

Religion / South Asian Studies 186
Followers of the Buddha (Buddhism)

Spring 2016
MW 10:35-11:30

Lyman Hall 132

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Overview

This course will provide a general introduction to the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563-483 BCE) who is better known as the “Buddha,” meaning the awakened or enlightened one, and the philosophical and religious systems that have developed throughout history from those who have considered themselves his followers. Starting first with the Buddha’s life in India, the course will then move out to consider the major movements of Buddhist thought; patterns of Buddhist religious organization and practice; and the influence that followers of the Buddha have had on the development of society, politics, art, literature, and culture.

In this course you will be encouraged to combine both historical knowledge and personal reflections. The aim of the course is twofold: (1) to acquaint you with ways of thinking and being that are presently unfamiliar to you or, if you have practiced Buddhism yourself, a new way of thinking about that practice and (2) to expose you to a religious system with significant influence on the cultural, economic, and political development of a large part of the world. In our examination of Buddhist traditions, we will take care to avoid seeking an essential definition of what “Buddhism” is about. Instead, we will explore the range of beliefs and practices of those who, in different times and places, have studied the Buddha’s thought and/or worshipped the Buddha and other Buddhist figures as objects of devotion.

Course Texts

The following text is required reading for the course. It is available for purchase from the university bookstore or as an e-book:

Taigen, Dan Leighton. 2012 [2003]. *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and their Modern Expression*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

In addition, the following textbook, used for *recommended reading only* is available for purchase online (\$40.77 new on bn.com) and will be placed on reserve at the library.

Keown, Damien and Charles S. Prebish. 2010. *Introducing Buddhism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

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

Course Assignments and Requirements

1. Section Grade (20%).

You are required to enroll in one once-weekly discussion (recitation) section where you will be asked to discuss the course material of the past week. This portion of your grade will reflect your participation during these sections. While active participation is strongly encouraged, your grade will be weighted more on the quality than the quantity of your participation. Students who ask questions and make valuable contributions during the lecture portion of the course may also have their section grades raised.

2. Weekly Reflections (20%).

For each week of the course when a recitation section is scheduled (with the exception of the first week), you should submit a short informal reflection (100-200 words) on the subject matter of the week. You should e-mail your reflection to your section leader no later than **12 noon** on the **Thursday** of the week assigned. *Please write your reflection in the body of the e-mail message and not as an attachment. You should also bring a printed, handwritten, or electronic copy of your reflection with you to section for your reference as it may be used in discussion.*

Your reflection should feature your original analysis on the material covered during the past week and must consider at least one element from lecture and one element from at least one of the readings. You should make your references to lectures and readings as specific as possible. Reflections will be graded on *both* the strengths of your insights and your familiarity with the course readings and lectures for the week. As the course develops, you are also expected to make connections between recurring lessons and concepts as they arise in different cultural settings where the Buddha's teachings have spread.

The main purpose of your reflections is to generate discussion in Friday's section. Therefore **you will not receive credit for your reflections if you are absent from section**. Per university policy, students may be excused from section *only* for one of the following three criteria: (1) serious illness; (2) bereavement; (3) NCAA athletic participation (with signed letter from athletic coordinator only). Students missing sections under these criteria will be required to make up the sections at a later time. If you believe you fall under these criteria, please contact your section leader. *We regret that participation in other extracurricular activities, including sorority and fraternity recruitment events, does not constitute grounds for excused absences.*

A list of sample reflections from the last time this course was taught will be distributed and discussed before the first reflection is due.

3. Quizzes (15%)

Quizzes will take two forms:

(a) At the end of each lecture (beginning from Jan. 25), a short multiple-choice quiz will be administered based on the lecture content that was delivered during that period (7.5%).

(b) At the beginning of each week's recitation section (beginning from Jan. 29), you will answer a series of brief short-answer questions on the assigned readings for the week (7.5%).

The lowest two quiz scores from type (a) and one quiz score from type (b) will be dropped.

4. A case study report of Buddhist practice (5 pages) due April 18 (15%). In this requirement, you will read on your own one of the following books describing the life of Buddhists in the world today:

Adiele, Faith. 2005. *Meeting Faith: The Forest Journals of a Black Buddhist Nun*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Cassaniti, Julia. 2015. *Living Buddhism: Mind, Self, and Emotion in a Thai Community*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Fowler, Jeaneane and Merv. 2009. *Chanting in the Hillsides: the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin in Wales and the Borders*. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press.

Gyatso, Tenzin (H.H. the Dalai Lama of Tibet). 1998. *Freedom in Exile*. New York: Abacus Books.

