

RELB 1559

Buddhist Ethics:
(A New Course)

Important Info

Lecture is Scheduled as a recurring zoom meeting, for ONCE A WEEK, for 10 WEEKS:

Tuesdays, 9:30 (but see below)
(Zoom Invitation is Found on the last page of the syllabus)

Course Instructor

Sonam Kachru

sk3hp@virginia.edu

Teaching Assistants

Matthew Leveille (ml2rj)

Kyle Nicholas (kmn5at)

This course may be taken entirely asynchronously. After months in the pandemic, lives, bodies, and minds continue to be at stake. We must do our utmost to extend kindness to one another. There are no texts to purchase. I will explain how the assignments are low-key and flexible with respect to diverse schedules and pressures.

All sources may be found online (with hyperlinks through the syllabus) or on collab. Lectures will be recorded and links to the recording will be made available as soon as they are available on the collab cloud.

How To Make The Most of Your Teaching Assistants.

TAs will monitor discussion on COLLAB. But you may also schedule ten minute office hour sections with them.

We are planning on devoting the time allotted to discussion sections to scheduled meetings with TAs if / when needed. We will have more info on this for you very soon.

ASSIGNMENTS

You will have two main responsibilities.

1. Participation in Discussions Forum (35%)

Ideally, each week, you will (a) post a comment prompt, with the option of following up on comments to your comment and (b) reply to one prompt initiated by another on the Discussions Forum on Collab. These comments will be graded by TAs who are monitoring the discussion.

They will be graded for two virtues:

- (i) Accurate use of a concept learnt in that week's lesson.
- (ii) The degree with which one engages in someone else's question / concern with openness and curiosity.

Please engage as respectful adults—as friends—with enthusiasm but also with civility and kindness, with—as one Buddhist philosopher, Asaṅga put it—with a care for the protection of another's mind.

Each week will be associated with a discussion thread on a topic. If for some reason you cannot comment during the week, allowance will be made and you may catch up later.

2. Completion of a Scrapbook provided by the Instructor, to be turned in at the end of the course. (Date to be announced.) 65%

About this Course

Our goal is to take the time to consider how to think about how one might live, given how Buddhists have thought about what can go into making a life felicitous.

I have decided on a simplified introduction to the topic. We shall organize the course according to the popular verse, verse 183 of the *Dhammapada*, which says (in the translation of Narada Mahathera):

Not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind, this is the Teaching of the Buddhas.

After an introductory lecture, in which I'll introduce our topic and the course, our lessons will be divided into three parts: ethics as restraint, or the avoidance of what is not good; ethics as the promotion of certain kinds of actions; and ethics as the purification of mind.

Note: All readings / assignments are ideally completed before attending / watching / listening to the lecture.

Lecture One

Topic: What is Ethics?

To Watch:

- Buddhism: A Short Introduction
<https://youtu.be/p5HxC2q90RU>

Reading:

- Maria Heim, *Buddhist Ethics*, pages 1-8.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Noble Eight-Fold Path*, pages 40-43



Part I

Don't Do What's Bad

Lecture Two

Topic: **Ethics as Discipline, and Supererogation**

- Look Over the following lists, familiarizing yourself with their differences and similarities:

(a) Five Precepts:

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sila/pancasila.html>

(b) Eight Precepts:

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sila/atthasila.html>

(c) Ten Precepts:

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sila/dasasila.html>

- Heim, *Buddhist Ethics*, 17-23.

Note: Start from the first full paragraph on page 17 and read *slowly*.

- *WATCH:* A Day in the Life (no more than 10 minutes)

https://youtu.be/6pllQ_-ZxEA

<https://youtu.be/4n-X2Dj01AE>

Recommended:

Students may wish to read the following two essays (on Collab) to motivate some of the background concepts used in this course from this point.

- W. J. Johnson, “Are Jaina Ethics Universal?”
 - “Supererogation”
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Lecture Three

Topic: A Closer Look: Norms of Speech and Norms of Sexuality

- JOSÉ IGNACIO CABEZÓN, “Revisiting the Traditional Buddhist Views on Sex and Sexuality”

<https://www.lionsroar.com/rethinking-buddhism-and-sex-2/>

- Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eight-Fold Path, pages 43-49.

Recommended: <https://www.lionsroar.com/buddhism-and-sexuality-its-complicated/>

Lecture Four

Topic: The Unwilling Wrong-Doer

What are the attitudes Buddhism recommends taking up with respect to wrong-doing? To wrong-doers? It can be complicated. This unit covers little-covered ground in the study of Buddhist ethics.

To Read:

- Read the debate “Just Deserts” very carefully:
<https://aeon.co/essays/on-free-will-daniel-dennett-and-gregg-caruso-go-head-to-head>

- And then, Gregg D. Caruso, “Rick Repetti’s Buddhism, Meditation, and Free Will,” **only pages 481-492**

- Steven Collins, “Madness and Possession in Pāli Texts”:

<https://journals.equinoxpub.com/BSR/article/view/26533/22670>

Recommended (and I’ll use this in lecture):

- Amy Paris Langenberg, “What Does Buddhism Say About Abortion?”

<http://blog.shin-ibs.edu/what-does-buddhism-say-about-abortion/>



Part II: Do Good

Lecture Five:

Topic: Extreme Goodness

To read

- Sibi Jataka, the first story found on the webpage here:

<https://www.opendharma.com/2016/03/18/king-sivi-and-the-sivi-jataka/>

- The Story of the Hare, which may be found on pages 52-63, in *Jātakamālā, or Garland of Birth Stories*.

