

RELI 226 INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Department of Religions and Cultures
Concordia University*, Winter 2019
Tuesday/Thursday: 10:15-11:30 (H553 SGW)

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Course Description

This course surveys Buddhism from its early history to contemporary practice. It introduces students to the various forms of Buddhism such as Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. The spread of Buddhism outside of India during the early medieval period will be discussed through the examination of subsequent developments of Buddhist experiences in Tibet, China, Vietnam, and Japan. We will begin the course with a brief discussion of how Buddhism has been studied and reconstructed in the West. We will then examine some of the fundamental Buddhist doctrines that are shared in common by all Buddhists. In addition, other areas of interest such as Buddhist architecture and art will be explored, as well as how Buddhist ideals and beliefs are expressed through worship, pilgrimage, and meditation. In short, the goal of this course is to familiarize students with the history of the development of various schools of Buddhism in India and other countries, and how Buddhist doctrines, social regulations, and objects of religious art are understood, represented and practiced in contemporary times.

Course Readings

1. An anthology (coursepack) of articles and book chapters has been prepared for this course. It can be purchased at the Concordia University Book Store.
2. Additional hand-out materials will be posted on Moodle.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments of various types will be given for assessment so that each student will have a chance to use their own strong skills to shine. Essay assignments will help students foster their abilities to think, read and write critically.

1. Two In-Class Quizzes: (10 % each) Jan. 31 & March 19

Two quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class (approx. 20 minutes) on the days assigned. The quizzes will be multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank type, and short-answer questions and are based on readings and class lectures. A handout of terms and concepts will be given to you one week in advance to prepare for each quiz.

* I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands, particularly those of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, who are recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we are situated.

2. In-Class Midterm: (30%) Feb. 21

The midterm will be in class and will consist of 6 essay questions from which you will pick 4 to answer. You will have the full class period for the exam.

3. Temple Visit Report Due: (20%) April 2

Students will visit a Buddhist temple ideally on Sunday morning to observe how Buddhists pay homage to the Buddha and perform rituals. This will give you a chance to witness how Buddhism is practiced in certain communities nowadays. You will write a report of 1000 words (minimum) on your experience. Guidelines along with a list of temples that can be visited will be provided to the students on Moodle. You will be assigned to one of the two groups, but you can also visit a temple on your own if you want to. I will lead these two groups of students to visit a temple on two different Sundays (Feb 24 and March 10). Thus, I will be there with you and answer your questions.

4. Final Take-Home Exam: (30%) April 25

The take-home exam will be an essay-style exam (about 10-12 pages, double space). The questions for this exam will be distributed on April 11. You must only draw on the materials from the coursepack, handouts, class lectures, and Moodle posts.

Academic Integrity and Policies on Absences & Late Assignments

1. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported. Plagiarism is using other people's ideas, images, graphs or words without giving acknowledgement or citing your sources. For details please visit Concordia University's website for the code of academic conduct (see <https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html>).
2. Excuses for the absence from in-class quizzes and the midterm will not be accepted. No make-up quizzes will be possible; however, a limited exception will be made in the case of (documented) illness or emergency.
3. Late assignments will be accepted without penalty only in the case of (documented) illness or emergency. Otherwise, assignments will be accepted for one week after the deadline, with a penalty of one letter grade. In the case of the final take-home exam, no late submissions will be accepted beyond April 30.
4. Papers must be dropped off ONLY in my mailbox on the main floor of annexe FA (2060 Mackay)
5. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Grading Criteria

- A range: Superior grasp of material, exams well written, clear explanation, original insights.
B range: Good understanding, clear and orderly presentation.
C range: Adequate grasp of material, reasonably clear.
D range: Evidence of having done the reading but inadequate comprehension
F range: Failure; absence of evidence that the requirements were met.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

Jan 8, 10: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE and THE STUDY OF BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

Lopez, Donald (1995). "Introduction" in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 1- 29.

WEEK 2

Jan 15, 17: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY INDIAN BUDDHISM

Trautmann, Thomas (2016). "New Religion, New Empires" in *India - Brief History of a Civilization*, Oxford University Press, pp. 50-64.

Robinson, R., Johnson, W., Thanissard. (2005). "The Social and Religious Context of Early Buddhism" and "The Development of Early Indian Buddhism," in *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction*. USA: Wadsworth Publishing Learning, pp. 1-2, 43-74.

