

REL 771
Power and History in Japanese Buddhism

Time: Friday 1:30–3:20 PM
Instructor: Bryan Lowe (he/him/his)
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Drop-in Hours: Tuesdays, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM and by appointment

Course Description

The course offers a roughly chronological narrative of key themes in the study of Japanese Buddhism from ancient times through the modern day. The goal is to familiarize students with the field and prepare them for a general exam in Japanese religions by reading both classic and recent studies. The readings share a common theme loosely related to issues of power and politics in Japanese Buddhism. How does Buddhism relate to the state and how does this relationship change over time? How have different hermeneutic and discursive frameworks emerged? What models have scholars used to understand power and politics in relation to religion? How do we assess the agency of women? Rulers? Divine beings? Material objects? By the end of the course, you should have a solid foundation in the history of Buddhism in Japan and a deep understanding of the key questions that animate research in the field. You will also gain professional development skills in terms of writing book reviews and designing courses.

For each week, students should read the common reading marked with a star. In addition, you should read (or at least skim) one other title on the list. We will spend most of class discussing the common reading, but you should be prepared to give a short three to five-minute presentation on the reading you selected individually. For each reading, please pay attention to the following:

- 1) What are the contributions of the book to the field? What intervention does it make?
- 2) What types of sources are used? What is gained and lost with these choices?
- 3) What explicit and implicit theoretical models inform the author's research?
- 4) What are the shortcomings of the book?
- 5) What can future scholars do to further advance the field by building upon or rejecting this research?

It's especially important for you to be able to find strengths in books you hate and weaknesses in books you love. This type of work will make you a more self-reflective scholar, better aware of your own tendencies, skills, and shortcomings.

Course Requirements/Grading

All students should attend each class prepared to discuss and debate the readings. Enrolled students (in contrast to auditors) are expected to submit three written assignments. Each of these is designed to enhance your professional development, both in graduate school and beyond:

- 1) A minimum 2,000-word **book review** of any book on the syllabus. This will teach you how to write in this particular genre, something you will likely do on occasion in your career. It will also make you a better close reader. We will workshop each book review in class on the day of that reading. Please let me know which book you would like to review by the start of week 2 in the course.
- 2) A **syllabus** for an undergraduate class with a significant Japan component. Through this, you will learn how to design a course. The syllabus should include all elements of a real

syllabus (course description, assignments, schedule of readings, etc.). Please discuss your idea for the course with me by week six. We will circulate and workshop these syllabi during reading week (date TBA).

- 3) One **practice general exam** essay of eight double-spaced pages. This will give you a chance to get a sense of the genre of an exam and receive feedback before taking your actual general. It also provides an opportunity to synthesize multiple readings and gain a sense of the field as a whole. These are due on Dean's Date (Tuesday, December 8).

Learning and Wellness

Each and every one of us brings different skills to the classroom. Do not be intimidated by your classmates and do not be too hard on yourself. We are all (and I include myself here) still learning. We should work together and help one another. You are not an impostor and you belong here.

You learn best when you are rested. Take care of yourself. Sleep and eat. If you are having any trouble at all, [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) located in the McCosh Health Center is a valuable and confidential resource. Self-care is especially important this semester with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Accommodations

I am committed to creating an effective and welcoming environment for all. If you have a learning or physical disability or require any accommodations, the University requires that those requests be made through the [Office of Disability Services](#).

Online Learning

We will begin the semester meeting online via Zoom (<https://princeton.zoom.us/j/91586087663>). We may shift to in-person later in the semester.

Schedule

Week 1 (September 4): Buddhism and the State in Ancient Japan

*Michael Como, *Shōtoku: Ethnicity, Ritual, and Violence in the Japanese Buddhist Tradition*

Jonathan Augustine, *Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan: Images of Compassion in the Gyōki Tradition*

Michael Como, *Weaving and Binding: Immigrant Gods and Female Immortals in Ancient Japan*

Bryan Lowe, *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan*

Donald McCallum, *The Four Great Temples: Buddhist Archaeology, Architecture, and Icons of Seventh-Century Japan*

Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty*

Joan Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*

Chari Pradel, *Fabricating the Tenjūōkoku Shūchō Mandara and Prince Shōtoku's Afterlives*

