

Religion 332: The Buddhist Traditions

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Optional In-Person Class Meetings: Monday OR Wednesday 10:15-11:30 a.m., 111 Lampe Drive Room 341 (details on class meetings below)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description: History and structure of the Buddhist tradition analyzed through the “three jewels”: the Buddha, the Monastic Community (sangha), and the Teachings (dharma). Emphasis on fundamental religio-philosophical concepts, social history and ritual practices of Southern Buddhism, early Mahayana development, and Tantric ideals. Growth of the traditions in China and Japan. (3 cr hrs).

In this course, we will use a range of methodologies, techniques, and media—drawn from history, philosophy, religious studies, anthropology, and documentary film, among other fields—to survey ideas and practices in the Buddhist tradition over its development of some two thousand five hundred years. We will devote most of the course to exploring the origins and development of Buddhism in India before surveying the later development of Buddhism elsewhere, with stops of varying lengths in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, the Tibetan cultural sphere, and North America. Throughout the semester, we will constantly test our criteria for defining “religion” and how best to understand the category in light of the evidence we examine. Themes emphasized in this presentation of Buddhism include political authority and violence, and transformations of Buddhism within new cultural configurations.

PREREQUISITES AND RESTRICTIONS

None.

GEP REQUIREMENTS AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course satisfies 3 hours of the 6-hour GEP Humanities requirement and the one-course GEP Global Knowledge co-requisite.

By the completion of this course, students will:

1. Engage the human experience through the interpretation of human culture
2. Become aware of the act of interpretation itself as a critical form of knowing in the humanities, and
3. Make academic arguments about the human experience using reasons and evidence for supporting those reasons that are appropriate to the humanities.

They shall also:

Identify and examine distinguishing characteristics, including ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological or scientific developments, and/or attitudes of people in a society or culture outside the United States.

2. Compare these distinguishing characteristics between the non-U.S. society and at least one other society.
3. Explain how these distinguishing characteristics relate to their cultural and/or historical contexts in the non-U.S. society.

REL332 students shall also have:

- Achieved basic familiarity with doctrinal, institutional, and practical aspects of Buddhism in a number of influential cultural contexts.
- Learned techniques for reading and distinguishing between primary texts and secondary scholarship.
- Learned how to write more precisely and persuasively than before.
- Explored definitions of “religion” and questioned their applicability in the context of Buddhism.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. **ISBN-10:** 0192892231 **ISBN-13:** 978-0192892232. \$23.32.

Lopez, Donald S., Jr. *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Buddhism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015. **ISBN-10:** 0393912590 **ISBN-13:** 978-0393912593. \$28.00.

These books should be available at the NCSU Bookstore. All other required readings are uploaded as .pdf files and links on the course Moodle site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements include weekly response post on Moodle, take-home midterm and final examinations, and one group project.

*****PANDEMIC RULES: REL332 COURSE SCHEDULE FOR FALL 2020*****

Here is a general outline for how each week will proceed. This schedule is subject to change.

Week 1 (August 10 and 12, 2020): **ALL ONLINE. Do not come to the classroom.** We will require time to strategize on in-person meetings. Please 1) watch the videos 2) read the PowerPoints 3) do the assigned text readings and 4) post on Moodle for Week 2, following instructions uploaded to Moodle. You will receive instructions on this in advance via email.

Week 3 onward (revised August 19, 2020):

By Monday: you have completed all the readings for the week.

Monday class session: held via live (synchronous) Zoom session. You will have a link for the class, sent via email and uploaded to the course site. I will deliver content via lecture while I engage the class through Zoom, taking full advantage of chat, breakout rooms, and speaking.

Tuesday: by 5:00 p.m., you will post on Moodle, following the format detailed below.

Wednesday class session: held via live (synchronous) Zoom session. We will take up your Moodle posts, answer questions, read texts in detail, discuss upcoming assignments, etc.

Each of these sessions will be recorded. You will be able to watch all of the in-person class proceedings and comment on them via Moodle in your posts. If you are unable to keep up with the synchronous Zoom sessions, you can catch up on the recorded sessions and post on Moodle without penalty.

There are specific measures for COVID-19 listed at the end of this syllabus. Please read them carefully. Where material overlaps regarding attendance or other matters, the COVID-19 rules will apply.

Response Papers

These are one-page (250- to 350-word) responses that reflect your critical engagement with the week's assignments. I will provide a written prompt in advance via Moodle and email to give you ideas on how to get started.

You will post your weekly response paper on Moodle **NO LATER** than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, unless otherwise instructed.

