COURSE DESCRIPTION

Be a light unto yourself. Work out your own liberation with diligence.
– attributed to Shakyamuni Buddha (ca. 550-450 BCE)

As long as suffering exists, there will be those for whom the Buddha’s message signifies liberation. As long as Buddhism exists, there will be multiple views and versions of it. This course entails study of the history and diversity of Buddhist traditions, from the time of the Buddha in 5th-century BCE India to contemporary Buddhist communities in Asia and the West.

Prerequisite: GSTR 110  Fulfills: International (Non-Western) and Religion Perspectives

Required texts (all other materials provided via moodle.berea.edu [*] or in class):

Students who complete this course successfully should be able to:

- understand distinctive aspects of the cultures and civilizations studied;
- think critically about aesthetic, moral, and/or social norms other than their own and gain a better understanding of their own cultures;
- recognize and think critically about cross-cultural connections;
- develop tolerance of values across cultures;
- understand religion as a mode of response to, and as system of beliefs and practices derived from, an interaction with divine or ultimate reality;
- understand religion as a way of addressing fundamental questions about human nature and experience;
- understand how religion is expressed in art, ritual, myth, or texts;
- understand relationships of religious beliefs and practices to ethical teachings, practices, or issues.

NOTE: If the structure of this course results in any barriers to your full participation in it, please meet with me to discuss ways to ensure your full participation. Together with Disability & Accessibility Services (111 Lincoln Hall, tel. ext. 3237, lisa.ladanyi@berea.edu), we can determine how to best achieve this goal. I am open to creative solutions as long as they do not compromise the course's core content and learning goals.

Course Assessment

Students’ progress toward achieving these learning goals will be assessed using the following instruments:

1. Prepared, present, and engaged participation in all class sessions (= 20% of course grade, letter-graded). Preparation consists not only of completing all reading and writing assignments prior to specific deadlines, but also re-reading, re-watching, and reflecting on what one has read and watched, including keeping a hand-written (private) record of your thoughts as you read or watch to keep handy during class sessions. Being present begins, but does not end, with merely showing up for class. Don’t just show up; arrive on time, remain throughout the class period, and bring assigned materials with you. If you can’t be in class for what you consider to be a good reason, communicate that reason to the instructor in advance, if possible, or after the fact, if not. Excuses may be sought, but will not necessarily be granted. Engagement is a difficult quality to describe, but it entails playing an active role (including active listening as well as active speaking) in class sessions, trying one’s best, seeking help when necessary, and not giving up in the face of challenges.

2. Submission of 8 reading responses (= 20% of course grade). These should consist of your comments and questions (not summaries) related to a particular week's readings (and/or, on occasion, in-class videos), emailed directly to the instructor by 8 a.m. on the dates indicated in the calendar. They must be at least 250 words in length and be written in clear, error-free English prose. All sources, whether quoted or paraphrased, should be cited using a recognized system of documentation (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA). Reading responses will be graded pass/fail. You may decide the weeks in which you submit responses. Responses cannot be made up or submitted multiply (i.e., more than one per week).
3. Submission of 2 analyses (each = 20% of course grade). By 8 a.m. on March 2, you must complete EITHER a scholarly essay (8-10 double-spaced, 12-point-font, stapled pages) OR a media presentation (podcast, video, or website), submitted as an attached, emailed document (or URL) sent to the instructor, which answers one of the following sets of questions:

OPTION A: What well-known but non-Buddhist work of art (e.g., film, musical composition, novel, painting, play, poem) engages themes that could be identified as Buddhist? What makes these themes “Buddhist”? How might a Buddhist interpret them?

OPTION B: How can a contemporary global or national issue (e.g., climate change, persecution of ethnic or sexual minorities, armed international interventions) be understood from a Buddhist perspective? How might Buddhist views of this issue differ from other views? As a response to this issue, what would “right action,” in a Buddhist sense, look like?

OPTION C: When undertaken as an act of Buddhist meditation, how does your experience of an ordinary, habitual activity change? In what way(s) can this activity be understood as a form of Buddhist practice? To which goals or outcomes of Buddhist practice might this activity lead?

OPTION D: How might a Buddhist critique your culture of origin? What criteria might a Buddhist use to assess the dominant ideas, institutions, and practices of your culture? What suggestions for cultural change or conservation might a Buddhist suggest?

Regardless of the form that this analysis takes, it must (1) be free of grammatical and spelling errors, (2) engage primary and secondary sources of evidence assigned in the course, and (3) fully cite all sources of evidence using a recognized system of documentation (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA). If you earn a grade of B+ or better on this first analysis, you will not be required to submit a second analysis; your grade on the first analysis will be doubled in order to generate 40% of your course grade. If you earn a B or lower grade on this first analysis, you will be required to complete a second analysis in response to one of the remaining options from the list above. This second analysis, if required, must be submitted by 8 a.m. on April 27.

