SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Spring 2013
 Discipline: Religion
 RELB 3559: Buddhism in the Modern World
 Division: Upper
 Faculty Name: Waldron

Pre-requisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this course we will explore the diversity of Buddhist traditions in modern world, both in Asia and the West. We will examine its transformation from pre-modern Asia to the modern, global era by focusing on several related themes: the role of Buddhism in political movements for national liberation, social justice and the environment; its complex relation with modern science and psychology; and its place in popular imagination.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
To understand the complex relations between Buddhism as a monastic tradition and its social, cultural and political dimensions in various cultures; to explore how modern Buddhists seek to revive, reform and renovate their traditions; to improve ability to analyze modern religious, social and political movements; to improve ability to comprehend and appreciate multiple, often conflicting perspectives.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Mishra, Pankaj
TITLE: An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World
PUBLISHER: Picador
ISBN #: 0312425090
DATE/EDITION: 2005

AUTHOR: Queen, C., King, S.
TITLE: Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia
PUBLISHER: SUNY
ISBN #: 0791428443
DATE/EDITION: 1996

AUTHOR: McMahan, D.
TITLE: Buddhism in the Modern World
PUBLISHER: Routledge
ISBN #: 0415780152
DATE/EDITION: 2012
TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Jan. 12. Saturday. Class B1

Class One. Introduction.
McMahon, BMW, McMahon, Buddhist Modernism, pp. 160-176

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
Explanation of syllabus and assignments. What is the academic study of religion? What are its advantages and drawbacks? What is Buddhist Modernism? What are its main characteristics? Why is self-identity fraught with uncertainty and striving?


Class Two.
Mishra, End of Suffering
   pp. 23-47. Invention of ‘Buddhism’
   pp. 84-110. World of the Buddha
Ereserve: Collins, Selfless Persons, ‘Renouncing Individual,’ pp. 60-64.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What were the major religious ideas and practices at the time of the Buddha? Which aspects of them did he retain and which did he reformulate? What is the Middle Way? What exactly did he see under the Bodhi Tree?

Jan. 15. Tuesday. No Class. Hilo
Jan. 16. Wednesday. No Class. Hilo

Jan. 17. Thursday. Class A3
Jan. 18. Friday. Class B3

Class Three.
Watch Before Class Movie: Footprint of the Buddha (52 min.)
Mishra, End of Suffering,
   pp. 269-279. Fire sermon.
   pp. 280-292. Spiritual politics
   pp. 380-388. Last journey

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What are the Four Noble Truths? What is the relationship between lack of permanent self-identity and dependent arising? What is the relationship between the republic that the Buddha
was born in and the rules he set down for the monastic community? What was and is the relationship with the lay community?

Jan. 19. Saturday. Class A4
Jan. 20. Sunday. Class B4

Class Four.
Mishra, *End of Suffering*,
pp. 111-152. Death of God.

**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
What were some of the characteristics of colonial era? How did the colonial experience collide with modernity in India? How did this help promote nationalism? What is the relation between freedom and individualism?

Jan. 23. Wednesday. Class A5
Jan. 24. Thursday. Class B5

Class Five

**Ereserve:** Wangdu, *World Religions: Buddhism*, ‘The Spread of Buddhism,’ pp. 36-55.


McMahan, BMW, Queen, ‘Socially Engaged Buddhism,’ pp. 196-213


**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
The spread of Buddhism from India to East Asia. Why is a nation an ‘Imagined Community’? What are the basic topics in ‘Engaged Buddhism’? How are they related to the history of colonialism, independence and nationalist movements? What is the tension between the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘political’?


Jan. 25. Friday. Class A6

Class Six

**Watch Before Class Movie:** Japan: Land of the Missing Buddha.


McMahan, BMW, Chilson, ‘Searching for a Place to Sit: Buddhism in Modern Japan’ pp. 50-68;


**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
The recent history and diverse sects of Buddhism in modern Japan. What is ‘modern’ about Suzuki’s version of Zen Buddhism? Why did it appeal so much to Japanese as well as Westerners? How did it differ from older, more traditional forms of Buddhism?
Jan 27-31  No Class. Japan 日本   Yokohama 横浜  Kobe 神戸

Feb. 1. Friday. Class A7
Feb. 2. Saturday. Class B7

Class Seven  
McMahan, BMW, pp. 69-88, Fisher, ‘Buddhism in China and Taiwan.’  
**Ereserve:** Mitchell, *Buddhism*, ‘Cultural Experience of Chinese Buddhism Today,’ pp. 236-244

**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
What is Mahāyāna Buddhism? What are the new Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhist Scriptures? Why is the practice of compassion central to the Bodhisattva path in Mahāyāna Buddhism? How do these inform Chinese Buddhist practice?