Response papers are intended to 1) provide regular writing practice, 2) demonstrate your careful engagement with the assigned texts, and 3) generate productive discussion of each week's issues. I do not provide individual letter grades for each weekly response paper. Instead, I include your response papers as part of your cumulative course participation grade. Regard these weekly posts as a chance to practice writing without the pressure of a specific grade.

The format for the weekly postings is as follows:

What they should **NOT** be: an opinion piece based on one's own religious or cultural understandings and experiences, or a binary comparison of the readings with (one's own) 21st-century American or other perspectives.

What they **SHOULD** be: analyses of the week's texts that identify central themes, suggest areas for clarification, point out dilemmas raised either by the primary sources or by the scholars discussing the issues, and/or outline observations that promise to generate class discussion.

Each posting should consist of at least two paragraphs, with each dedicated to one of the readings, and each paragraph should include one discussion-oriented comment or question. While reading an assignment, keep asking yourself analytical questions: "What does the author mean by that?", "Why should I believe that?", or "Why is this relevant? What is the greater significance of this material?" When you formulate criticisms of something you read, try to anticipate how the author would respond, and how other students may elaborate on your comments.

Ideally, your response should include **TWO** questions for class discussion. These questions should follow any combination of the 5W1H format: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. The most productive responses tend to pose "Why" and "How" questions.

Responses must include clear citations from the week's readings, including author name, document name, and page numbers, and they must otherwise follow guidelines for written work (see "Academic Dishonesty" and other relevant sections below).

I will provide feedback on your writing in my weekly video uploads, and I am more than happy to consult with you in person over Zoom regarding specific aspects of your written work.

You may miss one response paper during the semester without penalty. If you miss two or more responses, your grade will suffer. Unexcused missing response papers are calculated as follows: 1 (no penalty), 2 (1/2 letter grade), 3 (1 full letter grade), 4 (1.5 letter grades), etc. subtracted from your participation grade. I will provide more information on the weekly responses in class.

Take-Home Mid-term and Final Examinations

Both of the take-home exams consist of two essay questions chosen from a list that I will post several days before the take-home due date. The exams are open-book, and I will only expect the essays to draw on the course readings. Each question should not exceed three double-spaced pages (approximately 750 words). If you receive a grade of B+ or better on the mid-term, you may choose to write a paper in lieu of the final take-home examination. Please consult with me for further information.

Group Presentation

Toward the end of the course, you will work with several of your fellow classmates to create a video presentation that applies the course texts to a specific site, event, concept, or other phenomenon. I will provide details on the content of this presentation, the mechanics of how you will present, and how the class will respond as we proceed.

All of the group projects will be conducted entirely online. Potential topics include:

- Constructing a virtual pilgrimage to a Buddhist site.
- Applying one or more Buddhist concepts to a historical event, concept, or practice.
- Survey and analysis of a Buddhism-relevant current event.

Reading Resources

Please see the relevant folder on the course Moodle site for links to Buddhism dictionaries and encyclopedias.

COURSE GRADE

Class Participation and Weekly Posts	35%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Group Project	15%

A+ 97-100	C 73-76
A 93-96	C- 70-72
A- 90-92	D+ 67-69
B+ 87-89	D 63-66
B 83-86	D- 60-62

B-	80-82	F	59 and below
C+	77-79		

GRADING RUBRIC

Grading follows this basic template:

A = Elegantly written or articulated, answers all aspects of a question, and anticipates criticism with persuasive argumentation. An A+ response displays all of these traits and includes at least one aspect that raises the work above the level of most excellent college student efforts. An A- product (exam answer, class participation level, etc.) is truly excellent in almost all respects but possesses one or more flaws, such as failing to anticipate important critiques.

B = Careful but not brilliantly written or articulated, addresses the question generally, and anticipates critique to some degree. A B+ answer has most of these traits but also includes a stand-out feature (such as particularly original thinking), while a B- answer covers the basic expectations for an examination response but also has one or more serious flaws.

C = Shows evidence of inquiry into the subject but uneven success either in meeting expectations to address the question with evidence drawn from course assignments or in presenting a coherent argument. C-level responses are hampered by unclear writing, insufficient command of the assigned readings, and arguments that do not stand up to close scrutiny.

D = Minimally acceptable in that it counts as the completion of the assignment, but is carelessly written or articulated, displays no meaningful engagement with the sources, and/or lacks a clear argument. An F response fails to meet the most basic criteria.

