

RSOC 113 BUDDHISM IN AMERICA

Winter 2016

Tu Th 2:00-3:40 p.m.

Kenna Hall 104

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Office Hours: Tu/Th 1:00-1:50 pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course, which fulfills the RTC 3 requirement for the core curriculum, will focus on many facets of Buddhist traditions in America. Following a survey of key Buddhist teachings and practices, and the history of major Buddhist traditions, we will turn to the transmission of Buddhism to this continent. We will focus on particular examples of Buddhism in North America, particularly in the U.S. Through sociological, historical, and literary-doctrinal study, we will examine the roles played by Buddhism in the lives of American practitioners. In so doing, we will focus on diaspora, immigrant, and convert Buddhist communities, and the interactions between these groups. We will do this via multiple media, including the study of academic and popular works on Buddhism, the viewing of films on the subject, and meetings with guest speakers. We will also visit and study Buddhist sites in small groups, and report on our findings.

COURSE GOALS

1. Provide an introduction to Buddhist teachings, practices, and the history of Buddhism,
2. Explore in depth the ongoing spread of Buddhism in America,
3. Gain an appreciation of the roles played by Buddhism in the local religious environment, and the dynamic growth of American Buddhist communities.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The study of Religion, Theology and Culture forms an important component of a Santa Clara education. This course fulfills the requirement for the third course in Religion, Theology and Culture (RTC 3). Students must have taken both RTC 1 and RTC 2 courses, and have completed 88 units, to earn RTC 3 credit. As an RTC 3 course this class is part of the Explorations dimension of the Core Curriculum. Building upon the first two RTC courses, this class will enable students to:

1. Identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions and
2. Evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society.

In the context of RSOC 113, we will develop these skills by exploring the challenges faced by Asian communities in diaspora and convert Buddhist communities, and the ways that Buddhism contributes to their development of distinct religious communities.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING:

Quiz of Basic Buddhist Teachings and History (20%)

Since not all students in this course will have previously taken courses on Buddhism, this course will begin with a survey of basic Buddhist teachings and the history of Buddhist traditions. Mastery of this segment of the course will be measured by an in-class quiz. The quiz will test students' abilities to identify key concepts, historical personages and events, as well as a short essay for reflecting on the diversity of Buddhist experience in the contemporary world. *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 (examples: Temple, Dharma Center, Monastic Training Center, Meditation Center, or other larger scale, religiously established sangha for Buddhist practice and community-building). Students will be expected to employ ethnographic techniques to document the site. Through interviews with Buddhists, the group will also be expected to assess the demographic groups served by the temple, and reflect on the roles played by the temple in the lives of their members. How do people in these communities view Buddhism and the temple? What roles do the religion and the institution play in their social, spiritual, and moral lives? To what degree does Buddhism and/or the temple or center help the community deal with contemporary social issues? Students will prepare a twenty-minute group presentation summarizing what they learned on their visit, which they will share with the class. *This will assess course goals #2 and 3, and core learning objectives #1.*

Short Reflection Papers (20%)

In addition to a group project, each student will also be expected to write two short reflection papers. One of these will be a reflection on the experience of the temple visit, critically examining the experience and what was learned, in the group visit to the local Buddhist site. The second paper will be a reflection on one of the examples or topics in Buddhism in America, choosing from Sections 2 or 3 of the course syllabus, for example, engaged Buddhism, women in American Buddhism, or Buddhism and technology. Both papers should contain reflection on the roles played by Buddhism in the lives of contemporary American communities. *This will assess course goal #3 and core learning objective #2.*

Final Paper (30%)

The course will conclude with a paper that explores the multiple roles played by Buddhism and Buddhist institutions in contemporary American society and in the lives of American Buddhists. Students will develop a topic drawing upon the course readings and their own qualitative ethnographic research in the local community, and will explore it in a medium length reflection paper. *This will assess course goals #2 and #3, and core learning objective #2.*

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 to strengthen the students' knowledge of the traditions studied, 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 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

Course learning occurs in class, in course readings, in assignments, and in instructor feedback on assignments. In order for students to receive the greatest benefit from course material, regular attendance is required. If you must miss a class, please inform the instructor in advance whenever possible. Students are responsible for making up missed work. **Unexcused absences will significantly lower your class participation grade, and thus your final grade.**

Academic Honesty and Proper Citations

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/>
<http://www.scu.edu/provost/policy/academicpolicy/>

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.*

For proper citation formatting, please refer to resources for Chicago-Turabian Style: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers, Eighth Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Online Resource: <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocChicago.html>

For a sample paper, please see (although there is no need for a title page for assignments):

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/1300991022_717.pdf

If your field of study uses a different citation format, please inform the instructor and stay consistent with one formatting method.

