

## Religion 186 **Buddhism**

Fall 2008  
MWF 11:40-12:35

(MWF) Newhouse #1, Room 101  
(F) Newhouse #1, Room 212

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Office Hours: MTWRF 10-11

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This course will provide a general introduction to the Buddhist religion. We will start by exploring the foundations of Buddhist teachings from its beginning in India more than two thousand years ago. We will then move out to consider the development of Buddhist thought, institutions, and cultural practices throughout Asia and eventually other parts of the world.

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 the Buddhist tradition, 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 considered themselves Buddhist.

### Course Texts

The following texts are required reading for the course. They are available for purchase from the university bookstore:

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

Lopez, Donald, ed. 2004. *Buddhist Scriptures*. New York: Penguin.

Reynolds, Frank E. and Jason A. Carbine, eds. 2000. *The Life of Buddhism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

In addition to readings from these texts, several course readings will be available on Blackboard [BB] as noted below.

This course will not include a general introductory reader as most basic background material will be covered in class lecture. However, the following two readers will be placed on reserve in Bird library for your use as needed.

De Bary, William T. 1972. *The Buddhist Tradition: In India, China and Japan*  
New York: Vintage Press.

Harvey, Peter. 1990. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Course Assignments and Requirements

### 1. Class Participation (10%).

This portion of your grade will reflect your performance during class discussions of course readings, lectures, and films both in small and large groups. You will be graded on the thoughtfulness of both your questions and insights. While active participation is encouraged, the quality of your participation will count for more than the quantity. For the most part, your participation grade will be based on once-weekly discussion sections but questions and comments raised during lectures will also be considered.

### 2. Weekly Discussion Paragraphs (20%).

A discussion paragraph is due by 2 pm on the Thursday of each week followed by a star [\*]. Your paragraphs should be submitted via e-mail directly to your discussion leader for that week (either Jill or myself). **Paragraphs submitted after this deadline will receive half-credit only.** You should also bring a printed or handwritten copy of the paragraph with you to class for your reference. The discussion paragraph should end in an open-ended question. The best paragraphs relate themes and ideas presented across several of the unit's readings as well as lectures and films. Your questions will be used to generate discussion in Friday's class on the issues and questions raised in the reading unit.

3. A midterm (15%) and final (20%) short paper (5 pages) relating course lectures, readings, films, and class discussions due October 13 and December 12 (during the final exam period).

4. A descriptive analysis of your visit to a local Buddhist temple (5 pages) due November 21 (20%).

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.

## Course Readings and Assignments

## I. BASIC THEMES

### A. The Three Jewels

#### 1. The Buddha [8/27, 8/29, 9/3, 9/5] \*

- 1) Lopez, Ch. 14, “The Noble Search,” Ch. 15, “A Life of the Buddha,” Ch. 16, “Maya, Mother of the Buddha” and Ch. 17, “Why the Buddha had Good Digestion.”
- 2) Leighton, Ch. 4, “Shakyamuni as Bodhisattva.”
- 3) 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].

#### 2. The Dharma [9/8, 9/10, 9/12] \*

- 1) Lopez, Ch. 3, “Karma Tales,” Ch. 52, “In Praise of Reality,” and Ch. 37, “The Direct Path to Enlightenment.”
- 2) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 7, “Meditation.”
- 3) Mipham, Sakyong. 2004. “Turning the Mind into an Ally.” In *The Best Buddhist Writing 2004*. Boston: Shambhala Press. Pp. 67-74 [BB].

#### 3. The Sangha [9/15, 9/17, 9/19]

- 1) Lopez, Ch. 25, “The Evolution of Ordination,” Ch. 27, “A Murderer Becomes a Monk,” Ch. 31, “Lives of Eminent Monks and Nuns,” and Ch. 33, “Taking the Vinaya Across the Sea.”
- 2) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 1, “Temples and Monastic Complexes,” and Ch. 5, “The Ordination of Monks and Novices.”

### B. Cosmologies [9/22, 9/24, 9/26] \*

- 1) Lopez, Ch. 1, “Realms of Rebirth,” Ch.4, “Lessons from a Ghost,” Ch. 6, “One Buddha per Universe,” and Ch. 9, “Avoiding Hell, Gaining Heaven” (pp. 69-74 only).
- 2) Gyatson, 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].
- 3) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 12, “Cosmology and Healing.”

## II. THERVADA BUDDHISM AND ITS SPREAD IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

### A. The Arhat and the Theravadin Ideal; Karma and Village Life [9/29, 10/1, 10/3] \*

- 1) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 2, “Image Consecrations,” and Ch. 4, “Village Rituals and Ceremonies.”

- 2) Eberhardt, Nancy. 2006. *Imagining the Course of Life: Self-Transformation in a Shan Buddhist Community*. Chapter 3, "Souls into Spirits." Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Pp. 46-71 [BB].
- 3) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 13, "Devotional Rituals."
- 4) 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].