Mauil, Fleet. 2005. *Dharma in Hell: The Prison Writings of Fleet Mauil*. Boulder: Prison Dharma Network.

These books will be placed on reserve at Bird Library or you may order them online. Your paper will consist of a description of the book and your response to a set of questions asking you to relate the contents of the book to themes in the course. **Because of the time that it will take your book to arrive, you must select one by Friday, February 12, and inform your section leader of your choice.**

A more detailed assignment related to the book you have chosen will be distributed during class on **Monday, April 4.**

5. Midterm (15%) and final (15%) take-home examinations (5 pages each). In these examinations you will choose from a series of questions asking you to discuss course lectures, readings, films, and class discussions. The midterm paper is due in class on **Monday, February 29** and the final paper will be due to Hall of Languages 501 on **Monday, May 9 at 5 p.m.** Question prompts for both examinations will be distributed in class twelve days prior to the due date.

Please note that there are no in-class examinations for the course. You will not be asked to memorize and regurgitate terminology. You will be expected to *think through* and use key terms and concepts *very precisely* in your written assignments.

University Requirements and Recommendations

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

I. CORE THEMES

A. The Three Jewels

1. The Buddha [1/20, 1/25, 1/27]

Required:

- 1) Leighton, *Faces of Compassion*, pp. 83-98.
E-book: From beginning of Ch. 4 until beginning of subheading "Buddha's Inconceivable Life Span and Humanity."
- 2) Brown, Sid. 2001. *Even Against the Wind: the Journey of One Buddhist Nun*. Introduction and Chapter 1, "A Young Buddhist Goes Forth." Albany: SUNY Press. Pp. 1-23 [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, Preface: "Background to Buddhism" and Ch. 2.

2. The Dharma

A. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path [2/1, 2/3]

Required:

- 1) Gyatso, Tenzin (H.H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet). 2005. "The Big Bang and the Buddhist Beginningless Universe." In *The Universe in a Single Atom*. New York: Morgan Road Books. Pp. 71-94 [BB].
- 2) Thich Nhat Hahn. 1982. "Please call me by my True Names." Essay prepared for United Nations Special Session on Nuclear Disarmament [BB].
- 3) Film: *The Matrix*

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, Ch. 3.

B. Pathways to Ultimate Reality [2/8, 2/10]

Required:

- 1) Lopez, Donald, ed. 2004. *Buddhist Scriptures*. London: Penguin. Ch. 17, "Why the Buddha had Good Digestion" [BB].
- 2) Lopez 2004, Ch. 3, "Karma Tales" [BB].
- 3) Thich Nhat Hanh. 1996. "The Individual, Society, and Nature." In *Engaged Buddhist Reader*, ed. Arnold Kotler. Berkeley: Parallax Press. Pp. 40-46 [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, Ch. 1.

3. The Sangha [2/15, 2/17]

Required:

- 1) Fisher, Gareth. 2013. "Renunciation in the Modern Day: A Field Report on the Life of Ordinary Monk at the Bailin Zen Monastery in China" [BB].

- 2) Brown, Sid. 2001. *Even Against the Wind: the Journey of One Buddhist Nun*. Chapter 2, "Who Gets to Drink in the Dhamma and How." Albany: SUNY Press. Pp. 24-36 [BB].
- 3) Numrich, Paul David. 2009. "The Problem with Sex According to Buddhism." *Dialog* 48(1): 62-73 [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, Ch. 4.

II. THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND ITS SPREAD IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA [2/22, 2/24]

Required:

- 1) Eberhardt, Nancy. 2006. "Souls into Spirits." In *Imagining the Course of Life: Self-Transformation in a Shan Buddhist Community*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Pp. 46-71 [BB].
- 2) Darlington, Susan M. 1998. "The Ordination of a Tree: the Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand." *Ethnology* 37(1): 1-15.
- 3) Tsomo, Karma Leshe. 1999. "Aung San Suu Kyi." In *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*. Albany: SUNY Press. Pp. 259-66.

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, Chs. 5 and 8.

III. MAHAYANA BUDDHISM AND ITS SPREAD IN EAST ASIA

A. Mahayana Buddhism and the Bodhisattva Ideal [2/29, 3/2]

Required:

- 1) Leighton, pp. 25-43; 98-100; 109-17; 241-45; 255-64.

