

PHL 426/526: Buddhist Social Justice Philosophy

TR 12:30-1:45

HUM 518

Instructor: Dr. Emily McRae

Office: HUM 525

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12 and by appointment

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Course Description: This seminar is an experiment in de-centering the West and Western philosophical concepts in philosophical discussions of social justice. What happens when we turn to the Buddhist philosophical traditions of South Asia to understand social injustice and the mechanisms for creating social change? What might we learn and how might our analyses of social justice change? This class will use both ancient and contemporary South Asian Buddhist texts to explore the dynamics of social oppression and the liberation from oppression. Themes will include: self, identity, and identity politics; violence and non-violence; the psychology and phenomenology of oppression and liberation; and the ethics of attention and responsiveness. We will focus particularly on issues regarding racial oppression (and Black Buddhism), gender and sexuality, and caste and class. If time permits, we will also explore Buddhist approaches to climate change and ecological crisis.

Academic Dishonesty: I will enforce the University's policies on academic misconduct. The University defines "Academic Dishonesty" as follows: "'Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records." For more information on the Academic Dishonesty policy, see: <https://policy.unm.edu/regents-policies/section-4/4-8.html>

Reasonable Accommodation: If you have any special requirements due to a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. I strongly recommend working through the UNM Accessibility Resource Center (<http://as2.unm.edu/>). Please let me know if you are working with UNM Accessibility Resource Center as soon as possible.

Required Texts: All required reading will be available on learn.unm.edu

Course Requirements:

- (1) Do the readings **before** class. Readings on Learn are marked in the reading schedule. They will appear on learn.unm.edu under the heading of the unit in which they belong.
- (2) **Attendance and Participation:** Active participation in class discussion is expected. Since active discussion is one of the best ways to learn philosophy every student should aim to speak at least once during class. If you are shy and this is difficult for you, come and see me. **If you have more than 6 absences (3 weeks of class), I will automatically drop you from the class.**
- (3) **Short Writing Assignments on Reading/In-class assignments/In-class discussion assignments** (40% total), including two graded in-class discussions on **October 1 and December 3**; and **one group facilitation of class discussion.**
- (4) **Mid-term Paper** (25%): 5-6 pages, tentative due date **10/8**
- (5) **Final Paper** (35%): 8-10 pages, tentative due date **11/21 for PHL 426 students**; 15 pages (max), tentative due date **12/10 for PHL 526 students**

- (6) **PHL 526 Students Only:** In addition to the above assignments, you will also be expected to write a **longer final paper**. And, instead of the last in class discussion (on 12/3), you will have an **in-class conference on your final papers on 12/5**. More details will be given later in the semester.

Late work (ONLY APPLICABLE TO MID-TERM AND FINAL PAPERS – not short assignments).

Penalty for late submission of work: 5% per day (including weekend days: an essay due Thursday, and submitted the following Monday, would be penalized 20% of the total points possible). The penalty stops accruing when you have successfully submitted your assignment to the appropriate Learn folder in an acceptable file format and properly anonymized. I cap the late penalty at 30%, so it's usually worth submitting work even if it's very late.

Laptop, Tablets (and Other Screens Policy): As a general rule: please do not use your laptops, tablets, or phones during class. Evidence shows that you will learn more if you take notes by hand. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>; <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>. See Professor for details.

READING SCHEDULE:

note: this reading schedule may change at any point in the semester

8/20: Syllabus

Part 1: Understanding Ourselves

The Suffering of Injustice: The Four Noble Truths in Context

8/22: (1) Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion Sutta, (2) Saccavibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Truths; (3) Mingyur Rinpoche excerpts from *Joyful Wisdom*, "The Four Noble Truths"

Optional Reading: Thanissaro Bhikkhu's "The Four Noble Truths Study Guide"

8/27: (1) "The Second Noble Truth (excerpts from Suttas)" (2) "Paticca-samuppada-vibhanga Sutta: Analysis of Dependent Co-arising"; and (3) excerpts from Thanissaro Bhikkhu's "The Shape of Suffering"