**B. Kingdoms, Politics, and the Sangha** [10/6, 10/8, 10/10] \*

- 1) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 3, "State Rituals and Ceremonies."
- 2) Swearer, Donald K. 1994. "Fundamentalistic Movements in Theravada Buddhism." In *Fundamentalisms Observed*. Martin E. Marty and Stuart R. Appleby, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 628-91 (excerpts).
- 3) Tsomo, Karma Leshe. 1999. *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*. Chapter 14, "Aung San Suu Kyi." Albany: SUNY Press. Pp. 259-66. [BB]
- 4) Darlington, Susan M. 2003. "Buddhism and Development: the Ecology Monks of Thailand." In *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism*. Christopher Queen et al, eds. New York: RoutledgeCurzon. Pp. 96-109 [BB].

**III. MAHAYANA BUDDHISM AND ITS SPREAD IN EAST ASIA**

**A. Mahayana Buddhism and the Bodhisattva Ideal** [10/13, 10/15, 10/17] \*

- 1) Leighton, Ch. 1, "The Bodhisattva Ideal," Ch. 5, "Manjushri," and Ch. 9, "Maitreya."
- 2) Lopez, Ch. 43, "The Bodhisattva Vow."

**10/13: Midterm Paper Due in class**

**B. The Development of Buddhist Schools of Thought in China and Japan (Hua-Yen, T'ien-tai, Chan/Zen)** [10/20, 10/22, 10/24] \*

- 1) Leighton, Ch. 6, "Samantabhadra."
- 2) Lopez, Ch. 34, "Zen for National Defense," and Ch. 41, "Both Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment."
- 3) Yampolsky, Philip, trans. 1967. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 125-33 [BB].
- 4) Excerpts from Zen koans [BB].
- 5) Merzel, Dennis Genpo. 2004. "Empty Your Cup." In *The Best Buddhist Writing 2004*. Boston: Shambhala Press. Pp. 253-57 [BB].

**C. Buddhism and the Family** [10/27, 10/29, 10/31] \*

- 1) Leighton, Ch. 7, "Avalokiteshvara," and Ch.8, "Ksitigarbha."
- 2) Lopez, Ch. 35, "How a Monk Freed His Mother from Hell," and Ch. 46, "Feeding Hungry Ghosts."
- 3) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 14, "Death and Beyond."
- 4) Fisher, Gareth, ms. "Mao and the Lotus: New Interpretations of the Sutra in Modern Beijing."

## **11/3 – NO CLASS – American Academy of Religion Meeting**

### **D. Pure Land Buddhism and the Growth of the Laity [11/5, 11/7] \***

- 1) Leighton, Ch. 10, “Vimalakirti.”
- 2) Lopez, Ch. 8, “Rebirth in the Land of Bliss,” Ch. 42, “Reciting the Name of the Buddha,” and Ch. 44, “Freeing Birds and Fish from Bondage.”
- 3) Huang, Julia C. and Robert P. Weller. 1998. “Merit and Mothering: Women and Social Welfare in Taiwanese Buddhism.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57(2): 379-96 [BB].

## **IV. BUDDHISM IN TIBET AND CENTRAL ASIA**

### **A. Vajrayana and Esoteric Buddhism [11/10, 11/12, 11/14] \***

- 1) Lopez, Donald S., ed. 1997. *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 7, “The Life of Tilopa” and Chapter 28, “Mindfulness of Death.” Pp. 137-56; 421-41 [BB].
- 2) Lopez, Ch. 54, “The Ultimate Couple.”
- 3) Major, John S. and Yeshe Dorjee, trans. 2007. “King Salgyel’s Daughter, Princess Dorjee.” In *The Three Boys and Other Buddhist Folktales from Tibet*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Pp. 157-65 [BB].

### **B. Monasticism, Pilgrimage, and the Hierarchy of Lamas [11/17, 11/19, 11/21, 11/24] \***

- 1) Reynolds and Carbine, Ch. 8, “The Monastic Quest,” and Ch. 11, “Cosmology and Law.”
- 2) Kapstein, Matthew T. 1998. “A Pilgrimage of Rebirth Reborn: the 1992 Celebration of the Drigung Powa Chenmo.” In *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*. Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew T. Kapstein, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 95-115 only [BB].
- 3) Cabezon, Jose Ignacio. 1996. “Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement,” in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (eds). Albany: SUNY Press. Pp. 295-320 [BB].

**11/21: Temple Visit Paper Due (in class)**

## **V. BUDDHISM IN THE WEST (and critical reflections) [12/1, 12/3, 12/5] \***

- 1) Rocha, Christina. 2005. “Being a Zen Buddhist Brazilian: Juggling Multiple Identities in the Land of Catholicism.” In *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization*. Linda Learman, ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Pp. 340-61 [BB].
- 2) Sanghadevi, Dharmacharini. 1999. “A Model for Laywomen in Buddhism: The Western Buddhist Order,” in *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*. Tsomo Karma Lekshe, ed. SUNY: Albany Press. Pp. 267-76.
- 3) Lopez, Donald. 1994. “New Age Orientalism: the Case of Tibet.” *Tricycle* [Spring 1994; online version] [BB].

**12/10 (Wed.) – 2:45-4:45 – Final Paper Due to Hall of Languages 513.**