



Introduction to Buddhism

RLST 2120

Traditions emphasis

Fall 2006

AC 137

M W TH F, 11:00-11:50

Instructor: Dr. Lola Williamson

Office: CC 10

Office Hours: M W, 10:00-10:50, or by appointment.

Email: willill@millsaps.edu

Phone: 601-974-1333

Course Description:

Siddhartha Gautama, or the Buddha as he is more commonly known, was a human being like you or I. Like most human beings, he noticed that life involves quite a bit of

suffering. Like some human beings, he determined to find a way out of suffering. But what makes the Buddha different from most of us is that he did find a way out. And after he did—what is referred to as his enlightenment experience—he shared his discoveries with others as he traveled with a small band of followers in India. After he died, his followers continued to teach Siddhartha’s wisdom to all who would listen. In this course, we will join the listeners of the last two-and-a-half millennia, as well as the 350 million followers today, in order to learn about the Buddha’s discoveries. We will also learn how his message was embellished over time and how religious practices were added to the simple monastic discipline that he had established. We will learn how Buddhist views and practices intersected with established cultural and religious norms as it traveled from country to country. We will encounter Buddhist beliefs ranging from a heaven in which trees are laden with brilliant jewels to the “emptiness” of all phenomena. We will encounter practices ranging from austere meditation to regal ceremonies surrounding the worship of a tooth. It promises to be an enticing journey.

Texts:

The Different Paths of Buddhism by Carl Olson

Original Buddhist Sources: A Reader edited by Carl Olson

The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh

Kindness, Clarity and Insight by the Dalai Lama; translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins.

Walking on Lotus Flowers by Martine Batchelor.

Required Website Reading:

Evaluating Internet Resources by Robert Harris, 1997.

<<http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>>

Helpful Website:

Buddhist Dictionary by Nyanatiloka, 1980, reprinted, 1988.

<<http://www.palikanon.com/english/wtb/dic1-titel.htm>>

Course Objectives:

Text readings, as well as class lectures and discussions, will increase your knowledge of Buddhism so that by the end of the semester you should be able to:

- a) Describe the central ideas and practices of Buddhism;
- b) Explain the interaction of Buddhism with different cultural traditions;
- c) Clarify the differences between Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions; and
- d) Discuss the intersection of Buddhist and gender concerns.

A research paper and essay exams will help you develop critical thinking and logical and clear expression of your thinking as you:

- a) Select, narrow, and focus topics;
- b) Organize material logically and coherently;
- c) Support ideas with evidence and reasoning; and
- d) Give compelling expression to your ideas through the precise, vivid, and creative use of language.

Class discussion, small group work, “performances,” and presentations will help you develop proficiency in speaking and listening as you:

- a) Apply active listening principles;
- b) Employ verbal and nonverbal principles of effective speech delivery and conversational interaction;
- c) Use techniques for dealing with speech anxiety; and
- d) Display courtesy, clarity, and appropriateness while interacting with others.

Attendance

You will be allowed three absences during the semester without consequence to the calculation of your grade. Each absence after this will result in your final grade being reduced by one-third (i.e., B will become B- for four absences and C+ for five). Your free absences are intended to cover cases of serious illness or an extreme family crisis, such as a death in the family. If you use them for other purposes and then get sick later in the semester, I will not adjust the attendance policy for you. Please notify me of the reasons for your absences.

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period according to the schedule below. If you must miss class on the day of a test, presentation, or when an assignment is due, please notify me ahead of time.

You are expected to arrive to class on time. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class. It is your responsibility to see that your name is included. Three tardy arrivals will equal one absence.

Grading scale

4.0	A Excellent	2.0	C Satisfactory
3.66	A-	1.66	C-
3.33	B+	1.33	D+
3.0	B Good	1.0	D Low/Pass
2.66	B-	0	F Fail/No credit
2.33	C+		

Course Evaluation

- 20% Consistent effort in reading, thinking, listening, and speaking. Small group work, class discussion, class reading, and “performances” will be included in this grade.
- 40% Midterm and final exams (20% each).
- 40% Research project: 8-10-page research paper (steps to paper, 5%; first draft, 10%; final paper, 10%); and presentation (teaching circles; 5%; presentation, 10%).

Class Schedule

The schedule may change somewhat over the course of the semester. Detailed expectations for written and oral assignments will be provided in class close to the time they are due. Come to each class prepared to discuss the reading assignments. **This means you will have taken notes and written your own comments and questions about the material.** At the end of each class, you will be given several questions to consider for the following class.

Unit One: Life and Teachings of the Buddha (Class will be held M, W, TH, and F during the first unit.)

W Aug. 30: Overview of Course

F Sept. 1: Buddhist Worldview

Paths, 1-6, 18-20; *Heart*, 3-5; 161-168; *Kindness*, 9-17

M Sept. 4: Causality and Interdependence

Paths, 45-50; *Sources*, 38-45; *Kindness*, 26-28

W Sept. 6: Transforming the Cycle of Suffering

Heart, last paragraph of 231-249

TH Sept. 7: Four Noble Truths

Paths, 50-mid-54; *Heart*, 6-23; *Kindness*, 21-25; *Sources*, 47-48 (in class)

F Sept. 8: Eightfold Path

Paths, mid-54-58; *Heart*, 64-83, 206-209, *Sources*, 49-54 (in class)

Research for the week: Decide on a broad topic (like Buddhism and gender issues or Buddhism as practiced in a particular country) and browse books and articles. Be prepared to discuss topics that interest you on Friday.

