 9.6, 10.6

Sangha and society: 6.7, 7.7, 8.7, 9.7, 10.7

For bibliographies specific to each topic see the bibliographic notes in the respective chapters. For a comprehensive bibliography on Buddhism see Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, 374-401.

Essay proposal, outline and the final text will be evaluated according to the degree to which you:

- creatively use your knowledge to represent, explain and reformulate Buddhist doctrines, practices and historical developments,
- refer to (e.g. paraphrase, quote) analyze (e.g. structure, explain), contextualize (e.g. historically, socially, doctrinally) and question (e.g. point out what you do not understand and why, critique the views and intentions represented) the primary and secondary sources you are dealing with,
- abstract from your primary data and come to more general conclusions about Buddhist doctrine, social structures and historical change,
- draw from, process and refer to information received in class or from assigned readings,

- carry out the assignment comprehensively and accurately (e.g. if 3 items are required produce three, not two or four, delineate the items clearly and allow no overlap),
- structure your text (introductory remarks, main arguments, concluding remarks) and its parts (paragraphs),
- identify your work (add your name, enrolment details and email address, the course title and code, instructor's name, name of the assignment, session to which the assignment refers, date),
- get the facts right, including spelling of words in Buddhist languages (the use of diacritics is encouraged but not required, e.g. you may write "a" instead of "ā" or "m" instead of "ṃ"),
- quote from written material (books, articles, online sources; balance the proportion in which you use your sources, they should include all three source types mentioned here) correctly and comprehensively (using footnotes or endnotes),
- manage to do all this within the recommended number of words.

Before beginning both proposal, outline and essay please consult the document “Essay writing in 200-level classes” posted on the Blackboard course website.

It is crucial for written assignments that everything you produce has been either formulated by yourself or marked and referenced as a quotation if you use materials you have taken from a source (printed or electronic, textual or visual). The main objective hereby is to develop an understanding of the line, which runs between you and others, your own authorship and that of others and the respect for other people's work and intellectual property. It is important that you stand for what you yourself can produce and do not pretend to be someone else by appropriating his or her work. At the same time it is important to learn to intensely engage with, use and, to differing degrees, distance yourself other peoples work. This is only possible if you clearly separate your own contributions from those of others from which you draw and which you respect and which makes others respect your own work. Put other's words in quotation marks and note where you found them and others can find them too. And try to find a balance in your work of what you have formulated and of what you decide to quote. No assignment should be without a quote, but not more than 10% of your assignment should consist of quotes. Never leave a quote unconnected to your own work. Use quotes effectively: to prove, to stress, to condense your own statements. Finally, texts and bits of text (paragraphs, sentences, verses etc.) taken from sources, inserted in your work and not marked as quotes are called "plagiarisms" and have to be reported to university authorities by course instructors at UTM.

### **Optional tasks**

These tasks, of which you may choose one or more, allow you either to make up on a missed test and/or to top your final grade by a maximum additional 5% each.

1. Compose a haiku on student life and add your Buddhist interpretation of it.
2. Draw a map of the cosmos in which you blend Buddhist and modern scientific cosmography and add a short explanation.
3. Write a short review of one of the following movies referring to what you learnt in the course lectures: *Groundhog Day*; *The Matrix*; *Kundun*; *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*; *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*; *Seven Years in Tibet*; *Saṃsāra*, *Little Buddha*; *Star Wars*, or a movie with (some) Buddhist content of your own choice.
4. Write a Nāgasena-style dialogue in which you prove to your debate opponent either (a) the impermanence of all things, (b) non-self, or (c) that everything is suffering by resorting to at least one example from everyday student life.
5. Visit a Buddhist temple anywhere in the GTA and write a short report on your experiences there.

Word count range for any optional task: 300-1,000

### **Handing in your assignments**

The tests happen in class, are written on paper and will be collected by the instructor.

The other assignments all have deadlines that are listed below together with the grade weight.

Hardcopies: Assignments must all be printed out double-sided and handed in to the instructor as hardcopies when the class meets on the specified deadline date. Please do not drop hardcopies into mailboxes. Only hardcopies handed over to the instructor will be accepted.

Electronic copies: The same deadline applies. Additionally, you must send your assignment as email attachment to both the course instructor's and the teaching assistant(s) (TA)'s email addresses. The mail header and the file name should include the word "Buddhism" and your surname. The TA's email addresses will be made available at the beginning of the course. Please do not submit your assignments through the Digital Dropbox on the course website.

