

RSOC 130
Winter 2010

East Asian Buddhism
TR 1:45-3:30 PM Kenna Hall 308

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Office Hours: Fri. 9-11:45 AM or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will explore the Buddhist traditions of East Asia. Following an introductory survey of major Buddhist teachings and the history of the transmission of Buddhism to East Asia, we will explore the development of distinctly East Asian forms of Buddhism, with particular focus on the Pure Land and Chan/Son/Zen traditions. We will then focus on important issues facing contemporary East Asian Buddhist traditions, with particular focus on rituals surrounding major life issues as well as the experience of female practitioners of East Asian Buddhist traditions.

Course Objectives:

1. Provide a deeper and richer understanding of Buddhist traditions in East Asian contexts.
2. Cultivate the ability to identify and critically evaluate arguments made in primary and secondary texts.
3. Increased ability in developing one's own arguments, and cogently and convincingly expressing them orally and in writing.

Requirements:

Regular attendance is required, and frequent, unexcused absence will result in a grade penalty. I expect active participation in class discussions and will strive to make to class as interactive as possible; you should always feel free to ask questions and contribute your ideas. To do so you should come to class prepared; reading should be completed during the week they are assigned, and be prepared to be called upon to discuss them in any given class. There will be two medium length papers (1000-1500 words, 30% each), and two short review essays (400-600 words) of the two of three films that we will watch (15% each). Class participation will account for 10% of the final grade.

Students will be asked to assess the course via narrative evaluations at the end of the quarter.

Students will receive regular feedback on their work from their instructor to help them improve their understanding and analytic skills.

POLICIES

Attendance

Regular attendance is required. If you must miss a class, you should inform the instructor in advance when possible, and you are responsible for making up missed work. While absences due to unavoidable problems (sickness, etc.) will definitely be excused, I will **NOT** excuse absences for activities associated with other classes. **Unexcused absences will significantly lower your final grade.**

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form (as described in the Student Conduct Code) will result in a failed grade for the project, and possibly for the course. All allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department chair and Office of Student Life.

For a full presentation of University policies concerning plagiarism, see:

<http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/>

In order to avoid the sanctions applied to cases of academic dishonesty, please make sure that you properly cite all sources that you utilize in your writing, including works that are directly quoted or paraphrased, as well as works used as a source of information. This includes both print and online sources. Your paper submissions must consist of your own writing, and any direct quotations or paraphrasing from other works must be properly cited.

Disability Accommodations:

To receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson 216. The phone number is 408-554-4109 or inquiries can be emailed to Robin Cole, Administrative Associate, rcole@scu.edu. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations.

Class Texts (Required):

WLB William LaFleur, *Buddhism* (excerpts, available on Angel)

Red Pine, *The Platform Sutra: The Zen Teaching of Hui-neng* (Counterpoint 2008)

Bill Porter, *Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits* (Counterpoint 2009)

Martine Batchelor and Son'gyong Sunim, *Women in Korean Zen: Lives And Practices* (Princeton 1993)

William LaFleur, *Liquid Life* (Princeton 1994)

Jonathan Watts and Yoshiharu Tomatsu, eds. *Never Die Alone: Death as Birth in Pure Land Buddhism* (Jodo Shu Press 2008)

1. Introductions

Tues. 1/5 During the first class we will engage in the usual introductory rituals, and will discuss the goals of the course, and the ways that we will seek to achieve them.

Thurs. 1/7 ***Buddhism: Basic Teachings***

During this class, we will quickly survey the life of the founder of Buddhism, Śākyamuni Buddha, and his basic teachings.

• **WLB 1-16, 77-89**

Tues. 1/12 ***Mahāyāna Buddhism***
While numerous Buddhist traditions were transmitted to East Asia, the forms of Buddhism that took root and prospered there were from the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. In this class, we will survey the basic teachings of this tradition.

Thurs. 1/14 ***The Transmission of Buddhism to China***
In this class we will survey the history of the transmission of Buddhism to China.
• **WLB 17-28**
• **E. Zürcher, “The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Culture in an Historical Perspective”** (available on Angel)

2. Buddhism in China

Tues. 1/19 ***The Chan Tradition: Introduction***
In this class we will begin our study of the early history of one of the world’s best known Buddhist traditions, the Chan “meditation” school, better known in the West as Zen.

