SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Spring 2013  
Discipline: Religion  
RELG 3559: Myth of the Self: Buddhism and Modern Psychology  
Division: Upper  
Faculty Name: William Waldron

Pre-requisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Buddhists famously deny an unchanging self (ātman), yet incisively analyze our sense of self-identity. In this course we will survey traditional ideas and practices of Indian Buddhism in dialogue with modern psychology, touching upon such topics as: the Buddha as Hero, meditation and the promise and peril of self-analysis, the cognitive construction of our collective reality, and processes of transformation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
To understand the range and diversity of notions of self and no-self in Buddhist traditions and cultures; to survey the ways that modern psychology understands mind and the notion of self or self-identity; to develop students’ ability to read and understand abstract and philosophical analyses of self-identity; to relate these abstract analyses with their own assumptions and personal experiences.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Gethin, Rupert.  
TITLE: The Foundations of Buddhism  
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press  
ISBN #: 0192892231  
DATE/EDITION: 1998

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh  
TITLE: Zen Keys  
PUBLISHER: Three Rivers Press  
ISBN #: 0385475616  
DATE/EDITION: 1994

AUTHOR: Goleman, Daniel  
TITLE: Destructive Emotions: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama  
PUBLISHER: Bantam  
ISBN #: 0553381059  
DATE/EDITION: 2004
TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Jan. 12. Saturday. Class B1

Class One.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
Introduction to the course. Explanation of syllabus and assignments. What is self? What is ‘suffering of self”? What is the orientation of ‘Buddhism’ in relation to other concepts of religion?


Class Two

Watch Before Class Movie: Footprint of the Buddha (52 min.)


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The basic events in the life of the Buddha; how did he represent his own Awakening under the Bodhi tree? What is the significance of causal analysis for understanding the challenges of personal identity and personal growth? How is the Buddha’s life story like a Hero myth?

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

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

Class Three
Ereserve: Markus and Kitayama, Perspectives on Psychological Science 5(4) 420–430; ‘Cultures and Selves: A Cycle of Mutual Constitution.’


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What are the conceptions of self-identity in Japan and USA and how do they contrast with each other? What do you think and feel about these? How do ‘worlds made up of nouns or verbs’ differ from each other? How does a sense of morality differ depending on one’s conception
of self-identity? Why is ‘liberation,’ both in ancient India and the present, different than simply conforming to religious convention?

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

Class Four
Gethin, Foundations of Buddhism, ‘Four Noble Truths,’ ‘No-self,’ pp. 68-84; 133-162.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
In the Buddhist view, why are desire, craving and grasping ‘causes of suffering’? What are the Buddhist arguments against an unchanging self (ātman)? What, in their view, is the relationship between one’s view of self and the cause of suffering? And how are these causes eliminated when our views of self are changed? How do Buddhists explain causal continuity over time without an unchanging self? What is the relation between actions, their results and our afflictive reactions (in Duhigg’s terms, routine, reward, and cue)? Last, how do habits come into being over time and unconsciously help determine our behavior?


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

Class Five
Watch Before Class Movie: Eiheiji. 1985. NHK Productions (49 min.).
Ereserve: Kraft, Zen: Tradition and Transition, Foulk, Ch. 9, ‘the Zen Institution in Modern Japan,’ pp. 157-177.
Ereserve: Cook, How to Raise an Ox: Zen Practice as Taught in Master Dogen's Shobogenzo, ‘General Recommendations for Doing Zazen,’ pp. 65-68.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
The spread of Buddhism from its homeland in India to East Asia and the institutionalization of Zen in Japanese history and contemporary Japanese society. What is Zazen and how is it practiced? Why is self said to be inseparable from activity? What is ‘forgetting the self’? What is shikantaza? What is the problem with dualism? How is the ‘Perfect Way’ like space?

***Response paper: 2-page on self and no-self.

Jan. 25. Friday. Class A6

Class Six
Watch Before Class Movie: Land of the Disappearing Buddha. (52 minutes).

**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**

What are the various meanings of ‘Buddha’ in modern Japan? What is faith in Shin Buddhism? How is this different than Zen Buddhism? How does Naikan therapy adapt methods from Zen and Pure Land 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


**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


**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**

What are the Buddhist practices and principles that Thich Nhat Hanh and the UBC used in protest against the violence? How does the organization of life in a Zen monastery serve to implement and foster Buddhist ideals? What are the challenges that Zen Buddhism faces in the modern era and how does Thich Nhat Hanh propose to meet them?

Feb. 11. Monday. Class **A9**

Class Nine

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What is ‘seeing into one’s nature’? Why are concepts a problem in Zen and what do they use instead to ‘point to the moon’? What is interdependence and emptiness? What is the ‘Middle Way’ in the middle of? What ‘things’ are ‘empty’ and what are they empty of? Why does this paradoxically affirm the contingent, dependent nature of the world? What is Thusness (Suchness)?

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

Feb. 18. Monday. Class B9
Feb. 19. Tuesday. Class A10


Feb. 22. Friday. Class B10

Class Ten

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


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What is the practice of mindfulness or collectedness (sati) and how does it fit into the practice of the Buddhist path? What effect did the practice have on the ‘dhamma brothers’? To what extent do you think they are or are not doing ‘Buddhist’ practice? Why?