Incomplete Grades

Students will not be given a temporary grade of IN (incomplete) unless they have missed required work as a result of factors beyond their control, and they submit satisfactory documentary evidence of this. An IN grade not removed by the end of the next semester in which the student is enrolled or by the end of twelve months, whichever is earlier, will not be extended unless the student can present a compelling, well-documented case for the extension; otherwise the IN grade will automatically become an F. For NC State policy on IN (incomplete) grades, see <http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-50-03>

Credit Only Grades

If a student takes the course on a Credit Only (S/U) basis, then credit will be given only when the quality of the student work is determined to be C- or higher. This is required by the NC State policy on Credit Only grades: <http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-15>

Many major programs will not accept grades below C- or S/U grades for courses needed to meet requirements. Check on what your major and College will accept. Changing from Credit Only to Graded after the deadline can be extremely difficult administratively.

At present, auditing REL332 is not possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Readings are subject to change. Notice will be given: pay attention to the videos and in-person discussions and stay up to date with the files uploaded to Moodle.

Week 1 (August 10 and 12)

The Buddha and his world: society in India at the time of the Buddha.

Lopez, Donald S., Jr. *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Buddhism* (hereafter Lopez), "In the World of the Buddha," 45-91.

Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism* (hereafter Gethin), "The Buddha: The Story of the Awakened One," 1-34.

Week 2 (August 17 and 19)

Karma and cosmology

Lopez, "The Noble Search," 92-131.

Gethin, "The Buddhist Cosmos: The Thrice-Thousandfold World," 112-132.

Week 3 (August 24 and 26)

Early teachings of Buddhism (1)

Lopez, "Account of the Beginning," 131-158, and "Setting the Wheel of the Dharma in Motion," 177-193.

Gethin, "Four Truths," 59-84, and "No Self," 133-162.

"The Questions of King Milinda, Book II: The Distinguishing Characteristics of Ethical Qualities" (<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe35/sbe3504.htm>).

"Questions Which Tend Not to Edification" (<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bits/bits013.htm>).

*****NO CLASS Monday, August 31 and Wednesday, September 2*****

Week 4 (Sept. 7 and Sept. 9)

Early teachings of Buddhism (2)

Lopez, "The Buddha's Final Days," 158-177, "The Establishment of Mindfulness," 193-211.

"The Mind Less Permanent than the Body," *Samyutta-Nikāya* (<https://obo.genaud.net/dhamma-vinaya/bit/bit-18.htm>).

"The Buddha's Attitude Toward His Teaching: The Arrow and the Raft," *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*, 32-40.

Week 5 (Sept. 14 and 16)

Upholding the Dharma as a community: monastics, lay practitioners, and rulers

Lopez, "The Rhinoceros Horn Sutta," "Songs of the Female Elders," and "The Legend of Asoka," 228-247.

Gethin, "The Buddhist Community," 85-111, "The Buddhism Path," 163-201.

Strong, John. "The Experience of the Sangha," 2.1-2.5, from *The Experience of Buddhism*.

"Rules for Good Behavior," from the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (Disciplinary and Procedural Rules for the Sangha), 59-67.

Week 6 (Sept. 21 and 23)

The Great Vehicle: the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism

Lopez, "The Heart Sutra," 362-365.

Gethin, "The Mahāyāna," 224-252.

Excerpts from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines), Conze, Edward (trans.)

Excerpts from the *Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa)*, Thurman, Robert, (trans.).

Excerpts from the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka (Lotus Sūtra)*, Watson, Burton (trans.): Chapter 2, "Expedient Means," Chapter 16, "The Life Span of the Thus Come One," other excerpts.

Take-home midterm examination due Friday, September 25 at 5:00 p.m.

Week 7 (Sept. 28 and 30)

Tantric Buddhism and Buddhism on the move outside India

Strong, "Tantric Buddhism, or the Vajrayāna," 193-209.

"A Prophecy of the Death of the Dharma," Nattier, Jan (trans.), *Buddhism in Practice* (249-256).

"Atiśa's Journey to Sumatra," Decler, Hubert (trans.), *Buddhism in Practice* (532-540).

"Mantrayana/Vajrayāna – Tantric Buddhism in India," *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (192-202, 217-244).

"The Spirit of Destruction," from A.K. Warder's *Indian Buddhism*, pp. 506-516.

Week 8 (Oct. 5 and 7)

Tantric Buddhism and its Tibetan developments

Gethin, "Tibet and Mongolia: Northern Buddhism," 266-273.

"Divisional Issues: Sudden Versus Gradual Enlightenment," and "Meditational Endeavors: Milarepa's Quest," Strong (259-262, 271-277).

"Introduction," *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, Lopez, Donald (3-34).

"The Tibetan Tantric View of Death and the Afterlife," Benard, Elizabeth (169-180).

Film: *Unmistaken Child* (access via NCSU library site).