Feb. 3-8.  No Class. China 中国   Shanghai 上海  Hong Kong 香港

Feb. 9. Saturday. Class A8
Feb. 10. Sunday. Class B8

Class Eight  
**Queen King,** *Engaged Buddhism*, Thich Nhat Hanh and Unified Buddhist Church, pp. 321-363.  
**Ereserve:** Thich Nhat Hanh, ‘History of Buddhist Social Order,’ pp. 1-8.

**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
How was Thich Nhat Hanh influenced by his Western experiences to reform Vietnamese Buddhism? How did the movement expand from simply protecting Buddhist practice to struggling against oppression and working for peace? What are the various ways that Vietnamese Buddhists, as Buddhists, respond to the suffering and violence all around them? Was this ‘political’? Why or why not?

Feb. 11. Monday. Class A9

Class Nine.

**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
What are the various kinds of Buddhism in modern Vietnam? What are some of the challenges for Buddhists in present-day Communist Vietnam?

Feb. 12-17.  No Class. Viet Nam.

Field lab: Exploring Buddhism in Ho Chi Minh City
Feb. 18. Monday. Class B9
Feb. 19. Tuesday. Class A10

Class Ten.
McMahan, BMW, ‘Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Southeast Asia,’ pp. 10-27
McMahan, BMW, ‘Buddhism, Politics and Nationalism,’ pp. 178-194
Ereserve: Jerryson, Buddhist Fury, Ch. 5, ‘Identity,’ pp. 142-177.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The pattern of ‘church-state’ relations in Southeast Asian Buddhism. How did Buddhist institutions interact with the state or king in traditional Southeast Asia? What were the advantages and tensions in such a relationship? What is legitimation and how did Buddhist institutions help legitimize political rule and national integration? How is Thai nationalism connected to Buddhist identity?


Feb. 22. Friday. Class B10
Feb. 23. Saturday. Class A11

Class Eleven

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The monks and the Burmese regime have differing interpretations of Buddhism, of morality, of an ideal of subjectivity, and the appropriate exercise of power. What are these and how do they lead to conflict? How is Buddhism conducive or not to democracy as an ethic of self-governance at both individual and institutional levels?


***Paper on Field Lab Due. 5-7 pages.


Mar. 2. Saturday. Class A12
Mar. 3. Sunday. Class B12

Class Twelve
Watch Before Class Movie: Arising Light: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Birth of a New Era in India. 28 minutes.
Queen King, Engaged Buddhism, Queen, ‘Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation,’ pp. 45-72.
Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What was the process by which Dr. Ambedkar came to embrace Buddhism? Who are the Dalits and what did they need liberation from? How did Dr. Ambedkar reformulate Buddhism to serve the specific needs of the Dalits?

Mar. 4. Monday. No Class, Study Day
Mar. 5. Tuesday. Class A13

Mar. 6-11. Cochin. India.

Mar. 12. Tuesday. Class B13

Class Thirteen


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The changing conditions of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. In Ariyaratne’s view how are individual and social liberation dependent upon each other? What does ‘awakening’ or liberation mean in this context and how does this differ from traditional understandings?
On what grounds did some Sri Lankan Buddhists come to justify or even advocate the civil war in the name of Buddhism? To what extent is this defensible?

Mar. 13. Wednesday. Class A14

Class Fourteen
McMahan, BMW, Wilson, ‘Buddhism and Gender,’ pp. 257-272
Queen, King, Engaged Buddhism, Barnes, ‘Buddhist Women and the Nun’s Order in Asia,’ pp. 259-294.

Ereserve: Cheng, “Luminary Nuns’ Order in Contemporary Taiwan: A Quiet Feminist Movement,” 40-54

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The historical antecedents to the current circumstances of Buddhist nuns in Asia today. What are the differences between the order of Buddhist nuns in South Asia and those in East Asia? To what extent could we consider the Luminary Buddhist nuns in Taiwan feminist? How does this reformulate the notion of liberation?

Mar. 15. Friday. No Class, Study Day.

Mar. 17. Sunday. Class B15

Class Fifteen
Assignment (5 pages): Independence, National Identity and/or Consolidation, Social Upliftment, Equitable Development and Gender Equality—Buddhism has been used for all these in modern Asia. Write an interpretive essay discussing the tensions between the Buddha’s spiritual message of liberation and the ways in which Buddhist traditions are used for more worldly aims. Cite examples from most of the countries we have studied. (Note: ‘Tension’ does not mean contradiction. Tensions often concern balancing two indispensable values that may conflict with each other, like freedom and equality in the US).