### **3 Dates, deadlines and evaluation**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type of assignment</b>	<b>Weight in final grade</b>
Sept. 19:	source comprehension test 1	5%
Sept. 26:	source comprehension test 2	5%
Oct. 3:	source comprehension test 3	5%
Oct. 10:	source comprehension test 4	5%
Oct. 17:	source comprehension test 5	5%
Oct. 24:	source comprehension test 6	5 %

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Type of assignment</b>	<b>Weight in final grade</b>
Oct. 31:	essay proposal	25%
Nov. 14:	essay outline	15 %
Nov. 28:	essay	30%

Not required, but possible:

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Type of assignment</b>	<b>Weight in final grade</b>
Nov. 21	optional tasks (not required)	5 % extra each

### **Course grading scheme**

A+ 90-100%	B+ 77-79%	C+ 67-69%	D+ 57-59%	F 0-49%
A 85-89%	B 73-76%	C 63-66%	D 53-56%	
A- 80-84%	B-70-72%	C- 60-62%	D- 50-52%	

### **Deadlines**

All UTM students are required to declare their absence on ROSI in order to request academic consideration for any missed course work. Students who wish to receive consideration due to illness must email the instructor within a week of the deadline, and provide a UofT medical certificate:

[http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/registrar/sites/files/registrar/public/shared/pdfs/forms/med\\_cert\\_web.pdf](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/registrar/sites/files/registrar/public/shared/pdfs/forms/med_cert_web.pdf)

Essay-related assignments are subject to a late penalty of 10% per day late. This penalty may be waived in the event of unforeseen emergencies such as illness or crisis. If your assignment is late and you believe that you should not be penalized, within a week of submitting the essay please send a written explanation to the instructor, along with appropriate supporting documentation. (Such documentation may include a UofT medical certificate, and/or a letter from a counsellor, police officer, religious leader, etc.) Based on your explanation and documentation we will overlook the late penalty, in whole or in part, as seems justified. Please note that this policy regarding late penalties means that no extensions for essays will be given in advance.

### **4 Interaction with the course instructor**

Address all your requests and queries about the course to the course instructor or the teaching assistants. Do not use any other account than your @utoronto.ca account when mailing to the course instructor. The mail header should start with the word "Buddhism", so that it can be quickly identified and to avoid trashing due to unclear header. If these requirements are not met, it may happen that your mail is lost. Though incoming mails are viewed on a daily basis and though the course instructor will try to address your issues as

swiftly as possible, it may take up to three days for him to reply to your mail, so do wait for that period before reacting and mail in time if you have any urgent requests. Prearrange all meetings so that they can be scheduled either during official office hours (Wed. 11am-12 noon) to avoid queuing or at other times upon request before or after class or by email.

If you feel unsure about the nature of the assignment or about how to approach it, book a meeting with the course instructor and/or send him a draft, which can be used to advise you via email. However, keep in mind the deadline, so plan in time and react quickly.

## 5 Support and accommodation

The new UTM Service Directory (<http://www1.utm.utoronto.ca/~servicesdirectory/>) is a convenient gateway to a variety of campus services, such as the library, UTM Bookstore, Blackboard Help, AccessAbility, etc.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please contact the instructor and/or the AccessAbility Resource Centre as soon as possible ([access@utm.utoronto.ca](mailto:access@utm.utoronto.ca) or <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/access/>).

UTM students are also invited to use the resources of the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre. For information regarding, e.g., individual appointments, writing workshops, and peer facilitated study groups, see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/>.

For information on other forms of available support, please see the following sites or speak with a UTM instructor or staff member:

- Campus Police: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/campus-police/>
- Computing Services: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/computing-services/>
- Registrar & Registration Services (including course information, tuition and scholarship information, and academic advising): <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/registrar/>
- Student Affairs & Services (including first year programs, health & counselling, housing, international student resources, multi-faith programs, study abroad, etc.): <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/sas/>

## 6 Course Calendar

(may be subject to change)

### INTRODUCTION

#### Sept. 12, Buddhism Around Us and Introducing the Course

**Optional follow-up reading:** “Buddhists and Buddhist Practice in the West”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 341-342; “Rituals and Festivals: The Buddha’s Birthday in Los Angeles”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 349-351; “Sangha and Society: Engaged Buddhists in California”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 362-365.

### ASIAN BUDDHISM TODAY

#### Sept.19, Dipak Bajracharya and Newar Buddhism

**Required reading:** “Offering the World-Manḍala to One’s Guru”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 210-12.