M Sept. 11: No-Self and Five Aggregates

Paths, 58-top of 64; *Heart*, 176-183; *Kindness*, 157-167; *Sources*, 56-58 (in class)

W Sept. 13: Nirvana

Paths, 64-67; *Kindness*, 18-20; *Heart*, 169-175, 214-220; *Sources*, 61-68

TH Sept. 14: Meditation

Sources, 69-77; *Kindness*, 65-73; *Flowers*, Intro and 3-15

F Sept. 15: The Buddha's Life

Paths, 21-42

Research for the week: Take advantage of the fact that there is very little reading this week and put time into your research. Narrow your research topic and submit ILL requests if needed.

M Sept. 18: The Buddha's Life

Sources, 27-37

W Sept. 20: The Buddha's Previous Lives

Sources, 18-25

TH Sept. 21: *The Little Buddha*

F Sept. 22: *The Little Buddha*

OR we can view this Sunday night and take Thursday and Friday off – your choice.

Unit Two: Theravada Buddhism (Classes will meet M, W, and F to free up time for research.)

Research for the week: Finalize topic and continue to explore sources. On Friday turn in (1) topic, (2) two to three possible research questions, and (3) a list of possible sources.

M Sept. 25: Overview of Theravada

1) <<http://www.buddhanet.net/>>

From the homepage, go to "Buddhist Studies" and click on the "Buddhist World" from the pull-down menu. Click on Theravada countries and read about all of the countries except Bangladesh. (11 pages)

2) <<http://www.sridaladamaligawa.lk/english/index.html>> From the homepage, go to "Rituals" and then to "Rituals Connected with the Sacred Tooth Relic" (4 pages)

W Sept. 27: Monastics and Laypeople

Paths, 88-95; 103-109

F Sept. 29: Ethics

Paths, 68-87

Research for the week: Continue reading. On Friday hand in (1) research question; (2) an annotated bibliography of 2-3 sources explaining what information or insights you plan to use from each, and (3) a brief discussion of what you expect to conclude about your research question based on the source materials you have read so far.

M Oct. 2: Folk Buddhism

Paths, 123-140

W Oct. 4 Women and Theravada Buddhism

Paths, 110-122

Flowers, 53-66

Sources, 110-117 (to be read in class)

F Oct. 6:

Video: *Footprints of the Buddha*

Review sheet handed out.

Research for the week: On Monday, hand in annotated bibliography for 2-3 additional *Sources* and a brief discussion of how you might use them to answer your research question.

M Oct. 9 Review

W Oct. 11: Midterm Exam: Objective

F Oct. 13: Midterm Exam: Essays

Unit Three: Mahayana Buddhism (Classes will continue to meet M, W, and F.)

Research for the week: Begin writing.

M Oct. 16: Overview of Mahayana; Bodhisattvas

<<http://www.buddhanet.net/>> From the homepage, go to “Buddhist Studies” and click on the “Buddhist World” from the pull-down menu. Click on Mahayana countries and read about China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. (8 pages)

Paths, 143-top of 145, bottom of 158-162

W Oct. 18: Six Perfections (Paramitas)

Heart, 192-213

(Bring *Paths* to class)

F Oct. 20: Emptiness (Shunyata) and Madhyamika

Paths, 165-167; *Sources*, 163-top of 169, bottom of 207-212

Research for the week: Continue writing.

M Oct 23: No class: Fall break

W Oct 25: Emptiness and Yogacara

Paths, 174-top of 181

F Oct. 27: Pure Land Buddhism
Paths, 184-200
Flowers, 67-74
Sources, 189-mid-194

Research for the week: Hand in first draft on Friday.

M Oct. 30: Zen Buddhism
Paths, 225-244

W Nov. 1: Zen Buddhism
Sources, 350-357
Flowers, 16-34

F Nov. 10
Video: *Land of the Disappearing Buddha*

Unit Four: Vajrayana Buddhism and Research Projects

Research for the week: Begin revisions after feedback.

M Nov. 13: Overview of Vajryana (Deities, Mantra, and Views on Dying)
Kindness, 95-99, 116-117, 168-182

W and TH Nov. 15 and 16:
Individual meetings to discuss paper.

TH evening, or another time agreed upon together, we will view *Kundun*, a movie about the life of the Dalai Lama. This will be in lieu of class on Friday, Nov 17.

Research for the week: Finish revisions and prepare to teach what you have learned to classmates.

M Nov. 20: Small group teaching circles.
Present research informally and answer questions.

W. Nov. 22: Continue teaching circles.
Write a two-three-page reflection paper to be handed in on Nov. 27 that discusses your experience of the teaching circles. Evaluate yourself and your colleagues. What did you find particularly interesting in the others' research? Did they present the material in a way that made it understandable? Were you well prepared and organized when you taught your material? Were you able to answer their questions?

TH. Nov 24 and F Nov. 25: No class – Thanksgiving break

Research for the week: Prepare presentation (guidelines handed out in class)

M Nov. 27: Practice speaking skills

Turn in reflection paper on teaching circles.

Prepare a one-minute introduction to presentation.

W Nov 29: Presentations

Turn in revised paper and speaking outline on the day you present. You will be evaluating one person's presentation, and this should be handed in the class after the person speaks.

TH Nov. 30: Presentations

F Dec. 1: Presentations

M Dec. 4: Presentations

W Dec. 6: Vajrayana Buddhism

Paths, 201-224

Review sheet handed out in class.

TH Dec. 7: Review

F Dec. 8: Review

M Dec. 11 at 2:00 p.m.: Final Exam (cumulative)