4. Completion of 1 final examination (= 20% of course grade). Final examinations are oral in format and will be given starting at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2 in Draper 102-C.
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<th>DAY &amp; DATE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>W 1/10</td>
<td>No assignment – discussion of course + “What Makes A Text Buddhist?” handout</td>
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<td>M 1/15</td>
<td>NO CLASS (M.L.K. DAY)</td>
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| W 1/17     | • Todd T. Lewis, “Ancient India: Belief and Society” (*BIG* 12-21)  
• Kevin Trainor, “The Career of Siddhartha” (*BIG* 22-45)  
[The Buddha](Hutchins Library DVD 249.363 B927 2010), parts 1-8 |
| M 1/22     | READING RESPONSE #1 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• Charles Hallisey, trans., “A Life of the Buddha” (*BS* 116-128)  
• Todd T. Lewis, “The Human Condition” and “The 'Four Noble Truths'” (*BIG* 58-71)  
[The Buddha](Hutchins Library DVD 249.363 B927 2010), parts 9-15 |
| W 1/24     | • B. Nāṇamoli & B. Bodhi, trans., “A Murderer Becomes a Monk” (*BS* 252-261) |
| M 1/29     | READING RESPONSE #2 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• K. R. Norman, trans., “The Ascetic Ideal” (*BS* 262-268) |
| W 1/31     | • Jonathan S. Walters, “Gotami’s Story” (*BIP* 107-132) |
| M 2/5      | READING RESPONSE #3 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• Charles Hallisey, “The Advice to Layman Tundila” (*BIP* 220-231) |
| W 2/7      | • Patrick Pranke, “On Becoming a Buddhist Wizard” (*BIP* 255-270) |
| M 2/12     | READING RESPONSE #4 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• Diana Winston, “Mi Mi May” (*NUBT* 167-173) |
| W 2/14     | • Todd T. Lewis, “Morality” and “Meditation” (*BIG* 72-75)  
• Mark L. Blum, “Meditative Trance” and “Mindfulness” (*BIG* 80-83)  
• John Peacock, “The Laity” (*BIG* 104-105)  
• Kevin Trainor, “Entering the Path,” “Devotion,” and “Donation” (*BIG* 106-111)  
[Footprint of the Buddha](Hutchins Library DVD 200 L849 2001 disc 2) |
| M 2/19     | READING RESPONSE #5 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• B. Nāṇamoli & B. Bodhi, trans., “The Direct Path to Enlightenment” (*BS* 343-349) |
| W 2/21     | • Donald K. Swearer, “A Modern Sermon on Merit Making” (*BIP* 293-295) |
| M 2/26     | READING RESPONSE #6 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• Easton Waller, “The War Against the Lawns” (*NUBT* 197-214) |
| W 2/28     | NO CLASS (OPTIONAL CONSULTATION WITH INSTRUCTOR) |
| F 3/2      | Email ANALYSIS #1 to  
[richeyj@berea.edu](mailto:richeyj@berea.edu) by 8 a.m. |
| SPRING BREAK | |
| M 3/12     | NO CLASS – SNOW DAY |
• Michael Willis, “The Mahayana Pantheon” (*BIG* 138-139) |
| M 3/19     | READING RESPONSE #7 DUE BY 8 A.M.!  
• William H. Grosnick, “The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra” (*BIP* 92-106)  
• Donald Lopez, trans., “The Bodhisattva Vow” (*BS* 388-393) |
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| W 3/21    | - Mark L. Blum, “Pure Lands” (*BIG* 144-147)  
- Michael Willis, “Depicting the Pure Land” (*BIG* 148-149)  
- Mark L. Blum, “Pure Land Sutras” (*BIG* 202-203)  
- *To The Land of Bliss* (Hutchins Library DVD 294.3 T627 2002) |
| M 3/26    | **READING RESPONSE #8 DUE BY 8 A.M.!**  
- Dennis Hirota, trans., “The Gift of Faith” (*BS* 522-530)  
- *Streams of Light* (Hutchins Library DVD 294.39 S914) |
- William Bodiford, trans., “A Zen Master Interprets the Dharma” (*BS* 531-539)  
- *Land of the Disappearing Buddha* (Hutchins Library DVD 297.4 L848 2001 disc 2) |
| M 4/2     | **READING RESPONSE #9 DUE BY 8 A.M.!**  
- “Awakening Stories of Zen Buddhist Women” (*BIP* 397-408) |
| W 4/4     | **Guest professor:** Dr. David Mozina, Boston College  
| M 4/9     | **READING RESPONSE #10 DUE BY 8 A.M.!**  
- *Trinh T. Minh-ha, “The Screensaver’s Light”*  
| W 4/11    | - *An Chi Pham, “Mandala”* |
| M 4/16    | **READING RESPONSE #11 DUE BY 8 A.M.!**  
- *The Burmese Harp* (Hutchins Library DVD 791.436 B962 2007), part 1 |
| W 4/18    | *The Burmese Harp* (Hutchins Library DVD 791.436 B962 2007), part 2 |
| M 4/23    | **READING RESPONSE #12 DUE BY 8 A.M.!**  
- ~PANEL DISCUSSION WITH LOCAL BUDDHIST PRACTITIONERS~  
(come prepared to ask a question about Buddhist practice) |
| W 4/25    | - Gerald Reilly, “Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree” (*NUBT* 5-15) |
| F 4/27    | EMAIL ANALYSIS #2 (if required) to  
[richeyj@berea.edu](mailto:richeyj@berea.edu) by 8 a.m. |
| W 5/2     | **FINAL EXAMINATION**  
(meet individually with instructor in Draper 102-C, 3-4:50 p.m.) |