

Semester at Sea Course Syllabus
Myth of the Self: Buddhism and Modern Psychology
Religion 3559-101 Spring 2013
8-9:15 am B Day
William Waldron

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Buddhists famously deny an unchanging self (*ātman*), yet incisively analyze our *sense* of self-identity both conceptually and experientially, through philosophy and meditation. We will survey traditional ideas and practices of Indian Buddhism in dialogue with modern psychology, discussing the topic of the Buddha as Hero, meditation and the promise and peril of self-analysis, the cognitive construction of our collective reality, and processes of personal self-transformation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To understand the range and diversity of notions of self and no-self in Buddhist traditions and cultures; to survey how modern psychology understands mind and self or self-identity; to develop students' ability to read and understand abstract and philosophical analyses of self-identity; to relate these abstract analyses to their own assumptions and personal understanding and experience.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism* Thich Nhat Hanh. *Zen Keys*
Goleman, Daniel. *Destructive Emotions: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama*

FIELD WORK FIELD LAB Zazen in Kamakura. Jan. 27, 2013.

Description: In this field lab, students will visit Zen Buddhist temple in the town of Kamakura, a main center of Zen practice since the 13th century. *Kencho-ji* is the headquarters of the *Rinzai* sect and Japan's oldest Zen training monastery. Students will receive a short introduction to Zen practice and participate in *zazen* sitting and walking meditation for about three hours. After exploring the exquisite temple complex, students will gather to discuss the experience over dinner.

Academic Objectives: Students will learn how to apply insights gained from classroom readings and discussions to 1st hand encounters with living traditions, and deepen their understanding of the relation between meditation practice and Buddhist doctrines.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS Students will participate fully in all aspects of the day's activities, and write a 5-7 page paper analyzing the teachings and practices of Zen Buddhism.

NOTE: There will also be a variety of short assignments in different parts 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%

Paper: 4 page paper 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].”

Jan. 12. Saturday. Class **B1**

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

Gethin: *Foundations*, ‘Four Truths, Orientation of the Buddha’s Teachings,’ pp. 59-68.

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?

Jan. 14. Monday. Class **B2**

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

Gethin. *Foundations of Buddhism*, ‘Life of the Buddha,’ pp. 7-30

Ereserve: Collins, *Selfless Persons*, ‘Renouncing Individual,’ pp. 60-64.

Ereserve: Watts, *Psychotherapy, East & West*, Ch. 1, ‘Psychotherapy and Liberation,’ pp. 13-27.

Ereserve: Campbell, *Hero w/ 1000 Faces*, ‘The Hero and the God,’ pp. 30-40; 245-251; 255-260

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. 18. Friday. Class **B3**

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

Ereserve: Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought*, ‘Ch. 6, ‘Is the World Made Up of Nouns or Verbs,’ pp. 137-163.

Ereserve: Haidt, *Righteous Mind*, Ch 1, ‘Where Does Morality Come From?’ pp. 3-26; pp. 95-98

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are the conceptions of self-identity in Japan and USA and how do they contrast? 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? How is ‘liberation,’ in ancient India and the present, different than conforming to religious convention?

Jan. 20. Sunday. Class **B4**

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

Ereserve: Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*, pp. 12-21; 43-52.

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 (or, in Duhigg’s terms: routine, reward, and cue)? Last, how do habits come into being over time and unconsciously help determine our behavior?

Jan. 24. Thursday. Class **B5**

Watch Before Class Movie: *Eiheiji*. 1985. NHK Productions (49 min.).

Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, ‘Evolving Traditions of Buddhism,’ pp. 257-266.

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.

Ereserve: Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 'Dropping off Body and Mind,' pp. 75-81.

Ereserve: Suzuki, D.T. *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, 'On Believing in Mind,' 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?

Jan, 26. Saturday. Class **B6**

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

Ereserve: Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 'Cultural Experience of Japanese Buddhism Today,' pp. 316-322.

Ereserve: McMahan, *Buddhism in the Modern World*, Chilson, 'Searching for a Place to Sit: Buddhism in Modern Japan,' pp. 50-68;

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are the various meanings of 'Buddha' in modern Japan? Where or who is the Buddha?

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

Jan. 27. Sunday. **Field Lab in Kamakura.**

Feb. 2. Saturday. Class **B7**

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

Follow-up discussion on Japanese Buddhism.

Eres: Berkwitz, *South Asian Budd.*, Ch. 3, 'Furcations: Origins of the Mahāyāna,' pp. 68-103.

Eres: McMahan, *Buddhism in Modern World*, Fisher, 'Buddhism in China, Taiwan,' pp. 69-88.

Ereserve: Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, '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. 10. Sunday. Class **B8**

Follow-up discussion on Chinese Buddhism.

Eres: Queen, King, *Engaged Budd.*, 'Thich Nhat Hanh and Unified Budd. Church,' pp. 321-363.