Scholarly Sources and More

It is important to recognize the difference between the variety of sources available. Scholarly sources include academic books and journal articles. Wikipedia, newspapers, magazines, blogs,

websites, and Twitter can be cited, but not as scholarly sources. If an assignment requires three scholarly sources, be sure to make this distinction. Some scholars have been known to blog, but may not hold the same standards for non-academic publications.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/disabilities as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

Title IX Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife and click on the link for the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com/http://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point/

Reporting Practices

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at Santa Clara University.

For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's EEO and Title IX Coordinator. If you inform me that you are struggling with an issue that may be resulting in, or caused by, traumatic or unusual stress, I will likely inform the campus Student Care Team (SCU CARE).

If you would like to reach out directly to the Student Care Team for assistance, you can contact them at www.scu.edu/osl/report. If you would like to talk to the Office of EEO and Title IX directly, they can be reached at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Life (OSL), Campus Safety Services, and local law enforcement. For confidential

support, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services office (CAPS), the YWCA, or a member of the clergy (for example, a priest or minister).

Finally, please be aware that if, for some reason, our interaction involves a disruptive behavior, a concern about your safety or the safety of others, or potential violation of University policy, I will inform the Office of Student Life. The purpose of this is to keep OSL apprised of incidents of concern, and to ensure that students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need.

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-
			0-59.9 F

CLASS TEXTS (REQUIRED)

- (1) Donald W. Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience, Third Edition* (New York: Oxford, 2014). **(IBE)**
- (2) Bhante H. Gunaratana, *Journey to Mindfulness: The Autobiography of Bhante G.* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003).
- (3) Angel Kyodo Williams, *Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2002).
- (4) James Coleman, *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition* (New York: Oxford, 2002). **(NB)**
- (5) Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Boston: Weatherhill, 2005 [1970].
- (6) Readings on Camino
- (7) Readings via web links to online readings

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. 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 **Life of the Buddha**

During this class, we will briefly survey the life of the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, and his basic teachings. Then, we will continue our introduction to Buddhism in America with a viewing of the film “Little Buddha,” which provides an introduction to the life of the Buddha, basic Buddhist

teachings, and Buddhism in America.

- **IBE 6-30**

- **Film:** Bernardo Bertolucci's "Little Buddha" (1994, 123 min)

Tues. 1/12

Basic Buddhist Teachings

We will begin with a brief introduction to basic Buddhist teachings, with a focus on the "Four Noble Truths," followed by a viewing of the conclusion of "Little Buddha" and a short discussion.

- **IBE 31-64**

- **Discussion of "Little Buddha"**

Thurs. 1/14

Theravada Buddhism

We will introduce the Theravada Buddhist tradition, which is the form of Buddhism that predominates in Southeast Asia

- **IBE 65-114**

Tues. 1/19

Mahayana Buddhism, Part 1

Due to the wide geographical scope of Mahayana Buddhism, we will use two class times to focus on its variety of forms. For this class, we will focus on the Mahayana tradition, more generally, and its expressions in India and Tibet.

- **IBE 115-221**

Thurs. 1/21

Mahayana Buddhism, Part 2

In this class we will continue our study of Mahayana Buddhist traditions as they developed in China, Korea, and Japan.

- **IBE 222-362**

2.

Buddhism in America

Tues. 1/26

Buddhism in America: Overview

This class will provide an overview of the basic history of the transmission of Buddhism to America, and the factors contributing to its growth in the United States during the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

- **IBE 363-382, 410-416**

- **NB 55-90**

Discussion of Group Project

Thurs. 1/28

Buddhism in America: Overview

We will continue our coverage of the growth of Buddhism in America with a viewing and discussion of a short documentary on the subject. This will be followed by a quiz on Buddhism basics.

- **Film:** Elda Hartley, "Buddhism Comes to America" (30 minutes, 1990)

- **Quiz**

Tues. 2/2

Vipassana, Discussion: *Journey to Mindfulness*

We will turn to one of the most prominent and popular forms of Buddhist practice in America, Vipassana meditation. We will overview the practice, introduce an

important teacher in America, Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, and discuss his autobiography. We will also discuss the Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center, developed by Euro-Americans who studied Buddhism with core teachers in Asia.

- Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, *Journey to Mindfulness*
- Form Project Groups**

Thurs. 2/4

Zen, Discussion: *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

In this class we will survey the history of Zen Buddhism in America, and will discuss the reasons why Americans without a Buddhist family or cultural background are drawn to the religion. We will discuss the most popular Zen book in the U.S., *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

- **NB 185-194**
- Shunryo Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Boston: Weatherhill, 2005 [1970].

Tues. 2/9

Zen, Guest Speakers Lyn Fine and Victoria Mausisa

Discussion: *Being Black*

Our guest speakers are ordained members of the Community of Mindful Living in the tradition of Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh. To understand the work of our guest speakers, we will read the Mindful Peacebuilding website and the basic Buddhist precepts as interpreted by Thich Nhat Hanh. We will discuss Angel Kyodo Williams's work, *Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace*, which is arguably a paradigmatic work of "American Buddhism."