E-book:

- Chapter 1 (entire)
- Chapter 4 from beginning of subheading "Buddha's Inconceivable Life Span and Humanity" until beginning of subheading "Shakyamuni's Flower and the Mind-to-Mind transmission"
- Chapter 5 from beginning of chapter until beginning of subheading "The Prediction of Manjusri's Attainment of Buddhahood."
- Chapter 9 from beginning of chapter until beginning of subheading "Maitreya in Early Buddhism and the Theravada" and from beginning of subheading "Maitreya as Messiah" until beginning of subheading "Maitreya and the Paramitas."

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, Ch. 6.

2/29: Midterm Examination Due

B. Mahayana Schools I (Hua-Yen, T'ien-tai) [3/7, 3/9]

Required:

- 1) Hurvitz, Leon, trans. 2009. "The Parable of the Burning House." *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 55-77 [BB].

- 2) Fisher, Gareth, ms. "Mao and the Lotus: New Interpretations of the Sutra in Modern Beijing" [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, Ch. 9.

No class – Spring Break – 3/14 and 3/16

C. Mahayana Schools II (Chan/Zen) [3/21, 3/23]

Required:

- 1) Yampolsky, Philip, trans. 1967. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 125-33 [BB].
- 2) Excerpts from Zen koans [BB].
- 3) Merzel, Dennis Genpo. 2004. "Empty Your Cup." In *The Best Buddhist Writing 2004*. Boston: Shambhala Press. Pp. 253-57 [BB].

D. Buddhism and Popular Worship in East Asia [3/28, 3/30]

Required:

- 1) Leighton, pp. 167-85, 192-97; 211-30.

E-book:

- *From beginning of chapter 7 to beginning of subheading "Reaching Back at Midnight" and from subheading "Folklore and Miracle Stories" to beginning of subheading "Associated Figures."*
- *From beginning of chapter 8 to beginning of subheading "Jizo as Conquering Warrior."*

- 2) LaFleur, William. 2000. "Memorializing one's Mizuko." In Reynolds, Frank and Jason Carbine, eds. *The Life of Buddhism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 195-206 [BB].

E. Pure Land Buddhism and the Growth of the Laity [4/4, 4/6]

Required:

- 1) Leighton, pp. 275-90.

E-book: From beginning of chapter 10 to beginning of subheading "Associated Figures."

- 2) Lopez 2004, Ch. 8, "Rebirth in the Land of Bliss," and Ch. 44, "Freeing Birds and Fish from Bondage" [BB].
- 3) Huang, C. Julia. 2003. "The Buddhist Tzu-Chi Foundation of Taiwan." In *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism*. Christopher Queen et al, eds. New York: Routledge. Pp. 134-51 [BB].

IV. VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM

A. Buddhism and Society in Tibet [4/11, 4/13]

Required:

- 1) French, Rebecca R. 2000. "Buddhist Secular Law: Doctrines in Context." In Reynolds, Frank and Jason Carbine, eds. *The Life of Buddhism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 152-60 [BB].
- 2) Childs, Geoff. 2014. "Hunger, Hard Work, and Uncertainty: Tashi Dondrup Reminisces on Life and Death in a Tibetan Village." In *Buddhists:*

Understanding Buddhism through the Lives of Practitioners, ed. Todd Lewis. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. Pp. 201-07 [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, pp. 199-201.

B. Lamas and Esoteric Adepts [4/18, 4/20]

Required:

- 1) Strong, John S. 2001. "Life at Drepung Monastery" and "A Monk and a Beggar." In *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press. Pp. 282-86 [BB].
- 2) Zivkovic, Tanya M. 2014. "A Female Tibetan Buddhist Diviner in Darjeeling." In *Buddhists: Understanding Buddhism through the Lives of Practitioners*, ed. Todd Lewis. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. Pp. 201-07 [BB].
- 3) Fisher, Gareth. 2015. "Wang Xiaolan: A Chinese Buddhist Layperson and her Tibetan Teacher" [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, pp. 186-99.

4/18: Case Study Report Due (in class)

V. BUDDHISM IN THE WEST [4/25, 4/27]

Required:

- 1) Jobrack, Stewart. 2014. "Refuge and Reconnection: One Lao Woman's Story." In *Buddhists: Understanding Buddhism through the Lives of Practitioners*, ed. Todd Lewis. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. Pp. 87-95 [BB].
- 2) Wilson, Jeff. 2014. "Mediating Mindfulness." In *Mindful America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 13-42 [BB].

Recommended:

- 1) Prebish and Keown, pp. 195-207.

5/2 – Course wrap-up and paper review

Final Examination Period– Final Take-Home Examination Due to Hall of Languages 501 no later than Monday, May 9 at 5 p.m.