(I apologize for the dated quality of the translation. A superb translation of the work is now available in Peter Khoroché, *Once The Buddha Was A Monkey*.)

Recommended:

Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints”

Lecture Six

Topic: Is Our World a Meritocracy?

- Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, “The Spider Thread” (a short story)
 - Sara McClintock, “Ethical Reading and the Ethics of Remembering and Forgetting” (available as e-resource through UVA Library.)
 - Spencer Lee Lenfield, “No One Deserves A Spot at Harvard: Michael Sandel Makes the case against Meritocracy,”
<https://harvardmagazine.com/2020/09/montage-michael-sandel-against-meritocracy>
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Part III: Purify the Mind



Lecture Seven

Topic: How is Meditation Ethical?

- Rupert Gettin, “On the Practice of Buddhist Meditation”
- Asoka Maurya, Kalinga Rock edict 1 and Pillar Edicts 1-3 (found on this website:

<https://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html#MINORROCK>

Search for “Kalinga Rock Edict” and read the first one.

Search for “Pillar Edicts” and read 1-3.)

- Olúfemi O. Táíwò, “Stoicism (as Emotional Compression) Is Emotional Labor,” **pages 6-10.**

Lecture Eight

Ethics as Moral Phenomenology

- Jay Garfield, What is it Like to be a Bodhisattva
- Jay Garfield, Mindfulness and Ethics: Attention, Virtue and Perfection

Lecture Nine

Anger

- Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, pages 293-297
- Nicolas Bommarito, “Bile and Bodhisattvas: Śāntideva on Justified Anger”

Lecture Ten

Anger Reconsidered

- Rev. M. Jamil Scott, “Do Bodhisattvas Get Angry? A Response to the Killing of Eric Garner”

<https://www.elephantjournal.com/2014/12/do-bodhisattvas-get-angry-a-response-to-to-the-killing-of-eric-garner/>

- Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger”
- Emily McRae, “Metabolizing Anger: A Tantric Buddhist Solution to the Problem of Moral Anger.”

I recommend for interested students a new book: Lama Rod Owens, *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation Through Anger* (North Atlantic Books, 2020).

Lecture Eleven

The Mythology of Anger; and the myth of forgiveness

- Agnes Callard, “Philosophy of Anger”
<http://bostonreview.net/forum/agnes-callard-philosophy-anger>
 - Jean Améry, *Beyond Guilt and Atonement*, selections
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Lecture Twelve

Extending Love

- Eric Schwitzgebel, “How Mengzi Came Up With Something Better Than The Golden Rule,”
<https://aeon.co/ideas/how-mengzi-came-up-with-something-better-than-the-golden-rule>
- Maria Heim, “Buddhaghosa on the Phenomenology of Love and Compassion”
 - From the *Dhammapada*, On Violence:
<https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.10.budd.html>

Strongly recommended: Emily McRae, “Equanimity in Relationship”

Lecture Thirteen

Buddhists in Love?

- Lisa Feldman Barrett and John Dunne, [“Buddhists in Love.”](#)

ZOOM INVITATION FOR COURSE LECTURES

Sonam Kachru is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: 20F Buddhist Ethics

Time: Aug 25, 2020 09:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every week on Tue, until Nov 10, 2020, 12 occurrence(s)

Aug 25, 2020 09:30 AM

Sep 1, 2020 09:30 AM

Sep 8, 2020 09:30 AM

Sep 15, 2020 09:30 AM

Sep 22, 2020 09:30 AM

Sep 29, 2020 09:30 AM

Oct 6, 2020 09:30 AM

Oct 13, 2020 09:30 AM

Oct 20, 2020 09:30 AM

Oct 27, 2020 09:30 AM

Nov 3, 2020 09:30 AM

Nov 10, 2020 09:30 AM

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly:

<https://virginia.zoom.us/meeting/tJEsduirqTsrGdPQn5jcuGxWNKMnwcXT7CQP/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCtrzorGdOVsRqARowMBYj4d-nwtmJcjadtrRGwCSNGRRvBGMIvPKV8KOyH>

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://virginia.zoom.us/j/95111370137?pwd=L0ZlNnQ4NlVYT3c4djZWdWRXRFNuZz09>

Meeting ID: 951 1137 0137

Passcode: 1p028r

One tap mobile

+16513728299,,95111370137# US (St. Paul)
+17866351003,,95111370137# US (Miami)

Dial by your location

+1 651 372 8299 US (St. Paul)
+1 786 635 1003 US (Miami)
+1 267 831 0333 US (Philadelphia)
+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 470 250 9358 US (Atlanta)
+1 470 381 2552 US (Atlanta)
+1 646 518 9805 US (New York)
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
+1 971 247 1195 US (Portland)
+1 213 338 8477 US (Los Angeles)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 602 753 0140 US (Phoenix)
+1 669 219 2599 US (San Jose)
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
+1 720 928 9299 US (Denver)

Meeting ID: 951 1137 0137

Find your local number: <https://virginia.zoom.us/j/95111370137>

Join by SIP

95111370137@zoomcrc.com

Join by H.323

162.255.37.11 (US West)
162.255.36.11 (US East)
221.122.88.195 (China)
115.114.131.7 (India Mumbai)
115.114.115.7 (India Hyderabad)
213.19.144.110 (EMEA)
103.122.166.55 (Australia)
209.9.211.110 (Hong Kong SAR)
64.211.144.160 (Brazil)
69.174.57.160 (Canada)
207.226.132.110 (Japan)

Meeting ID: 951 1137 0137

Passcode: 576364

Join by Skype for Business

<https://virginia.zoom.us/j/95111370137>