Watch IN Class Movie: ‘Becoming Buddha in L.A.’ (56 min.)

Mar. 19. Tuesday. Class A16
Mar. 20. Wednesday. Class B16

Class Sixteen
Watch Before Class Movie: Kundun. (NOTE: 135 minutes!)

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The recent history of Buddhist in the Tibetan cultural area. What were the (various) traditional relations between Buddhism and the Tibetan state in the pre-modern era? How did these change in the 20th century with the arrival of the Chinese Communist state?

Mar. 22. Friday. Class A17
Mar. 23. Saturday. Class B17

Class Seventeen
Watch Before Class Movie: Compassion in Exile. (62 minutes).

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The recent and current uneasy circumstances of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC today. What was the Dalai Lama’s position regarding independence and resistance to Chinese control? What are the religious motivations of the monks and nuns in the Tibetan protests?


Mar. 25-30. No Class. Cape Town
Possible Field-lab: Buddhism in South Africa

Mar. 31. Sunday. Class B18
Class Eighteen


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The characteristics of Buddhism in the West. How do the experiences of Asian Buddhist immigrant in America different from those of American ‘converts’? How do European Buddhists reinterpret traditional teachings? What impression of American Buddhists does Mishra get from his Zen retreat and how does Buddhism ‘overcome nihilism’?

April 1. Monday. Class A19
April 2. Tuesday. Class B19

Class Nineteen


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
Race and Gender in American Buddhism. How does the presence and role of women in American Buddhism differ from its Asian counterparts? How do African-Americans fit into the picture?

April 3. Wednesday. No Class. Study Day.

April 4. Thursday. Class A20
April 5. Friday. Class B20.

Class Twenty

Watch Before Class Movie: Dhamma Brothers (76 minutes).

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The practice of meditation in Western Buddhism. How does meditation improve the lives of the ‘Dhamma Brothers’? What are the promises and perils of studying meditation scientifically? Why do Western Buddhists prioritize the practice of meditation?


Class Twenty-One
Ereserve: Brauen, Dreamworld Tibet: Western Illusions, Ch. 4, ‘In Search of “Dharma-la” and Tibetan Lamas,’ pp. 163-205.
Ereserve: Paine, Re-enchantment: Tibetan Buddhism Comes to the West, Ch. 7, ‘Coming Attractions,’ pp. 165-182.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The image of Buddhism portrayed in modern media. What has the image of Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, been in the modern media? Why?

April 13. Saturday. No Class. Study Day.

April 14. Sunday. Class A22

Class Twenty-Two
Review and Prepare for Exam.

April 16. Tuesday. No Class Lens Course Final Exams
April 17. Wednesday. Class A23 A Course Final Exams


April 22. Monday No Class. Study Day.

April 22. Tuesday. Class B23 B Course Final Exams.
FIELD WORK

FIELD LAB (At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.)
Title: Exploring Buddhism in Ho Chi Minh City
Port: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Date: February 12, 2013

In this field lab, we will visit Buddhist institutions in and around Ho Chi Minh City that reflect the multiplicity of modern Buddhist traditions in Vietnam. The Ky Vien Temple is the main temple for Theravada practice in the country, and is the ‘official’ Theravada institution in Vietnam. In contrast, the Tinh Xa Trung Tam, or Central Temple, is home to a hybrid Mahayana-Theravada practice called The Mendicant Tradition. Lastly, a visit to the Vietnam Buddhist University (formerly Van Hanh), will illustrate how students from a variety of traditions study and practice together. At each site, we plan for students to hear a lecture describing their particular practice or institutional perspective.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS
Students will be expected to participate fully in each aspect of the trip will write a 5-7 page paper analyzing how Buddhism was presented and practiced in each setting. Special attention will be paid to the presentations by temple/institute representatives and to personal experiences at the sites. Students should include specific examples or concepts discussed in class. There will also be a variety of short assignments in different ports throughout the course.
METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

Attendance and Participation Grade. 20%
   This means coming to every class having done the reading and being prepared to discuss it.
Response paper: 2 pages on no-self, identity and dependent arising. 10%
Field Assignments and Field Lab Paper. 5-7 pages. 35%
Paper: 5-7 page on and Final Exam. 35%

HONOR CODE
Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University’s honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager’s Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: “On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.” The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed “[signed].”