8/29: David Loy, "The Three Poisons, Institutionalized" and "Notes for a Buddhist Revolution"

GROUP PRESENTATION

9/3: Mingyur Rinpoche "The Power of Perspective" and Frye, "Oppression"; Tsongkhapa excerpt for LamRim on the benefits of suffering

Social Identities and Identity Politics: No-Self in Context

9/5: (1) "Not-self Characteristic Sutta," (2) Thanissaro Bhikku, "No-Self or Not-Self?" (3) "Five Aggregates: Selections from Suttas" (Sections 5-17 only)

9/10: (1) "Questions of King Milinda" and Buddhaghosa's commentary (same pdf); (2) Tsoknyi Rinpoche, "The Four Egos: Part 2"

9/12: Class Canceled (JURY DUTY)

9/17: Aronson, "Ego, Ego, on the Wall?" **GROUP PRESENTATION**

9/19: Karmapa, "Being An Interdependent Individual"

9/24: (1) "Soma sutta", (2) selection from *Therigatha*, (3) Keya Maitra, "Mindfulness, Anatman, and the Possibility of a Feminist Self-Consciousness"

9/26: (1) Alice Walker “This Was Not an Area of Large Plantations;” (2) Melanie Harris “Buddhist Meditation for the Recovery of the Womanist Self, or Sitting on the Mat Self-Love Realized” **GROUP PRESENTATION**

10/1: Rima Veseley Flad “Racism and Anatta: Black Buddhists, Embodiment, and Interpretations of Non-Self”

10/3: Bryce Huebner, “The Interdependence and Emptiness of Whiteness”

10/8: Rev. angel Kyodo williams, “Introduction: Enter Here” and “Bringing Our Whole Selves: A Theory of Queer Dharma”

Mid-term Paper Due

10/10: FALL BREAK NO CLASS

Part 2: Living With Others

Love, Liberation and Anger: Bodhicitta in Context

10/15: excerpts from Śāntideva, and Garfield’s “What’s it Like to be a Bodhisattva?”

10/17: (1) Jessica Locke, “Making Consciousness an Ethical Project: Moral Phenomenology in Buddhist Ethics and White Anti-Racism” and (2) *Wheel Weapon* excerpts **GROUP PRESENTATION**

10/22: (1) “Brahmavihārā Sutta” (2) Patrul Rinpoche excerpts from *Words of My Perfect Teacher*

10/24: Karmapa, (1) “From Empathy to Courageous Compassion” and (2) “Opening Heart and Mind” **GROUP PRESENTATION**

10/29: Śāntideva, excerpts from BCA Chapter 6 and 7; **OPTIONAL:** Harris, “Skillful Handling of Poisons”

10/31: Huebner, “Anger and Patience” **GROUP PRESENTATION**

11/5: (1) bell hooks, “Toward a Worldwide Culture of Love” (2) Alice Walker, “Metta to Muriel and Other Marvels: A Poet’s Experience of Meditation” (3) Alice Walker, “I Believe the Women”

Buddhist Perspectives on Social Action and The Climate Crisis: Dependent Arising in Context

11/7: Karmapa, “Sharing Resources,” and Loy, “Buddhism and Poverty” **GROUP PRESENTATION**

11/12: Loy, “Is Climate Change the Problem?” and “Is the Eco-Crisis Also a Buddhist Crisis?”

11/14: Loy, “Is it the Same Problem?”

11/19: Loy, “Is it Too Late”? **GROUP PRESENTATION**

11/21: Loy, “What Shall We Do?”, (2) “Sixteen Core Dharma Principles to Address Climate Change” and (3) “The Eco-sattva Vows” **Final Paper Due**

11/26: Class Cancelled

11/28: THANKSGIVING BREAK

12/3: **In-Class Discussion (Graded, topic TBA)**

12/5: **In-class conference (FOR 526 Students Only!)**