Asuka Sango, *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan*

Atsuko Walley, *Constructing the Dharma King: the Hōryūji Shaka Triad and the Birth of the Prince Shōtoku Cult*

Dorothy Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia*

Dorothy Wong (ed.), *Hōryūji Reconsidered*

Week 2 (September 11): Esoteric Buddhism and the Kenmitsu Taisei

*Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*

Mikael Adolphson, *Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers and Warriors in Premodern Japan*

Cynthia Bogel, *With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyō Vision*

James Dobbins, ed., *JJRS Special Issue: The Legacy of Kuroda Toshio*

Richard Payne, *Language in the Buddhist Tantra of Japan: Indic Roots of Mantra*

Charles Orzech, ed., *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia* (esp. chapters 59–87)

Fabio Rambelli, *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics: Signs, Ontology, and Salvation in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*

Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*

Pamela Winfield, *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kūkai and Dogen on the Art of Enlightenment*

Week 3 (September 18): Mountain Practice and Pilgrimage

*Heather Blair, *Real and Imagined: The Peak of Gold in Heian Japan*

Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan*

Bernard Faure, Max D. Moerman, and Gaynor Sekimori, eds., *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie Special Issue: Shugendō: The History and Culture of a Japanese Religion*

Allan Grapard, *Mountain Mandalas: Shugendo in Kyushu*

Caroline Hirasawa, *Hell-bent for Heaven in Tateyama mandara: Painting and Religious Practice at a Japanese Mountain*

Miyake Hitoshi, *Shugendō: Essays on the Structure of Japanese Folk Religion*

D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan*

Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimage: Meaning and Practice in Shugendō*

Ian Reader and Paul Swanson, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Pilgrimage in the Japanese Religious Tradition*

Royall Tyler and Paul Swanson, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Shugendō and Mountain Religion in Japan*

Week 4 (September 25): “Kamakura Buddhism” and the Tendai Establishment

*Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*

William Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*

James Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*

Bernard Faure, *Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism*

James Ford, *Jokei and Buddhist Devotion in Early Medieval Japan*

Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School: With a New Preface*

Paul Groner, *Ryōgen and Mount Hiei*

Rubeb L.F. Habito and Jacqueline Stone, *JJRS Special Issue: Revisiting Nichiren*

Robert Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A minority Report*

Richard Payne, ed., *Re-Visioning “Kamakura Buddhism”*

Robert Rhodes, *Genshin's Ōjōyōshū and the Construction of Pure Land Discourse in Heian Japan*

George Tanabe, *Myōe the Dreamkeeper: Fantasy and Knowledge in Early Kamakura Buddhism*

Week 5 (October 2): Nuns and Monastic Reform Movements

*Lori Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*

Barbara Ambros, *Women in Japanese Religions*

Gina Cogan, *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan*

James Dobbins, *Letters of the Nun Eshini*

Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*
Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan*
David Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors: Shingon Ritsu and the Mañjuśrī Cult in Medieval Japan*
Barbara Ruch, ed., *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*

Week 6 (October 9): Other Sources and Approaches to Medieval Japanese Buddhism

*Charlotte Eubanks, *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan*

Barbara Ambros, James Ford, and Michaela Mross, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Kōshiki in Japanese Buddhism*
Heather Blair and Kawasaki Tsuyoshi, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Engi: Forging Account of Sacred Origins*
Edward Drott, *Buddhism and the Transformation of Old Age in Medieval Japan*
Bernard Faure, *The Fluid Pantheon and Protectors and Predators*
Hank Glassman, *The Face of Jizō: Image and Cult in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*
Sujung Kim, *Shinra Myōji and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian "Mediterranean"*
Keller Kimbrough and Hank Glassman, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Vernacular Buddhism and Medieval Japanese Literature*
Halle O'Neal, *Word Embodied: The Jeweled Pagoda Mandalas in Japanese Buddhist Art*
Fabio Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism*
Brian Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan*