Thich Nhat Hanh: *Zen Keys*. Pp. 19-25; 133-153.

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. 18. Monday. Class **B9**

Follow-up discussion on Vietnamese Buddhism.
 Thich Nhat Hanh: *Zen Keys*, pp. 27-118.

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? How does this affirm the contingent, dependent nature of the world? What is Thusness (Suchness)?

Feb. 22. Friday. Class **B10**

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

Ereserve: Walshe, *Thus Have I Heard*, 'Discourse on Foundations of Mindfulness (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*),' pp. 335-350.

Ereserve: Mahasi Sayadaw, "*Satipatthana Vipassana*", *Access to Insight*, June 7, 2010, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/mahasi/wheel370.html>. Pp. 1-22.

Ereserve: Salzberg (2011): Mindfulness and loving-kindness, *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12:01, 177-182

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. 24. Sunday. Class **B11**

Ereserve: Pranke, 'On saints and wizards. Ideals of human perfection and power in contemporary Burmese Buddhism.' pp. 453-467.

Ereserve: Jordt, Burma's *Mass Lay Meditation Movement*, 'Rise of New Laity,' pp. 15-42; 56-95

Ereserve: Stadtner, *Sacred Sites of Burma*, 'Shwedagon,' pp. 6-13, 72-105.

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?

Mar. 3. Sunday. Class **B12**

Follow-up discussion on Burmese Buddhism.

Ereserve: Segall, *Encountering Buddhism*, Olendzki 'Buddhist Psychology,' pp. 9-30.

Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 'The Buddhist Path,' pp. 163-188.

Ereserve: *Bodhi* (2011): What does mindfulness really mean? A canonical perspective, *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12:01, 19-39

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are the types and purposes of Buddhist meditation practice? How does mindfulness inform the Buddhist analysis of mind?

Mar. 12. Tuesday. Class **B13**

Eres: Safran, *Psycho. and Budd.*, 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? Are they necessarily in conflict?

Mar. 14. Thursday. Class **B14**

Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 'Abhidharma,' pp. 203-218

Ereserve: Harrington, *The Dalai Lama at MIT*, Dreyfus, 'An Abhidharma View of Emotion Pathologies and their Remedies,' pp. 117-140.

Ereserve: *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12, 1, 2011. Olendzki, 'Mindfulness Meditation: An Abhidhamma Perspective,' pp. 55-70.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What is the aim of Abhidharmic analysis of mind and what are its main methods? What is a *dharma*? 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. 17. Sunday. Class **B15**

Review: Thich Nhat Hanh, *Zen Keys*, pp. 99-117

Ereserve: Belsey, *Critical Practice*, 'Criticism and Meaning,' pp. 37-47.

Eres: Greenberg, *Not Diseases, but Categories of Suffering*, pp. 1-2. NY Times, Jan. 30, 2012.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

Why are 'things' 'empty' and what are they empty of? Why does emptiness 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 and not unchanging and ultimate? Why do we unconsciously accept/experience such conventional categories as *given* rather than created?

Mar. 20. Wednesday. Class **B16**

Eres: Gazzaniga, *Human: The Science Behind What Makes Your Brain Unique*, 'We All Act like Dualists,' pp. 246-275.

Ereserve: Metzinger, *Ego Tunnel: The Myth of the Self*, 'Introduction,' pp. 1-12.

Eres: Deutscher, *Does Your Language Shape How You Think?*, NY Times. Aug 26, 2010. p. 1-6

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 always and only a representation?

Mar. 23. Saturday. Class **B17**

Ereserve: Waldron, 'Buddhist Modernity and the Sciences,' pp. 1-17.

Ereserve: Waldron, 'A Buddhist theory of Unconscious Mind (*ālaya-vijñāna*),' pp. 1-31.

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Zen Keys*, pp. 118-131.

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?

March 24 Sunday. Assignment. 4-page paper on Self.

From the point of view of both modern science and traditional Buddhism, how does the sense of self arise? What are some of the conditions that enable it to occur? How is it strengthened? To what extent is our sense of self biological, neurological, social and cultural? What do you think about all this?

Mar. 31. Sunday. Class **B18**

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

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

What are some of the rationales for studying meditation neuroscientifically? What are the destructive emotions? How do Buddhists and cognitive scientists define them?

April 2. Tuesday. Class **B19**

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 5. Friday. Class **B20**

Goleman, *Destructive Emotions*, pp. 305-352.

Topics, Questions, Assignments:

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

April 10. Friday. Class **B21.**

Watch Before Class Movie: *Becoming the Buddha in LA.* (56 minutes).

Ereserve: Mishra, *End of Suffering*, 'Western Dharmas,' pp. 345--371

Ereserve: Coleman, *The New Buddhism*, 'Why Buddhism?,' pp. 185-216.

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 15. Monday. Class **B22.**

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

April 22. Tuesday. Class **B23 B Course**

Final Exam.