Week 9 (Oct. 12 and 14)

Buddhism transformed in China

Lopez, "Buddhism Comes to China," 491-495, "The Scripture in Forty-Two Sections," 496-503, "The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western World," 511-518.

Gethin, "China, Korea, and Japan," 257-266.

"The Scripture on Perfect Wisdom for Humane Kings Who Wish to Protect Their States," *Religions of China in Practice*, trans. Charles Orzech (372-380).

"The Coming of Buddhism to China," *Sources of Chinese Traditions I* (420-432).

"Buddhism in Central Asia and China," *Buddhist Religions, A Historical Introduction* (178-218).

Week 10 (Oct. 19 and 21)

Pure Land Buddhism

Lopez, "The Pure Land," 316-325.

"The Sūtra of (the Buddha of) Immeasurable Life," accessible at http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/sutra_of_immeasurable_life.html

"Celestial Buddhas and Pure Lands," Strong (184-192).

“Death-Bed Testimonials of the Pure Land Faithful,” *Buddhism in Practice*, Stevenson, Daniel B. (trans.) (592-602).

Film: *To the Land of Bliss* (access via NCSU library site).

Week 11 (Oct. 26 and 28)

An introduction to Chan/Zen Buddhism

Lopez, “Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,” 531-540, “Record of Linji,” 541-545.

Excerpts from the *Blue Cliff Records*, trans. Cleary, Thomas. “Three Pounds of Flax,” “Nanquan Kills a Cat,” “Vimalakīrti’s Door of Nonduality,” and “The Hands and Eyes of Great Compassion.”

“The Story of Early Ch’an,” McRae, John (125-139).

Week 12 (Nov. 2 and Nov. 4)

Buddhism in this moment: global perspectives on pandemic and race

McLaughlin, Levi, “Japanese Religious Responses to COVID-19: A Preliminary Report.”

Gleig, Ann. “Buddhists and Racial Justice: A History.”

Yetunde, Pamela Ayo, “Buddhism in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter”

https://www.lionsroar.com/buddhism-age-blacklivesmatter/?fbclid=IwAR25zvil-9u4QlAemJg1appr6dZhww1YQ5hb_bIhnJQX4ew-z_zuH6JTCc

Buddhism-relevant selections from *Religion News Service* coverage

(<https://religionnews.com/category/coronavirus/>), “Dossier Corona” at Utrecht University

(<https://religiousmatters.nl/dossier-corona1/>), and “CoronAsur” at the National University of Singapore

(<https://ari.nus.edu.sg/publications/coronasur/>).

Take-home final examination due Monday, Nov. 9 at 5:00 p.m.

Week 13 (Nov. 9 and 11)

Group Presentations

Week 14 (Nov. 16)

Group Presentations

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Participation means that your posts on Moodle and discussions with fellow students demonstrate that you have come prepared to discuss the assigned readings and films, having already set out points for discussion in your short response. This class is a space in which no single opinion, including mine, is the only one accepted. Keep in mind that informed opinions, ones that rely on careful engagement with assigned readings and other reliable sources, are of the highest value, and that questions generated from disagreements with or confusion about the course texts will be of the greatest benefit to everyone. It is essential that we deal with one another in a spirit of critical yet empathetic camaraderie and that we open our minds in order to cultivate a positive environment.

This course is a queer-positive and anti-racist space. Please observe proper use of pronouns and practice care and compassion for your fellow students.

LATE WORK

Late work will be marked down one full letter grade per day.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

For all work in this course, every student must abide by NCSU Honor Pledge (“I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this test or assignment”). All assignments and exams with your name on them are subject to this honor pledge. As the Student Code of Conduct stipulates, “Plagiarism and cheating are attacks on the very foundation of academic life, and cannot be tolerated within universities.” If you have any questions about what academic dishonesty is, check <http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01> or consult with me.

Follow this basic formula: is the idea you are writing out your own, or does it derive in whole or part from another source? Most of the ideas on which you will be writing in the weekly responses will deal with material that is new to you, so most of your points will derive from sources other than yourself. In these cases, include clear references to the texts that inform your points—author, document name, page numbers, and other salient details as required—so that your reader will be able to trace these points back to their original sources.

Violations of academic integrity will be handled in accordance with the Student Discipline Procedures (NCSU REG 11.35.02).