WEEK 3

Jan 22, 24: THE LIFE OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

Gethin, Rupert (1998). "The Buddha: The Story of the Awakened One," in *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 7-34.

Mitchell, Donald W. & Jacoby, Sarah H. (2014). "The Life of Gautama Buddha," in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 6-30.

WEEK 4

Jan 29, 31: BASIC TEACHINGS

Quiz 1: Jan 31

Miles, Jack (2015). "The Buddha's First Sermon," in *Buddhism: The Norton Anthology of World Religions*. NY, London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, pp. 177-181.

Mitchell, Donald & Jacoby, Sarah H. (2014). "The Teachings of the Buddha," in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 33-63.

WEEK 5

Feb 5, 7: THERAVADA

Mitchell, Donald & Jacoby Sarah H. (2014). "The Way of the Elders," in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 64-87.

Gombrich, Richard (2006). “The Buddha’s Dhamma,” and “The Sangha’s Discipline,” in *Theravada Buddhism*. London & NY: Routledge, pp. 60-86, 87-117.

WEEK 6

Feb 12, 14: MAHAYANA

William, Paul (2009). “Introduction,” in *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, Second Edition. NY: Routledge, pp. 1-44.

Mitchell, Donald & Jacoby, Sarah H. (2014). “The Great Vehicle,” in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 115-148.

WEEK 7

Feb 19, 21: MAHAYANA

In-Class Midterm: Feb 21

Harvey, Peter (2000). “Mahayana emphases and adaptations,” in *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values, and Issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 123-130.

William, Paul (2009). “Trust, Self-abandonment, and Devotion: the Cults of Buddhas and bodhisattvas,” in *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, Second Edition. NY: Routledge, pp. 218-226.

WEEK 8

March 5, 7: VAJRAYANA / TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Robinson, R., Johnson, W., Thanissard. (2005). “Buddhism in Late Medieval and Modern India,” in *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction*. USA: Wadsworth Publishing Learning, pp. 124-137.

Mitchell, Donald & Jacoby, Sarah H. (2014). “Tibetan Experiences of Buddhism,” in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 177-219.

WEEK 9

March 12, 14: BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE AND ART

Trainor, K. (1996). “Constructing a Buddhist Ritual Site: Stupa and Monastery Architecture,” in *Marg* 47/3, pp. 20-22, 25, 32-35.

Leidy, Denise Patry (2008). “The Buddha Image” and “Southeast Asia,” in *The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to its History and Meaning*. Boston & London: Shambhala, pp. 31-55, 163-187.

WEEK 10

March 19, 21: CHINESE BUDDHISM

Quiz 2: March 19

Mitchell, Donald & Jacoby, Sarah H. (2014). "Chinese Experiences of Buddhism," in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 222-272.

Miles, Jack (2015). "On the Origins of Zen," in *Buddhism: The Norton Anthology of World Religions*. NY, London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, pp. 531-540.

Chun-Fang Yu. "Princess Miao-shan and the Feminization of Kuan-yin," in *Kuan-yin*. Columbia University Press, pp. 293-350.

WEEK 11

March 26, 28: VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM

Robinson, R., Johnson, W., Thanissard. (2005). "Vietnam," in *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction*. USA: Wadsworth Publishing Learning, pp. 234-239.

Soucy, Alexander (2012). "Space and the Ranking of Buddhism," and "Sutra Recital and Buddhist Identities," in *The Buddha Side: Gender, Power, and Buddhist Practice in Vietnam*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 37-59, 118-137.

WEEK 12

April 2, 4: JAPANESE BUDDHISM

Temple Visit Report Due: April 2

Mitchell, Donald W. & Jacoby, Sarah H. (2014). "Japanese Experiences of Buddhism," in *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 309-360.

Miles, Jack (2015). "How Buddhism Protects the Nation," and "A Conversation with Skeleton," in *Buddhism: The Norton Anthology of World Religions*. NY, London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, pp. 637-645, 662-668.

WEEK 13

April 9, 11: BUDDHISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Miles, Jack (2015). "How to Meditate," and "An American Sutra," in *Buddhism: The Norton Anthology of World Religions*. NY, London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, pp. 761-770, 777-780.

Final Take-Home Exam Due: April 25