

Semester at Sea Course Syllabus
Buddhism in the Modern World Religion 3559-102
Spring 2013 8-9:15 am. A Day
William Waldron

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will explore the diversity of Buddhist traditions in modern world, both on the ground in various countries in Asia and as it is developing in Western countries. 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 practice and imagination.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To understand the complex relations between Buddhism as a monastic tradition oriented toward spiritual liberation 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 students' ability to analyze the dynamic processes of modern religious, social and political movements; to improve students' ability to comprehend and appreciate multiple, often conflicting, perspectives.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Mishra, Pankaj. *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World*

Queen, C., King, S. *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (EB)

McMahan, D. *Buddhism in the Modern World*

FIELD WORK FIELD LAB Exploring Buddhism in Ho Chi Minh City. February 12, 2013

Description: In this field lab, we will first visit the Tinh Xa Trung Tam, or Central Temple, home to a recent Mahayana-Theravada tradition unique to Vietnam, about which we will study in class.

Academic objectives: To discern and better understand the unique diversity of Buddhist teaching and practice in Vietnam by observing sacred sites, daily rituals and meeting lay Buddhists as well as monastics; to gain a better appreciation of the fluidity of religious institutions and practices.

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 the Central Temple. Special attention will be paid to the presentations by temple representatives and to personal experiences at the site. Students should include specific examples or concepts discussed in class.

NOTE: There may be small assignments in port related to the content of the class.

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: 4 page paper and Final Exam. 35%

HONOR CODE SAS students enroll in an academic program administered by Univ. 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].”

Jan. 11. Friday. Class **A1**. Introduction.

McMahon, BMW, McMahon, *Buddhist Modernism*, pp. 160-176

Ereserve: Loy, *Money, Sex, War, Karma*, ‘Suffering of Self,’ pp. 15-23.

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?

Jan. 13. Sunday. Class **A2**

Mishra, *End of Suffering*

pp. 23-47. Invention of ‘Buddhism’ pp. 84-110. World of the Buddha

pp. 153-173. Long Way to Middle Way. pp. 174-186. Science of Mind.

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 the Buddha see under the Bodhi Tree?

Jan. 17. Thursday. Class **A3**

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

Mishra, *End of Suffering*,

pp. 187- 213. Turning the wheel. pp. 253-268. Looking for self.

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 of the *sangha* with the lay community?

Jan. 19. Saturday. Class **A4**

Mishra, *End of Suffering*,

pp. 111- 152. Death of God. pp. 293-344. Empires and Nations.

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?

*****Response paper:** 2 pages. Explain relationship between no-self, identity & dependent arising.

Jan. 23. Wednesday. Class **A5**

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

Ereserve: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, ‘Introduction,’ pp. 1-7.

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

Queen, King, *Engaged Buddhism*, ‘Introduction,’ pp. 1-44. Basic themes.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

The spread of Buddhism to East Asia. Why is a nation an ‘Imagined Community’? 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**

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

Ereserve: Mitchell, *Buddhism*, ‘Cultural Experience of Japanese Buddhism Today,’ pp. 316-322.

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

Ereserve: Sharf, *History of Religion*, 33.1. ‘Zen and Japanese Nationalism,’ pp. 1-43.

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?

Feb. 1. Friday. Class **A7**

Follow-up discussion on Japanese Buddhism.

Ereserve: Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, Ch.3, ‘Furcations: Origins of Mahāyāna,’ pp.68-103.

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. 9. Saturday. Class **A8**

Follow-up discussion on Chinese Buddhism.

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 protecting Buddhist practice to struggling against oppression and working for peace? How do Vietnamese Buddhists, *as* Buddhists, respond to the suffering and violence around them? Is this ‘political’? Why or why not?

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

Ereserve: McLeod, ‘The Way of the Mendicants: History, Philosophy, and Practice at the Central Vihara in Ho Chi Minh City,’ *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 4, 2, pp. 69–116.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are the various kinds of Buddhism in modern Vietnam? What are some of the challenges for Buddhists in present-day Vietnam?

Feb. 12. **Field lab: Exploring Buddhism in Ho Chi Minh City**

Feb. 19. Tuesday. Class **A10**

Follow-up discussion on Vietnamese Buddhism.