DISABILITY-RELATED STUDENT NEEDS

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with the Disability Resource Office at Holmes Hall, Suite 304, 2751 Cates Avenue, Campus Box 7509, 919-515-7653. For more information on NC State’s policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG 02.20.01) <https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-01/>.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Observing appropriate email etiquette is a good way to help ensure you get the response from professors that you would like to receive. To that end, I urge you to begin each new email thread with a greeting, such as “Dear Professor [X].” This should be followed by a clear and brief statement of why you are emailing. Your email should conclude with a closing salutation and your name. And remember—think before you write. Is your request reasonable? Have you provided all of the necessary information? Have you given your professor enough advance notice (whenever possible)? If so, hit “send” and await my response. You should typically expect to hear back from me within approximately twenty-four hours during the workweek. You should not expect responses on the weekend.

Privacy: Electronic Course Components

Students may be required to disclose personally identifiable information to other students in the course, via digital tools, such as email or web-postings, where relevant to the course. Examples include online discussions of class topics, and posting of student coursework. All students are expected to respect the privacy of each other by not sharing or using such information outside the course.

Additional NC State Rules and Regulations

Students are responsible for reviewing the NC State University (PRRs) which pertains to their course rights and responsibilities, including those referenced both below and above in this syllabus:

- **Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy Statement**
<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-05> with additional references at <https://oied.ncsu.edu/divweb/policies/>
- **Code of Student Conduct** <https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01>

Health and Participation in Class

- If you test positive for COVID-19, or are told by a healthcare provider that you are presumed positive for the virus, please work with your instructor on health accommodations and follow other university guidelines, including self-reporting ([Coronavirus Self Reporting](#)). Self-reporting is not only to help provide support to you, but also to assist in contact tracing for containing the spread of the virus.
- If you feel unwell, even if you have not been knowingly exposed to COVID-19, please do not come to class.
- If you are in quarantine, have been notified that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, or have a personal or family situation related to COVID-19 that prevents you from attending this course in person (or synchronously), please connect with your instructor to discuss the situation and make alternative plans, as necessary.
- If you need to make a request for an academic consideration related to COVID-19, such as a discussion about possible options for remote learning, please talk with your instructor for the appropriate process to make a COVID-19 request.

Health and Well-Being Resources

These are difficult times, and academic and personal stress are natural results. Everyone is encouraged to [take care of themselves](#) and their peers. If you need additional support, there are many resources on campus to help you:

- Counseling Center ([NCSU Counseling Center](#))
- Health Center ([Health Services | Student](#))
- If the personal behavior of a classmate concerns or worries you, either for the classmate's well-being or yours, we encourage you to report this behavior to the NC State CARES team ([Share a Concern](#)).
- If you or someone you know are experiencing food, housing or financial insecurity, please see the Pack Essentials Program ([Pack Essentials](#)).

Community Standards related to COVID-19

We are all responsible for protecting ourselves and our community. Please see the community expectations (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/rule/rul-04-21-01/>) and Rule 04.21.01 regarding Personal Safety Requirements Related to COVID-19 [RUL 04.21.01 – Personal Safety Requirements Related to COVID-19 – Policies, Regulations & Rules](#)

Course Expectations Related to COVID-19:

- **Face Coverings:** All members of the NC State academic community are required to follow all university guidelines for personal safety with face coverings, physical distancing, and sanitation. Face coverings are required in class and in all NC State buildings. Face coverings must be worn to

cover the nose and mouth and be close fitting to the face with minimal gaps on the sides. In addition, students are responsible for keeping their course/work area clean. Please follow the cleaning guidelines described by the university.

- **Course Attendance:** NC State attendance policies can be found at [REG 02.20.03 – Attendance Regulations – Policies, Regulations & Rules](#). Please refer to the course’s attendance, absence, and deadline policies for additional details. If you are quarantined or otherwise need to miss class because you have been advised that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you will not be penalized regarding attendance or class participation. However, you will be expected to develop a plan to keep up with your coursework during any such absences. If you become ill with COVID-19, you should follow the steps outlined in the health and participation section above. COVID 19-related absences will be considered excused; documentation need only involve communication with your instructor.
- **Classroom Seating:** To support efficient, effective contact tracing, please sit in the same seat when possible and take note of who is sitting around you; instructors may also assign seats for this purpose.

Grading/Scheduling Changing Options Related to COVID-19

If the delivery mode has a negative impact on your academic performance in this course, the university has provided tools to potentially reduce the impact:

- **Enhanced S/U Grading Option:** [Enhanced Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory Grading Option](#)
- **Late Drop:** [Enhanced Late Drop Option](#)

In some cases, another option may be to request an incomplete in the course. Before using any of these tools, discuss the options with your instructor and your academic advisor. Be aware that if you use the enhanced S/U, you will still need to complete the course and receive at least a C- to pass the course.

This syllabus is designed in accord with the NCSU guidelines for course development