**Optional background reading:** Lienhard, Siegfried. “Nepal: the Survival of Indian Buddhism in a Himalayan Kingdom”. In Bechert & Gombrich, eds. *The World of Buddhism*, pp. 108-116 (please find this text on the Blackboard course site).

#### Sept. 26, Anagarika Dhammawati, Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian Buddhism

**Mandatory reading:** “The Rocket Festival in Laos”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 238-241.

**Optional background reading:** Bunnag, Jane. “The Way of the Monk and the Way of the World: Buddhism in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia”. In Bechert & Gombrich, eds. *The World of Buddhism*, pp. 159-170 (please find this text on the Blackboard course site).

#### Oct. 3, Lama Kalsang and Tibetan Buddhism

**Mandatory reading:** “Pilgrimage of Mountain Kailāsa”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 264-269.



**Optional background reading:** Kvaerne, Per. “Tibet: The Rise and Fall of a Monastic Tradition”. In Bechert & Gombrich, eds. *The World of Buddhism*, pp. 253-70 (please find this text on the Blackboard course site).

#### **Oct. 10, Chinese, Korean and Japanese Buddhism**

**Mandatory reading:** **Rituals and Festivals in Tenth-Century Japan.** In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 323-326.

**Optional background reading:** Zürcher, Erik. “Beyond the Jade Gate': Buddhism in China, Vietnam and Korea”. In Bechert & Gombrich, eds. *The World of Buddhism*, pp. 193-211 (please find this text on the Blackboard course site).

#### **Oct. 17, Buddhism and the State**

**Mandatory reading:** “Some Edicts of Aśoka”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 94-96; “Regulation and Reform: The Efforts of King Parākramabāhu”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 233-235.

**Optional background reading:** “King Udena and the Elder Piṇḍola”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 93-94; “Dalai Lamas, Regents, China, and Tibet”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 280-284.

### **ASIAN BUDDHISM IN HISTORY**

#### **Oct. 24, Buddhism and Modernity**

**Mandatory reading:** Monks and Politics: “The Views of Walpola Rahula”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 253-255.

**Optional background reading:** “Monks and Money”, In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 249-251; “The Commercialization of Services”, In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 311-314); “Monks and Marriage in Korea”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 337-340.

#### **Oct. 31, Buddhism and its Spread**

**Mandatory reading:** “The Buddha’s Visit to Sri Lanka and the Conversion of King Tissa”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 222-224; “Subduing the Demons of Tibet”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 257-259.

**Optional background reading:** “The First Monk, the First Temple, and the Emperor Ming”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 290-292; “The Legend of Prince Shōtoku”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 313-318.

#### **Nov. 7, Buddhism and Its Movements**

**Mandatory reading:** “How to Meditate: Some Practical Advice”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 132-134; “Śāntideva on Developing the Thought of Awakening”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 175-178; “The Meditator Becomes the God”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 212-216.

**Optional background reading:** “The Dharma: Some Perspectives on Mainstream Buddhism”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 97-98; “The Dharma: Some Mahāyāna Perspectives”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 145-146; “Tantric Buddhism, or the Vajrāyāna”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 206-207.

#### **Nov. 14, Buddhism and Cosmology**

**Mandatory reading:** “Viewing the Cosmos”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 36-38; “Karma and the Six Realms of Rebirth”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 38-42.

**Optional background reading:** “The Evolution of the World”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 110-114; “Sudhana’s Vision of the Cosmos”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 171-173; “Amitābha in His Pure Land”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 198-200.

#### **Nov. 21, Buddhism and Philosophy**

**Mandatory reading:** “Impermanence”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 99-101; “Milinda and the Chariot”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 101-104; “The Buddha’s Silence”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 104-105; “Interdependent Origination”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 108-110.

**Optional background reading:** “Milinda Asks about Nirvāṇa”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 115-118; “Nāgārjuna: Verses on the Noble Truths and on Nirvāṇa”. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 157-162;

“Vasubandhu: Types of Consciousness”, In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 164-168.

### **Nov. 28, Buddhism and the Buddha**

**Mandatory reading:** The “Death”and Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 45-50; Royal Pilgrim Retraces the Life of the Buddha. In John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 4-7.

**Optional background reading:** Lamotte, Etienne. “The Buddha, His Teachings and His Sangha”. In Bechert & Gombrich, eds. *The World of Buddhism*, pp. 41-58; see Blackboard).