

ACTIVIST BODHISATTVAS

BUDDHIST ETHICS AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

REL 383
EATON 148
TTh 9:30-10:45

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

One of the most important developments in modern Buddhism has been the turn toward social engagement. Across Asia and beyond, Buddhist organizations and movements have emerged that consider improving society to be an intrinsic Buddhist concern alongside the classic focus on perfecting the self. Where does this development come from? To what degree is it a departure from previous tradition? How do these movements reconceive and rearticulate Buddhist teachings and practices to address the problems of their societies and the global community? What perspectives does socially engaged Buddhism offer to others movements seeking to address the ills of our time? This course will explore these questions through a consideration of selected examples drawn from several Buddhist traditions from the nineteenth century to the present day.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (ALL PERCENTAGES APPROXIMATE):

1. Attendance – 10%
 - Attendance
Each student is allowed three excused absences.
Each unexcused absence is penalized one-third letter grade
 - Punctuality

A pattern of lateness is also penalized. Each three times late will be penalized one-third letter grade; one-third letter grade for every three incidences

2. Preparation – 15%

- Notecard Assignments

Unless otherwise specified, notecards for each class should include at least two of the following

- Passage for discussion (with page number)
- Question for discussion
- Question for the professor

20 notecards required for the semester (out of 25 eligible sessions), 10 before spring break and 10 after.

3. Written Work – 55%

- Mini-paper (1.5-2 pp) – 10%
- Research Essay (8-9 pp) – 40%

Essays will involve investigation of Buddhist responses to a social issue of the student's choice or an interpretation of non-Buddhist responses to a social issue through a Buddhist lens

- Research essay preparatory assignments 5%

4. Quizzes and exams 20%

- Quizzes 10%
- Take-home final exam 10%

GRADING

All grades are qualitative (A, B, etc.). In order to arrive at a comprehensive, weighted assessment of your work in the course, these are converted to arbitrary, but commonly accepted, numerical values. These are: A (95), A- (92), B+ (88), B (85), B- (82)...and so on. Should a final numerical equivalent fall between two grades, the closer grade will be received, i.e. a 94 would become an A, while a 93 would become an A-.

COMMUNICATION WITH/FROM THE PROFESSOR

Office: Ashe 505

j.ritzinger@miami.edu

305-284-3671

Skype: RitzingerUM

Office hours: Fridays 12:15-2:15 or by appointment

Students are encouraged to stop by office hours or to make an appointment to discuss any concerns they may have with the course or materials. Email is the best way to

contact me. I will attempt to respond to any emails within a day or two, but be aware that I will not check email between the hours of 9 pm and 9 am.

All emails from the professor will be to your **student email account**, which is linked to Blackboard. **It is your responsibility to check this account.** You should also use this email to contact the professor. Email from other accounts is sometimes caught in junk filters.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

A liberal arts education is about mastering not simply a body of knowledge but a mode of knowing. In all of your work it is important to properly attribute any quotations or facts to their sources and to provide proper citations so that others may investigate those sources for themselves. **Plagiarism or any form of cheating is a betrayal of the academic enterprise** and will be dealt with accordingly. **Consequences may include failing the class and expulsion from the university.**

EXCUSED ABSENCES, MAKE-UP QUIZZES, EXTENSIONS, AND OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Any request for an excused absence, make-up, extension or other **accommodation must be made via e-mail before or immediately after** (1-2 days) the relevant class sessions, deadline etc.

Absences: Each student may have three absences excused on reasonable grounds. Additional absences will be excused only in extreme circumstances. In the event that you are unable to attend, you should in a timely manner: contact the professor, do the reading, contact another student to get the notes, and come to office hours with any questions or points of confusion.

Extensions: Brief extensions may be granted for reasonable cause.

LAPTOPS, TABLETS, AND PHONES

Laptops and tablets may be used **by permit only.** Information about applying for a permit may be found on Blackboard under “assignments.” **Phones must be turned off and put away at all times.**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

If you have a documented disability that may impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please provide a letter from the disabilities office within the first two weeks of class. If you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please discuss this with the professor within the first two weeks of class.

COURSE MATERIALS

To purchase:

Dale Wright, *The Six Perfections* (available in bookstore)

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action* (available on Amazon, etc.)

Package of index cards

All other readings are available on Blackboard as pdfs or links.

All reading is printed out, done by the assigned class and brought in, annotated, on that day.

COURSE RESOURCES

If you encounter difficulty, your first resource should be the professor. If you would rather consult a book or if you would simply like to do extra reading to improve your grasp of basic ideas, the following books (all available in Richter) are recommended:

Rupert Gettin, *Foundations of Buddhism* (online through Richter)

Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (on reserve)

Kevin Trainor (ed.), *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide* (on reserve)

Robert Buswell (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (reference section)

ETHICS

FOUNDATIONS

Tuesday, January 16: Introductions and Orientations

Thursday, January 18: Against the Stream—Four Truths in Two Registers

Todd Lewis, “The Human Condition,” “The ‘Four Noble Truths,’” and “The Path of the Buddha,” *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide*, 58-79

THE BODHISATTVA PATH

Tuesday, January 23: Generosity

Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 18-35, 51-54

Thursday, January 25: Morality

Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 55-71 and 79-94

Tuesday, January 30: Tolerance

Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 94-125 and 130-132

Thursday, February 1: Energy

Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 137-153, 160-170

Tuesday, February 6: Meditation

Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 173-196, 201-213

Thursday, February 8: Wisdom

Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 218-254

ENGAGEMENT

LOTUS IN A SEA OF FIRE: THICH NHAT HANH AND THE VIETNAM WAR

Tuesday, February 13: A Sea of Fire

Sallie King, “Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Buddhist Church,” *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, 321-65 (bb)