Feb. 23. Saturday. Class A11

Class Eleven


Topics, Questions, Assignments:
How did the modern vipasanna movement come to be? Who were the main figures in it and what transformations of Buddhist practice did they develop? What is most distinctive about mass lay Buddhist practice in Burma?


Field-Lab in Rangoon.

Mar. 2. Saturday. Class A12
Class Twelve


**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
What are the types and purposes of Buddhist meditation practice? How does mindfulness fit into the Abhidhammic analysis of mind?

Mar. 4. Monday. No Class. Study Day

Mar. 5. Tuesday. Class A13

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

Mar. 6-11. Cochin. India.

Mar. 12. Tuesday. Class B13

Class Thirteen

**Ereserve:** Safran, *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism*, Ch. 1, Engler, ‘Being Somebody and Being Nobody,’ pp. 35-79.

**Ereserve:** Aronson, *Buddhist Practice on Western Ground*, Ch. 7, ‘Ego, Ego on the Wall, What is Ego after all?’, pp.64-90.

**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
How can we make sense of the Buddhist idea of no-self in Western terms? What are the different meanings and uses of the term ‘self’ in different contexts?

Mar. 13. Wednesday. Class A14


Class Fourteen


**Topics, Questions, Assignments:**
What is the aim of Abhidharmic analysis of mind and what are its main methods? What is a *dhamma*? What mental factors make a particular moment of mind healthy/skillful or unhealthy/unskillful? What is the relation of this kind of analysis with mindfulness practice?

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


Mar. 17. Sunday. Class B15
Class Fifteen

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
Why are ‘things’ ‘empty’ and what are they empty of? Why does emptiness paradoxically affirm the contingent, dependent nature of the world? What is Thusness (Suchness)? Why does Saussure say that language works by marking systemic difference between words rather than by simply naming ‘things’? Why is meaning public and conventional? Why do we unconsciously accept/experience such conventional categories as *given* rather than created?


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

Class Sixteen

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What is dualism and why are we unconsciously all dualists? How did we humans come to impute essences onto animate and inanimate objects? What is Theory of Mind (TOM) and why is this a ‘nonreflective intuitive belief’ for most of us (but not autistics)? What is phenomenal self-model (PSM) and why is it transparent to us? Why is knowledge representation only?


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

Class Seventeen

Topics, Questions, Assignments:
What is the distinction between *vijñāna* (consciousness) and *jñāna* (wisdom)? Why are representations and concepts products of discrimination (*Zen Keys*, 129)? How are phenomena and Thusness inseparable? Why is sensorial and especially linguistic categorization constitutive or ordinary experience of the ‘world’? And why does most of this happen unconsciously? How does the accumulative results of past behavior give rise to species-specific ‘worlds’? And why is the constant, unconscious construction of a sense of self central to this process? How do we unconsciously yet collectively construct our reality?

Mar. 25-30. No Class. Cape Town

Mar. 31. Sunday. Class B18

Class Eighteen
Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, pp. 3-86.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are some of the rationales for studying meditation neuroscientifically? What are the destructive emotions?

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

Class Nineteen
Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, pp. 119-176; 205-234.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

Why are emotions universal? To what extent do you think emotions can be trained/cultivated?

April 3. Wednesday. No Class. Study Day.

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

Class Twenty

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are the promises and perils of the interaction between Buddhism and neuroscience?


Class Twenty-One
Watch Before Class Movie: Becoming the Buddha in LA. (56 minutes).
Ereserve: Mishra, *End of Suffering*, ‘Western Dharmas,’ pp. 345--371

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are the most interesting aspects of Buddhism in America? What are the diverse motivations our authors delineate for Americans becoming Buddhists?

April 13. Saturday. No Class. Study Day.
April 14. Sunday. Class A22

Class Twenty-Two  Class Discussion: Personal Reflections on Self-identity across cultures.

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

April 18-21. No Class, Casablanca.

April 22. Monday No Class. Study Day.

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

***Final Paper: on Buddhist and Psychological Notions of Self. 5-7 pages.
FIELD WORK

FIELD LAB

- Title: Mindfulness and Devotion in Burmese Buddhism
- Port: Rangoon/Yangon
- Date: Feb. 25, 2013

Field Lab Description:
Students will disembark in Rangoon and then proceed to Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Yangon. Depending on time necessary to get through immigration, they may or may not have lunch at the Academy before engaging in a three-hour training session in which they will be led by senior Buddhist monks on the fundamentals of Buddhist meditation, both sitting and walking. This session will include a ‘dhamma talk,’ a sermon on Buddhist ideas that will connect their practice with the Buddhist doctrines they will have studied in the course.

Following this, students will proceed to the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, the most famous pagoda in Burma. They will spend a few hours observing the wide variety of religious practice there at the many shrines that adjoin the main Pagoda.

We will complete the day with a traditional Burmese meal at the restaurant to be determined.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

Following completion of the field-lab, students will write a 5-7 page paper describing and analyzing their experiences both in Buddhist Academy and at the Pagoda, and relating these experiences to materials studied in the course. 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-page paper on self and no-self. 10%
Field Assignments and Field Lab Paper. 5-7 pages. 35%
Final Paper on Buddhist and Psychological Notions of Self and non-self. 5-7 pages. 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].”