McMahan, BMW, ‘Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Southeast Asia,’ pp. 10-27

McMahan, BMW, ‘Buddhism, Politics and Nationalism,’ pp. 178-194

Ereserve: Swearer, *Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia*, Ch. 2, ‘Buddhism, Political Legitimation, and National Integration,’ pp. 33-52.

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

Feb. 23. Saturday. Class **A11**

Ereserve: Gravers, 'Monks, morality and military. The struggle for moral power in Burma—and Buddhism's uneasy relation with lay power.' *Contemporary Buddhism*, 2012, 13:1, pp. 1-33

Ereserve: Waldron, 'Buddhism, Berger and the Social Construction of Reality: Buddhist Contributions to a Critical Social Theory,' pp. 1-6.

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? In what sense is identity always constructed? Is there some tension in the very idea of a 'Buddhist identity'?

Mar. 2. Saturday. Class **A12**

Follow-up discussion on Burmese Buddhism.

McMahan, BMW, Berkwitz, 'Buddhism in Modern Sri Lanka,' pp. 29-48.

Queen, King, *Engaged Buddhism*, Bond, 'A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka,' pp. 121-146.

Ereserve: Bartholomeusz, (1999a) "In defense of dharma: Just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 6: 1–16.

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 advocate the civil war in the name of Buddhism? To what extent is this defensible?

Mar. 5. Tuesday. Class **A13**

Watch Before Class Movie: *Arising Light: Dr. Ambedkar, Birth of a New Era in India*. 28 min.

Queen, King, **EB**, Queen, 'Dr. Ambedkar and 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. 13. Wednesday. Class **A14**

McMahan, BMW, Wilson, 'Buddhism and Gender,' pp. 257-272

Queen, King, **EB**, 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. 16. Saturday. Class **A 15**.

*****Assignment (4 pages):** Independence, National Identity and/or Consolidation, Social Uplift-ment, 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 several of the countries we have studied. (Note: 'Tension' does not necessarily mean contradiction. Tensions often result from two equally indispensable values that push a tradition or culture in divergent directions, like freedom and equality in the US).

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

Mar. 19. Tuesday. Class **A16**

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

McMahan, BMW, Jacoby and Terrone, 'Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism,' pp. 90-111.

Ereserve: Robinson, *Buddhist Rel.*, Ch. 11, 'Buddhism in Tibetan Cultural Area,' pp. 271-296.

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**

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

Ereserve: Harris, ed. *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, Schwartz, 'Renewal and Resistance: Tibetan Buddhism in the Modern Era,' pp. 229-253.

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. 24. Sunday. Class **A18**

McMahan, BMW, Baumann, 'Modernist Interpretations of Buddhism in Europe,' pp. 113-136.

McMahan, BMW, Numrich, 'The North American Buddhist Experience,' pp. 138-156

Mishra, *End of Suffering*, 'Western Dharmas,' pp. 345-371; 'Overcoming Nihilism,' pp. 372-379.

Ereserve: Prebish, Baumann, ed. *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*, Clasquin, 'Buddhism in South Africa,' pp. 152-162.

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**

Ereserve: Seager, *Buddhism in America*, 'Gender Equality,' pp. 185-200.

Ereserve: Coleman, *The New Buddhism*, 'Sex, Power and Conflict,' pp. 139-183.

Ereserve: Dugan and Bogert, Harvard Pluralism Project, 'Racial Diversity in Buddhism in the U.S.,' pp. 1-18

Ereserve: Willis, 'Buddhism & Race: an African-American Baptist-Buddhist Perspective,' pp. 81-91, in Dresser, ed., *Buddhist Women on the Edge: Contemporary Perspectives from the Western Frontier*.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

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 4. Thursday. Class **A20**

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

Ereserve: Watson, *Psychology of Awakening*, Varela, 'Steps to a Science of Inter-Being: Unfolding the Dharma Implicit in Modern Cognitive Science,' pp. 71-89.

McMahan, BMW, Cho, 'Buddhism and Science,' pp. 274-288.

Ereserve: McMahan, *Making of Buddhist Modernism*, 'Meditation and Modernity,' pp. 183-214.

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?

April 11. Thursday. Class **A21**.

McMahan, BMW, Rocha, 'Buddhism and Globalization,' pp. 290-303.

McMahan, BMW, Mitchell, 'Buddhism, Media and Pop Culture,' pp. 305-323.

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 14. Sunday. Class **A22**

Review and Prepare for Exam.

April 17. Wednesday. Class **A23 A Course**

Final Exams