Week 7 (October 16): Death and Funerals

*Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka system*

Andrew Bernstein, *Modern Passings: Death Rites, Politics, and Social Change in Imperial Japan*
Helen Hardacre, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Japan*
Elizabeth Kenney and Edmund T. Gilday, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Mortuary Rites in Japan*
Mark Rowe, *Bonds of the Dead: Temples, Burial, and the Transformation of Contemporary Japanese Buddhism*
Jacqueline Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan*
Jacqueline Stone and Brian Cuevas, *The Buddhist Dead: Practices, Discourses, Representations*
Jacqueline Stone and Mariko Namba Walter, eds., *Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*
Duncan Williams, *The Other side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan*

Week 8 (October 23): Separating Kami and Buddhas

*Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan*

Anya Andreeva, *Assembling Shinto: Buddhist Approaches to Kami Worship in Medieval Japan*
John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shintō*
John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital*
John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*
Allan Grapard, *Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History*
Bernard Faure, Michael Como, and Iyanaga Nobumi, eds. *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie Special Issue: Rethinking Medieval Shintō*
Helen Hardacre, *Shintō: A History*
Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*
Yijiang Zhong, *The Origin of Modern Shinto in Japan: The Vanquished Gods of Izumo*

Week 9 (October 30): What, if anything, is New in Meiji?

*Janine Sawada, *Practical Pursuits: Religion, Politics, and Personal Cultivation in Nineteenth-Century Japan*

Micah Auerback, *A Storied Sage: Canon and Creation in the Making of a Japanese Buddha*

Melissa Curley, *Pure Land, Real World: Modern Buddhism, Japanese Leftists, and the Utopian Imagination*

Hayashi Makoto, Ōtani Eiichi, Paul Swanson, *Modern Buddhism in Japan*

Richard Jaffe, *Neither Monk Nor Layman*

Takashi Miura, *Agents of World Renewal: The Rise of Yonaoshi Gods in Japan*

Michel Mohr, *Buddhism, Unitarianism, and the Meiji Competition for Universality*

James Mark Shields, *Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan*

Noto Thelle, *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue: 1854–1899*

Week 10 (November 6): Japanese Buddhism and the World

*Richard Jaffe, *Seeking Śākyamuni: South Asia in the Formation of Modern Japanese Buddhism*

Christopher Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingered Questions for Buddhist Ethics*

James Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution*

Judith Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition*

Richard Jaffe, ed. *JJRS Special Issue: Religion and Japanese Empire*

John Harding, *Mahayana Phoenix: Japan's Buddhists at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions*

Hwansoo Kim, *Empire of the Dharma: Korean and Japanese Buddhism, 1877–1912*

Hwansoo Kim, *The Korean Buddhist Empire: A Transnational History, 1910–1945*

Duncan Williams, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War*

Yamada Shōji, *Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West*

Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*

Week 11 (November 13): The Category of Religion and its Implications for Buddhism

*Jolyon Thomas, *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan*

Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*

Clinton Godart, *Darwin, Dharma, and the Divine: Evolutionary Theory and Religion in Modern Japan*

Mitsutoshi Horii, *The Category of 'Religion' in Contemporary Japan: Shūkyō and Temple Buddhism*

Jason Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*

Hans Krämer, *Shimaji Mokurai and the Reconception of Religion and the Secular in Modern Japan*

Trent Maxey, *The "Greatest Problem": Religion and State Formation in Meiji Japan*

Aike Rots and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *Japan Review Special Issue: Formations of the Secular in Japan*

Week 12 (November 20): Temple Buddhism and Buddhist NRMs

*Jessica Starling, *Guardians of the Buddha's Home: Domestic Religion in Contemporary Jōdo Shinshū*

Paula Arai, *Women Living Zen*

Paula Arai, *Bringing Zen Home: The Healing Heart of Japanese Women's Rituals*

Erica Bafelli, *Media and New Religions in Japan*

Erica Bafelli and Ian Reader, *Dynamism and the Ageing of a Japanese 'New' Religion: Transformations and the Founder*

Steven Covell, *Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation*
Steven Covell and Mark Rowe, eds., *JJRS Special Issue: Traditional Buddhism in Contemporary Japan*
Helen Hardacre, *Lay Buddhism in Contemporary Japan: Reiyūkai Kyōdan*
Levi McLaughlin, *Sōka Gakkai's Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation in Modern Japan*
John Nelson, *Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan*
Shimazono Susumu, *From Salvation to Spirituality: Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan*