

RSOC 86: Buddhism

A Proposal for a course for the new Core Curriculum

Revised and resubmitted on 11/6/2008 by:

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Core Area or Requirement: RTC 2

Undergraduate Bulletin Description:

This course will explore the development of Buddhism in Asia, as well as its modern manifestations in the Silicon Valley region. Students will engage with Buddhism both textually and through fieldwork in small groups in the local community.

RSOC 86: Buddhism

Spring 2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course, which fulfills the RTC 2 requirement for the core curriculum, will explore in depth the history of the development of Buddhism in South Asia, its transmission to Southeast, East, Central Asia, and North America. Close attention will also be paid to the development of key Buddhist doctrines and practices, and their impact of the lives of Buddhist practitioners, as expressed in autobiographical literature and encountered in fieldwork in the local community. The course will employ, and students will be expected to gain a basic level of mastery in, several methodological approaches. These approaches include the theological; we will seek to understand key Buddhist teachings and practices as understood by Buddhists themselves. We will also utilize religious historical methodologies, in order to heighten our understanding of how Buddhist traditions have changed through time and as they cross cultural boundaries. Lastly, students will be introduced to the ethnographic approaches to the study of religion in preparation for group visits to Buddhist sites.

COURSE GOALS

1. Students will gain a detailed appreciation of Buddhist traditions, with understanding of both their histories and key teachings and practices.
2. Students will be expected to gain the ability to analyze Buddhist traditions using multiple methodological approaches.
3. Through engagement with Buddhist traditions and Buddhists in multiple ways, via autobiographical literature and interactions with Buddhists in the Santa Clara valley, students will be expected to be able to clearly articulate their reflections on the experience of Buddhists in the past and present, in this and other cultural environments.

DEPARTMENT GOALS

1. Students will master a coherent body of material in order to broaden and deepen the "database" that students use to think about religions, religious issues, and all the possible interdisciplinary connections.
2. Students will master a discrete body of material in its own terms, to draw on this new knowledge in addressing issues framed by other disciplines, and to be alert to the way knowledge is organized and appropriated.

The Religious Studies departmental learning goals are embedded in the course goals.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement Religion, Theology, and Culture 2.

Core Learning Goals: Habits of Mind and Heart: Complexity, Critical Thinking, Religious Reflection

Core Learning Objectives:

1. Be able to analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (such as architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, and other cultural expressions of religious belief).
2. Be able to integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.
3. Be able to clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING:

Midterm Exam (30%)

During the first half of the course the history and key teachings of the two major Buddhist traditions, the Theravada and Mahayana, will be covered. Students' understanding of major Buddhist teachings and practices, and their ability to reflect critically on what they have learned, will be assessed via a midterm examination. *This will assess course goal #1 and core learning objective #1.*

Group Fieldwork Project and Presentation (20%)

Students will visit Buddhist sites in small groups. They will be expected to employ ethnographic techniques to document the site. Through interviews with Buddhists, the group will also be expected to assess the theological stance of the community, and to document their history, thus employing all three course methodologies. Students will prepare a twenty-minute presentation summarizing what they learned on their visit, which they will share with the class. *This will assess course goal #2 and core learning objective #2.*

Short Reflection Paper (10%)

In addition to their group project, each student will also be expected to write a short paper in which they critically reflect on their experience, and what they learned, in the group visit to the local Buddhist site. *This will assess course goal #3 and core learning objective #3.*

Final Paper (30%)

During the second half of the course, the attention will shift to the experience of Buddhists in a wide array of cultural and historical periods. In the final paper, students will be expected to draw upon data derived via different methodological approaches (theological, religious historical, and ethnographic) to reflect upon key issues concerning the religious dimensions of human experience. *This will assess course goals #2 and #3, and core learning objectives #2 and #3.*

Class Participation (10%)

Participation in class discussions, group projects, and active engagement with the course readings are requirements of this class. This class will have structured discussions, in which students will be required to prepare in advance reflections on course readings, discuss them in small groups, and present the keys points of their discussions to the class. These discussions are intended the students' knowledge of the traditions studies, their ability to reflect upon them critically, and their ability to work and learn collaboratively. Participation will both be directly measured by the instructor, and indirectly measured by

the students' progress in the other assignments. *This will indirectly support, but not directly assess, all of the course goals and core learning objectives.*

Students will be asked to assess the course via the SALG evaluation process at the beginning and end of the quarter, and the 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. Students will also receive peer feedback for the group projects.

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. **Unexcused absences will significantly lower your class participation grade, and thus 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 request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disabilities Resources located on the second floor of Benson. Phone numbers are (408) 554-4111; TTY (408)554-5445. Students must register and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS

Papers and group presentations are due in class on the day that they are listed on the syllabus, and exams taken on the day they are given, or they will be considered late. Late work will be penalized unless the instructor granted an extension in advance (i.e., at least 24 hours prior to the due date).

Grading Scale

94.0–100	A	87.0–89.9	B+	77.0–79.9	C+	67.0–69.9	D+
90.0–93.9	A-	83.0–86.9	B	73.0–76.9	C	63.0–66.9	D
		80.0–82.9	B-	70.0–72.9	C-	60.0–62.9	D-

CLASS TEXTS (REQUIRED)

(1) Robinson, et al. *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction* (Wadsworth 2004)

- (2) Susan Murcott, *First Buddhist Women* (Parallax 1991)
- (3) Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu* (Yale 1987)
- (4) N. Waddell, *Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Autobiography of Zen Master Hakuin* (Shambhala 2001)
- (5) Kurtis Schaeffer, *Himalayan Hermitess* (Oxford 2004)

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule of class meetings, readings, and assignments will be distributed on the first day of class.