This seminar will explore the diversity of adaptations by Buddhist adherents to the global condition of modernity and the ways in which modernity has created what we think of as Buddhism today. In the first third of the seminar, we will examine the historical roots of our modern understanding of Buddhism in colonial encounters between the west and peoples of Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will go on to explore Buddhism’s relationship to the making of the modern Asian nation-state which in some places elevated the prestige of its institutions while in other settings facilitated its marginalization or attempted demolishment. In the second two-thirds of the seminar, we will build on these insights to explore the evolution of Buddhist practices in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries relying primarily on ethnographic studies of lived Buddhist practices in both Asia and the west. We will focus in particular on the role of Buddhism in mediating transitions from socialism to capitalism (China, Vietnam, Cambodia); mediating death and the afterlife in a changing world (Vietnam, Japan, the U.S.); in both critique and celebration of consumption and cosmopolitanism (Thailand, Brazil); and in displacement and conflict (Tibet/China, Thailand/Malaysia, Sri Lanka, the Asian diaspora).

Course Texts

The following texts are required for the course and available for purchase from the bookstore:


Wilson, Jeff. 2009. *Mourning the Unborn Dead: A Buddhist Ritual Comes to America*. Oxford University Press.

In addition, a number of readings are available on the course blackboard page and online as noted [BB].

**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](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](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](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 Assignments and Requirements

1. Class Participation (30%).
   As this is a seminar, you are expected to come to class prepared to participate actively each week. With the exception of the first week, all readings must be completed by the Tuesday of each week.

2. Weekly Responses (30%).
   Prior to the final class of each week (usually Thursdays, but also Tuesday, Oct. 14 and Tuesday, Dec. 2), you should post a response on aspects of the assigned weekly readings that interest you to the discussion board on the class blackboard page. Your responses should contain your original analysis and intellectual reflections on the material. They should reflect the main themes and issues for the week’s readings as defined under the subject headings for each week and discussed at the end of the previous week’s class. Your responses should represent the beginning point of your analysis and need not be exceptionally polished, provided that your readers can follow along with what you are writing. You are encouraged to relate the material with outside scholarship that interests you, but you should take care to define any outside theories or concepts clearly and not assume that your readers have prior knowledge of them. Responses should range between 250 and 500 words. Please submit your responses directly into the text editor and not as an e-mail attachment. The responses are due no later than 12:01 a.m. You are expected to read over and familiarize yourself with your classmates’ responses prior to the beginning of class; you may also refer to them in your response, but you are not obligated to do so.

3. Analytical Paper(s) (40%)
   In addition to the weekly responses, you are required to submit formal analytical writing. For the completion of this analytical work, you have two options:

   (a) The seminar paper option. You will write one article-length paper (5,000 to 10,000 words including notes and bibliography) relating the readings and discussions during the course to an intellectual area of your interest. At least one half of the sources in your paper should come from outside of the class. A brief abstract (c. 100 words) and annotated bibliography of your sources is due during class on November 4. Your final paper is due no later than Friday, December 12 at 5:00 p.m. to Hall of Languages 501. Students taking the seminar paper option will be asked to give a brief, informal presentation of their research on the final day of class (Dec. 4).

   (b) The conference paper option. You will write three papers of 2,000 to 3,000 words in length presenting your analysis of the material we cover in class in response to question prompts that I will distribute one week prior to the due dates. You will have a choice of two questions to answer for each paper. You may use outside sources or scholarship but this is not a requirement. The three papers will be due on September 30, November 11, and December 4 by 5:00 p.m. to Hall of Languages 501.

All analytical papers should be submitted in double-spaced, 12 point font, with numbered pages, and in print hardcopy form.
You must inform me no later than the September 9 class meeting which of these two options you plan to take.

Per religion department policy, if you are planning to take an incomplete for this course, you must submit all relevant paperwork to me no later than the last scheduled day of class. Incompletes will only be granted for late submission of the seminar paper or the conference papers and not for missing weekly responses. Students whose work is incomplete who have not submitted paperwork will receive a failing letter grade; no grades will be left blank.

Class Assignments and Activities

Tu. Aug. 26
Course Introduction

I. BUDDHISM BEFORE (AND WITHOUT) MODERNITY
Th. Aug. 28


I. BUDDHISM IN COLONIAL MODERNITY
A. The invention of Buddhism
Sept. 2, 4


B. Making the Buddhist Nation  
Sept. 9, 11


C. Buddhism Outside the Nation  
Sept. 16, 18

Johnson, *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah*.

D. Buddhism Unraveled  
Sept. 23, 25


II. BUDDHISMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

A. From Socialism to Capitalism

Sept. 30, Oct. 2


Oct. 7, 9

Soucy, *The Buddha Side*.

*Oct. 9 – Guest Speaker: Prof. Alexander Soucy.*

B. Doctrinal Changes
Tu. Oct. 14


Th. Oct. 16 – No class: GF away at Buddhist Studies Conference.

Oct. 21, 23
Rowe, Bonds of the Dead.

C. Consumption Back to Front
Oct. 28, 30
Darlington, The Ordination of a Tree.

Nov. 4, 6
Rocha, Zen in Brazil.

Nov. 11, 13
Wilson, Mourning the Unborn Dead.

D. Displacement, Negotiation, and Conflict
Tu. Nov. 18, Tu. Dec. 2
Makley, The Violence of Liberation.

Th. Nov. 20
No class: GF away at AAR meeting.

Nov. 25, 27 – Thanksgiving break.

Th. Dec. 4
Course Wrap-up and Presentation of Seminar Papers.