• **WLB 39-44, 96-104**

Thurs. 1/21 ***Discussion: The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch***
In this class we will discuss one of the best-known Chan scriptures, and explore the key religious ideas that it expressed.
• **Red Pine, *The Platform Sutra***

Tues. 1/26 ***The Pure Land Tradition***
In this class we will introduce the other major Chinese Buddhist approach to practice, the Pure Land tradition of devotion to Amitabha Buddha.
• **Charles B. Jones, “Buddha One: A One-Day Recitation Retreat in Contemporary Taiwan”** (available on Angel)

Thurs. 1/28 ***Buddhism in Contemporary China***
In this class we will survey the recent history of Buddhism in China, with particular focus on the Communist period and the Cultural Revolution, and the tremendous challenge this posed to Buddhist practitioners in China.

Tues. 2/2 ***Discussion: Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits***
In this class we will discuss an account of Buddhist practitioners in China during the 1980s, shortly following the end of the Cultural Revolution and the opening of China to the outside world.
• **Bill Porter, *Road to Heaven***
• **Paper #1 Suggested Topics Distributed**

Thurs. 2/4 **Discussion: Amongst White Clouds**
In this class we will view and then discuss a documentary on Buddhist hermits in contemporary China.
• **Film:** Edward A. Burger, "Amongst White Clouds: Buddhist Hermit Masters of China's Zhongnan Mountains" (86 minutes, 2007)

3. Buddhism in Korea

Tues. 2/9 We will begin our study of Buddhism in Korea with an overview of the history of Buddhism in Korea and the development of distinctly Korean forms of Buddhism.

Thurs. 2/11 **Women in Buddhism**
We will dedicate a class to a discuss the status of women in Buddhism, looking historically from the early Buddhist sangha to issues affecting contemporary Buddhist communities.
• **WLB 49-56**
• **Paper #1 Due**

Tues. 2/16 **Discussion: Women in Korean Zen**
This class will be dedicated to a discussion of Martine Batchelor and Son'gyong Sunim's account of contemporary female Korean Zen practitioners.
• **Martine Batchelor and Son'gyong Sunim, Women in Korean Zen: Lives And Practices.**

4. Buddhism in Japan

Thurs. 2/18 We will begin our study of Buddhism in Japan with an overview of the history of Buddhism in Japan and the development of distinctly Japanese forms of Buddhism.

Tues. 2/23 **Buddhist Views of Death**
We will overview Buddhist beliefs concerning death and rebirth, and practices centering around death and the welfare of deceased individuals.
• **Malcolm D. Eckel, "Death and the Afterlife"** (available on Angel)

Thurs. 2/25 **Discussion: Never Die Alone**
We will dedicate this class to a discussion of the beliefs and practices concerning death that are held by the Jodo Shin school of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.
• **Watts and Tomatsu, Never Die Alone: Death as Birth in Pure Land Buddhism**

Tues. 3/2 **Discussion: To the Land of Bliss**

We will view and discuss a documentary on the death of a Pure Land Buddhist master in China. This will be followed by an introduction to the practice of fetal funereal rites performed by Buddhists in Japan, and the relation of this to the debates concerning abortion.

- **Film:** Qin Wen-jia, "To the Land of Bliss" (47 min., 2002)

Thurs. 3/4

Discussion: Liquid Life

We will dedicate this class to a discussion of a book on the contemporary Japanese Buddhist practice of performing funerals for aborted fetuses.

- **William LaFleur**, *Liquid Life*.

Tues. 3/9

Pilgrimage in Japan

In our final class we will explore an important East Asian Buddhist practice, pilgrimage, with a look at an important Japanese pilgrimage practice, the circuit of eighty-eight temples on Shikoku Island.

- **Ian Reader**, "**Legends, Miracles, and Faith in Kobo Daishi and the Shikoku Pilgrimage**" (available on Angel)

- **Film:** Oliver Statler, "Japanese pilgrimage: the pilgrimage to the eighty-eight sacred places of Shikoku" (30 min., 1983)

Paper #2 and Film Reviews due Final Paper due by 4 PM Thursday 3/18