Course Overview

This course will survey the history of women and the problems of gender and sexuality in Buddhist-inspired traditions. We will explore both representations of women and gender in Buddhist scripture and art and the living experiences of women who have followed the Buddhist path either as devotees, lay practitioners, or as renunciant nuns. We will also consider what Buddhist philosophies and practices contribute to concepts of gender and sexuality. Emphasis will be placed on the personal experiences of Buddhist women throughout history with special attention to the contemporary world.

Course Texts

The following texts are required for the course and available at the university bookstore:


In addition, a number of readings are available on the course blackboard page [BB].
Course Assignments and Requirements

1. Active Class Participation (10%).
You will be expected to come to class prepared to contribute your questions and insights on the course readings, lectures, and films. Most of your grade for this section of the course will be based on your performance during our four designated discussion days (Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 6, Nov. 20), but you will also be required to participate regularly in other classes throughout the semester. Attendance will be taken for each class. Students missing four or more classes will receive a failing grade in class participation.

2. Reading Questions (15%).
In order to facilitate class discussion, you are required to submit one reading question for each starred (*) class period covering the readings for that day. Questions are due via e-mail to me (gfisher@syr.edu) no later than 12 noon on the day of the class. Because the purpose of the questions is to facilitate class lecture and discussion, late questions will not be accepted. A list of sample reading questions will be made available on the first day of class.

3. Four short (approximately 2 pages) discussion response papers (10% each) relating course readings, films, and class discussions. These papers will coincide with our four designated discussion days (Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 6, Nov. 20). One class period before the designated discussions, I will pass out a list of questions for you to think through. Then, by 12 noon on the day of the discussion, you will send me by e-mail attachment a rough outline or notes in response to the questions I have generated and other issues that have interested you since our last discussion. Your notes will be used to generate the discussion for that day. After the class, I will provide you with feedback that you can use in drafting your formal two-page paper. The paper will be due one week following the discussion during class (hardcopy only).

4. One research paper (10-20 pages) on a topic of your choice related to the course material: First copy (10%) due December 2 in class; Final copy (25%) due December 9.
In this paper, you will combine library research with your own analysis on a topic of your choice related to the role of women in Buddhism or questions of gender and sexuality as explored through the Buddhist tradition. You are required to submit your proposed topic for the research paper no later than Wednesday, Sept. 18 at 12 noon by e-mail. A detailed list of guidelines for researching and writing the paper will be distributed during the second class meeting (Wednesday, August 28).

Once the first copy is reviewed and graded, you will be scheduled for a fifteen-minute appointment with me to get feedback. The final copy of the paper should follow my suggested revisions.

During the final week of classes, you will present a brief informal presentation of your research work to the class. This presentation will be worth 10% of your grade for the final paper.

*Please submit both the first and final copies both by hardcopy and by e-mail attachment.*

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university policy. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted
in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first offense by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of Academic Integrity Policy. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu.

Students with Disabilities / Special Needs

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities “Accommodation Authorization Letters,” as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Faith Tradition Observances

Syracuse University does not have non-instructional days for any religious holiday and students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s).

SU’s religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes.

Course Readings and Assignments

**Monday, Aug. 28**
Course introduction

**Wednesday, Aug. 30**
Buddhism overview and review – no readings assigned

**Monday, Sep. 2**
Labor Day – No class

**I. Representations of Women and the Feminine in Buddhist Scripture and Philosophy**
**A. Sex change, emptiness, and the falsity of gender**

**Wednesday, Sep. 4** *


B. The “problem” of “women”: Pollution and desire
Monday, Sept. 9 *
1) Paul, pp. 15-25.

C. Goddesses and Representations of the Divine Female
Wednesday, Sept. 11 *
1) Paul, pp. 138-44; 247-64.

Monday, Sept. 16
DISCUSSION #1
Paper #1 Outline / Notes due by e-mail 12 noon.

Wednesday, Sept. 18
RESEARCH PAPER WORKSHOP
No assigned readings
Research paper topics due by e-mail 12 noon.

II. Women in Buddhism in Practice
A. The Lives of Female Buddhist Renunciants
1. “Going Forth”
Monday, Sept. 23 *
2) Gutschow, pp. 123-42.

Paper #1 due in class hardcopy only

2. Taking Vows
Wednesday, Sept. 25 *
1) Paul, pp. 82-97.
2) Brown, pp. 37-42.
3) Gutschow, pp. 173-94.

3. Challenges: Personal
Monday, Sept. 30
1) Brown, pp. 42-62.

4. Challenges: Societal
Wednesday, Oct. 2 *
1) Brown, pp. 24-36.
B. Lay Devotees
Monday, Oct. 7 *

C. Lay Practitioners
1. Historical Models
Wednesday, Oct. 9

2. Contemporary Conditions
Monday, Oct. 14

D. Tantric Adepts
Wednesday, Oct. 16 *

Monday, Oct. 21
DISCUSSION #2
Paper #2 Outline / Notes due by e-mail 12 noon.

E. Modern Innovations to Female Buddhist Practice
1. Ordination Innovations and the Influence of the West
Wednesday, Oct. 23 *
1) Gutschow, pp. 236-58.

2. Reform sanghas
Monday, Oct. 28 *

Paper #1 due in class hardcopy only

F. Western Women and the Sangha
Wednesday, Oct. 30 *

Monday, Nov. 4 *
1) Adiele, pp. 147-271 (if short of time, please concentrate on pp. 169-81, 219-71).
Wednesday, Nov. 6  
**DISCUSSION #3**  
Paper #3 Outline / Notes due by e-mail 12 noon.

III. Buddhism and Sexuality  
A. Asexualities  
**Monday, Nov. 11**  

B. Homosexualities  
**Wednesday, Nov. 13**  
3) Gutschow, pp. 142-45.  
**Paper #3 due in class hardcopy only**

C. Heterosexualities  
**Monday, Nov. 18**  

Wednesday, Nov. 20  
**DISCUSSION #4**  
**Paper #4 Outline / Notes due by e-mail 12 noon.**

Monday, Nov. 25 and Wednesday, Nov. 27  
NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

**Monday, Dec. 2**  
Research Presentations – Day 1 – no assigned readings  
**RESEARCH PAPER FIRST COPY DUE in class (hardcopy) and by e-mail attachment**

Wednesday, Dec. 4  
Research Presentations – Day 2 – no assigned readings  
**Paper #4 due in class (hardcopy only)**

**RESEARCH PAPER FINAL COPY due Monday, Dec. 9 by 7:15 p.m. to Newhouse 3, Room 250 (hardcopy) and by e-mail attachment (gfisher@syr.edu).**