Quiz

Thursday, February 15: Love in Action I

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action*, 39-80

Tuesday, February 20: Love in Action II

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action*, 81-6, 107-112, 119-38

RACE AND RACISM IN AMERICA AND AMERICAN BUDDHISM

Thursday, February 22: Origins, Pure and Tainted—Racism in the Encounter with Buddhism
Cheah, “Colonial Legacy of White Supremacy in American Buddhism,”

Sunday, February 25: **Mini-paper due**

Tuesday, February 27: Whitewashing Buddhism—White Privilege and the Erasure of Asian Americans

Funie Hsu, “We’ve Been Here All Along,” *Lion’s Roar* (2017)

Arunlikhati, “Western Buddhists to the Rescue!” *Dharma Folk* (2009)

Arunlikhati, “What Marginalization?” *Angry Asian Buddhist* (2011)

Arunlikhati, “Stereotypology of Asian American Buddhists,” *Angry Asian Buddhist* (2014)

Thursday, March 1: Emptiness, Insight, and Identity—American Buddhism in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter

Bonnie Duran, “Mistaking a Stick for a Snake: What the Buddha taught about inherent bias,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (2016)

Christopher Raiche, “#BlackLivesMatter and Living the Bodhisattva Vow,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (2016)

Jan Willis, “Why We Can’t Breathe,” *Lion’s Roar* (2014)

Tuesday, March 6: Building Inclusive Sanghas—The East Bay Meditation Center

Ann Gleig, “Dharma Diversity and Deep Inclusivity at the East Bay Meditation Center”

Larry Yang, “Steps to Take Now,” “Learning Points from East Bay Meditation Center,” and “East Bay Meditation Center’s Agreements for Multicultural Interactions,”

Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practice of Inclusivity and Community, 223-236

Thursday, March 8: Library Session

Quiz

Mini-paper rewrite due

---SPRING BREAK---

SPIRITUAL EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY: THE ORDER OF NUNS

Tuesday, March 20: Monastic Equality in Taiwan—The Eight Heavy Rules and the Question of Buddhist Feminism

Elise Anne DeVido, “The Infinite Worlds of Taiwan’s Buddhist Nuns,” *Buddhist Women and Social Justice : Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements*, (2004), 219-231

Chiung Hwang Chen, “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism: The Issue of the Eight Garudhammas,” *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 16-32. (bb)

Thursday, March 22: Monastic Opportunity in Theravada—Restoring the Bhikkhuni Order

Viewing: The Buddha's Lost Nuns

Susanne Mrozik, "A Robed Revolution: The Contemporary Buddhist Nun's (bhikṣuṇī) Movement," *Religion Compass* 3, no. 3 (2009): 360–378

Sunday, March 25: **Preliminary bibliography due**

Tuesday, March 27: Professor at Conference

Individual paper consultations to be scheduled

No reading! Work on your papers!

Quiz

Tibetan Independence/Autonomy

Thursday, March 29: The Tibetan Quest for Self-determination

José Ignacio Cabezón, "Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement," *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, 295-321

Tuesday, April 3: The Sun Behind the Clouds

Viewing: *The Sun Behind the Clouds*

No reading! Work on your papers!

Thursday, April 5: All the World's a Stage and All the Protests, Theater

John Whalen-Bridge, "Angry Monk Syndrome on the World Stage: Tibet, Engaged Buddhism, and the Weapons of the Weak," *Buddhism, Modernity, and the State in Asia: Forms of Engagement* (bb)

Sunday, April 8: **Annotated bibliography due**

THE ANGULIMALA LINEAGE: PRISON OUTREACH

Tuesday, April 10: Dhamma Brothers

Viewing: *The Dhamma Brothers*

Hellmuth Hecker, "Angulimala: A Murderer's Road to Sainthood," *Access to Insight* (bb)

Piercarlo Valdesolo, "The Psychological Power of Satan: How a Belief in 'Pure Evil' Shapes People's Thinking," *Scientific American* (October 2013)

Thursday, April 12: Buddhist Prison Ministry

Virginia Cohn Parkum and J. Anthony Stultz, "The Angulimala Lineage: Buddhist Prison Ministry," *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, 347-71 (bb)

Sunday, April 15: **Provisional argument summary due**

SAVING ALL SENTIENT BEINGS: ENVIRONMENTAL WORK

Tuesday, April 17: Radical Perspectives—Gary Snyder

Gary Snyder, "Smokey the Bear Sutra," *Dharma Rain*

David Landis Barnhill, "Gary Snyder's Ecosocial Buddhism," *How Much is Enough: Buddhism, consumerism and the human environment*, 83-120

Quiz

Thursday, April 19: Buddhist Environmentalism—Theoretical vs. Practical

Seth Clippard, "The Lorax Wears Saffron: Toward a Buddhist Environmentalism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* (2011): 212-248

Sunday, April 22: **Research essay due**

Tuesday, April 24: Climate Change

TBD

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Thursday, April 26: No Wisdom, No Peace

Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Wisdom Over Justice," Lion's Roar (2017)

John Kaag and Clancy Martin, "In Dark Times, 'Dirty Hands' Can Still Do Good," New York Times (2017)

Sunday, May 6: **Optional research essay rewrite due**

Tuesday, May 8: **Take-home final due**