- Angel Kyodo Williams, *Being Black*.
- Mindful Peacebuilding website: <http://www.mindfulpeacebuilding.org>
- Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Five Mindfulness Trainings," web resource: <http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>

Thurs. 2/11

Tibetan Buddhism in Diaspora

We will discuss Tibetan religious heritage, lived largely in diaspora in India, the U.S., and across the world. We will focus on prominent teachers for U.S. audiences, such as the Dalai Lama and American convert teacher Pema Chodron. We will view and critique a film narrated and directed by an American, who interviews the Dalai Lama, but lacks familiarity with key Buddhist ideas, history, and cross-cultural study methods.

- Pema Chodron, "Breathing In Pain, Breathing Out Relief," *Buddha's Daughters: Teachings from Women Who Are Shaping Buddhism in the West*, ed. Andrea Miller, Boston: Shambala, 2014, 52-53, 58-65.

Film: "10 Questions for the Dalai Lama" (2006, 86 minutes)

Discuss Reflection Papers

3.

Tues. 2/16

Topics in Buddhism in America
Engaged Buddhism, Global Buddhism

We will consider a variety of opportunities and challenges as Buddhist practitioners inhabit Buddhism in a variety of social, cultural, and political

settings. One variant, popular in the U.S., is engaged Buddhism.

Group Project Temple Selections Due

• IBE 390-415

- David Loy, "What's Buddhist about Socially Engaged Buddhism?" *Zen Occidental.net*, February/March 2004. Web resource: <http://www.zen-occidental.net/articles1/loy12-english.html>
- Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism" in *Interbeing*, Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1993. Excerpt in web resource: http://viewonbuddhism.org/resources/14_precepts.html

Thurs. 2/18

Technology, Mindfulness, and American Buddhism

We will discuss a variety of topics in technology and Buddhism, including Buddhism via the internet, meditation "apps," and mindfulness for business (minus the Buddhism).

- Diana Winston, "You Are What You Download" in *Hooked: Buddhist Writing on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume*, ed. Stephanie Kaza, Boston: Shambala, 2005, 76-85.
- Lizzie Widdicombe, "The Higher Life: A Mindfulness Guru for the Tech Set," *The New Yorker Magazine*, 6 July 2015.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/07/06/the-higher-life>

Tues. 2/23

Women and Gender in Buddhism and America

We will consider studies that see gender, even when contemplating "no-self" in Buddhism, as American scholars seek to accurately depict histories of women in early Buddhism. Turning to Thailand, Ven. Dhammananda has reestablished a female monk lineage, against the will of the male monastic order, yet with the support of allies in the U.S. and elsewhere. Thus, American Buddhism goes beyond North America in its relevance.

- Rita M. Gross, "Sakyadita, Daughters of the Buddha: Roles and Images of Women in Early Indian Buddhism," *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993, 29-54.
- Tanaporn Pichitsakulchai, "The Bhikkuni Revolution: Religious Feminism in Thai Buddhism," *Awakening Buddhist Women*, Brisbane, Australia: Sakyadita International Association of Buddhist Women, 4 August 2014. Web resource: <http://awakeningbuddhistwomen.blogspot.com/2014/08/the-bhikkuni-revolution-religious.html>

Discuss Class Presentations

Thurs. 2/25

Buddhism, Sex, Power & Conflict

We will discuss some of the problems that have caused conflict and division in prominent American Buddhist institutions, as well as different Buddhist communities facing ethnic tensions in a global landscape.

• NB 139-183

First Reflection Paper Due

Tues. 3/1 **Meditation in American Prisons**
This week we will focus on the global movement, which has spread to America, of teaching meditation to interested prisoners. We will overview the movement and view a documentary on an attempt to teach meditation in an American prison.
• Jenny Phillips, *Letters from the Dhamma Brothers*, ix-xv, 3-31
• Thich Nhat Hanh, *Be Free Where You Are: A Talk Given at the Maryland Correctional Institution*, Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2000.
Class Presentations, Groups #1-2

Thurs. 3/3 **Discussion: *Letters from Dhamma Brothers***
In this class we will turn to an interesting pattern that has developed in America, namely, the growing availability of Buddhist meditation classes in prison. We will discuss an essay dedicated to this topic, which we will follow with a viewing of a film on this topic.
• **Film:** David Donnenfield, "Changing from the Inside" (44 minutes, 2006)
Class Presentations, Groups #3-4

Tues. 3/8 **Class Presentations, Groups #5-7**
Thurs. 3/10 **Temple Visit Reflection Paper due**
Tues. 3/15 **Final Paper due**

Note: I offer sincere gratitude to Prof. David Gray, whose syllabi for the same course (Winter 2011 and Fall 2013) factored centrally into the planning for this course.