



The Beijing Center

北京中国学中心

Spring 2021 TBC 2520 Introduction to Buddhism

Credit Hours: 3.0

Class Times and Location: TBA

Instructor: TBA

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Course Description

Buddhism has over twenty-five hundred years of history and has taken root, in one form and another and at one time or another, in virtually every country in Asia. In more recent times, it has found a niche in Western nations as well.

This class aims at giving the students an overview of basic Buddhist doctrine, an introduction of the history of its development in India, China and Tibet and a discussion of certain related religious topics, such as religious experience and asceticism. This class will be divided into three parts, namely, early Buddhism in India, Mahayana Buddhism in China and Tantric practice in Tibet. Each of the three part will be dealt with in the above mentioned doctrinal and historical perspectives.

Though this class is primarily a survey class of Buddhist practice, there will be sessions of class addressing specific issues of Buddhist practice. It is considered to be beneficial for the students to dive deeper into certain areas of the vast array of social and cultural phenomena that have clustered in the course of time around a figure called the Buddha. The purpose of doing so is to portray somehow more precisely the thoughts and actions of the large segment of human race who have called themselves Buddhists.

Learning Outcome

On successful completion of this course (i.e. by *passing* this course), a student will be able to

1. demonstrate knowledge, with attention to historical development, of the central texts, beliefs, ethical understandings, and practices of Buddhism.
2. analyze and interpret Buddhist religious texts, beliefs, and practices using standard scholarly methods and tools.
3. demonstrate knowledge of and capacity to articulate the foundations of Buddhism, whether they are Buddhist themselves or not.
4. monitor students' own individual thinking or behavior in relationship to Buddhism in order to question, confirm, validate, or correct their presuppositions and pre-judgements.
5. demonstrate how faith traditions or belief systems, in this case Buddhism, have been or can be related to the intellectual and cultural life of Buddhists

Required Textbook

1. Bercholz, Samuel, ed. *Entering the Stream*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993.
2. Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. London & Bedford: The Gordon Fraser Gallery.

All assigned readings for this class will be put on reserve at TBC library for the students to check out.

Course Requirements

1. Class Discussion

15% to 20% of the class time will be used to have a class discussion on the assigned reading. Students are expected to finish the assigned readings **before** each class meeting. Class discussions will require students to reflect on their own presuppositions and correct erroneous opinions by appealing to data and reasoned argumentation.

2. Field Trips

Two organized field trips to religious places of worship and Buddhist monasteries as a part of the class activities will provide the students with first-hand experience of the living Buddhist practice. Both field trips are **required**.

3. Attendance Policy

Attendance is required. Students are expected to come to class on time. 2 late arrivals will be considered as equivalent to 1 absence on the attendance record. I reserve the right to drop a student after 2 unexcused absences. Late attendance may eventually cause attendance grade deduction.

Only valid medical or family emergencies qualify as an absence, and documentation of the same must be presented to the professor no later than the next class meeting.

4. Grading

- (a) Attendance (10%)
- (b) Class participation (10%)
- (c) Midterm exam (20%)
- (d) Presentation (20%)
- (e) Term paper (40%)

5. Academic Honesty Statement

Please click the following link to see The Beijing Center's policy on Academic Integrity: <http://thebeijingcenter.org/academic-integrity>

Course Schedule

Week 1

Teacher and class introduction

The Buddha-life story *Before He Was Buddha-the life of Siddhartha* and the rise of Buddhism-earliest religious practice in India

Reading:

What the Buddha Taught P16-50

Entering the Stream P57-61 P83-86

Week 2

The Four Noble Truth and Karma, the wheel of life and Buddhist cosmology

Reading:

Entering the Stream P122-130

What the Buddha Taught P51-66

Founding the Buddhist Community and the Buddha's passing away

Reading:

Answers to Common Questions about Buddhism P165-217

Week 3

Religious life in early centuries

The rise of Mahayana Buddhism in India

Reading:

Answers to Common Questions about Buddhism P219-253

Buddhist Saints in India Chpt 1.2

Week 4

The Spread, Development and Evolution of Buddhism in China

Reading:

Buddhist Saints in India Chpt 3.4

Week 5

Field Trip: Fayuan Monastery

Week 6

Mid-term Exam

Week. 7

The Bodhisattva Path

Reading:

The Buddhist Religion P99-108

The Experience of Buddhism P158-172

Chan

Reading:

Zen mind, the beginner's mind

Week. 8

Field Trip: Guangji Monastery

Week 9

Introduction of Tantra

Reading:

Entering the Stream P251-253 P258-265

Tibetan Buddhism-an overview

Reading:

The Indestructible Truth P17-207

Week 10

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Topics on Tibetan Buddhism-Dalai Lama, Milarepa

Reading:

Life of Milarepa

Tantric rituals, Mandala and systematic advancement

Week 12

Religious Experience and in-depth psychology

Reading:

The secret of golden flower

Week 13

Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism

Review of the class

Week 14

Term paper (10-15 pages) should be submitted no later than the last day of the class.

Expanded Description of Learning Outcomes

Knowledge Area (Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge)

By taking this course, students will be able to

1. demonstrate knowledge, with attention to historical development, of the central texts, beliefs, ethical understandings, and practices of Buddhism.
By way of example, (1) name and discuss some of the most important Buddhist scriptures; (2) articulate the general outline of the historical evolution of Buddhism, including its different major branches; and (3) define and discuss key Buddhist concepts, terms, values, and religious practices.
2. analyze and interpret Buddhist religious texts, beliefs, and practices using standard scholarly methods and tools.
3. analyze and interpret some Buddhist scriptures and scriptural passages.
4. demonstrate knowledge of the central ethical teachings and perspectives of Buddhism.
5. evaluate the religious perspectives of Buddhists in light of what they learn about the teachings and practices that are foundational to Buddhism in its many forms.

Skills (Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions)

Students will be able to:

1. demonstrate the ability to comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and/or contextualize a variety of religious texts, histories, and ideas, as well as scholarly arguments about those texts, histories and ideas.
2. articulate reasoned arguments about materials studies in the course or to critique arguments to which they are exposed in the class.
3. monitor students' own individual thinking or behavior in relationship to Buddhism in order to question, confirm, validate, or correct their presuppositions and pre-judgements.

Values Area (Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World):

By taking this course, students will be able to

1. demonstrate knowledge of and capacity to articulate the foundations of Buddhism, whether they are Buddhist themselves or not.
2. demonstrate how faith traditions or belief systems, in this case Buddhism, have been or can be related to the intellectual and cultural life of Buddhists(e.g., Buddhist systems of philosophy, ritual customs that characterize Buddhist countries, Buddhist beliefs about the relationship between humans and other kinds of living beings, Buddhist beliefs about the human body and how illness and healing take place, and so forth.)