

MODERN BUDDHISM

Professor Brennan

brennanj@kenyon

Office: O'Connor House 204

Office Hours: W 1-4 and R 3-5

Or by appointment

RLST 370

WF 8:40-10:00

Location: Horn Gallery Basement

COURSE DESCRIPTION

When (1) the material world is understood as most real, (2) scientific methods are understood as the supreme means to knowledge, (3) the horizon of change is immanent rather than transcendent, and (4) most of the world is shaped by historically conditioned structures of racialized, gendered and colonial forms of social, political, relational and psychic organization, then what becomes of the Buddhist tradition?

This course has two starting points. The first is the premise that assertions 1 – 3 above reflect states of affairs characteristic of what we call modernity, and that these states of affairs are, in general, different than those found in much of the history of the Buddhist tradition in its many iterations throughout Asia. The second is the premise that assertion 4 names a set of historical realities within which modern Buddhists have lived into the Buddhist tradition. The course's motivating question asks how all 4 states of affairs have shaped Buddhism in the modern world.

REQUIRED READINGS*

Radical Dharma, by Rev. angel Kyodo williams, Lama Rod Owens, and Jasmine Syedullah

Buddhism After Patriarchy, by Rita Gross

Prescribing the Dharma, by Ira Helderman

Pure Land, Real World: Modern Buddhism, Japanese Leftists, and the Utopian Imagination, by Melissa Anne-Marie Curley

Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama

*These required books are available for purchase through Kenyon's bookstore. If you plan to buy online instead, please ensure that you are buying the same edition (otherwise the pagination may be different, which makes it difficult to work together in class).

*All other required readings are posted on Moodle. Please have them downloaded on your computer or printed and in front of you during class time.

COURSE SCHEDULE

February 3rd – Feb 23rd

- 1) Race and caste in modern Buddhism
 - a. *Radical Dharma*, plus the following associated readings:
 - b. Christopher S. Queen, “Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation”
 - c. Selections from Ambedkar’s *The Buddha and His Dhamma*
 - d. Emily McRae, “White Delusion and Avidyā: A Buddhist Approach to Understanding and Deconstructing White Ignorance”
 - e. Ann Gleig, “Undoing Whiteness in American Buddhist Modernism: Critical, Collective and Contextual Turns.”

February 25th – March 18th

- 2) Gender in Modern Buddhism
 - a. *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, plus the following associated readings:
 - b. Selections from the *Therigatha*, the *Lotus Sutra*, and the *Vimalakirti Sutra*
 - c. Hsiao-lan Hu, “The White Feminism in Rita Gross’s Critique of Gender Identities and Reconstruction of Buddhism”
 - d. An essay TBD from *Buddhist Women and Social Justice*, by Karma Lekshe Tsomo

March 23rd – April 13th

- 3) The meeting of meditation and therapeutic practices
 - a. *Prescribing the Dharma*, plus the following associated readings:
 - b. Adam Gopnik, “What meditation can do for us and what it can’t”
 - c. David McMahan, “Meditation and Modernity” and “Mindfulness, Literature, and the Affirmation of Ordinary Life.”
 - d. Candy Gunther-Brown and Saki Santorelli, “Does Mindfulness Belong in Public Schools.”

April 15th – April 30th

- 4) Buddhism and the modern nation-state: Japan
 - a. *Pure Land, Real World*, plus the following associated reading:
 - b. Selections from James Dobbins’ *Jodo-Shinshu: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*

May 4th – May 11th

- 5) Buddhism, the nation-state, and colonization: Tibet and the Dalai Lama
 - a. *Freedom in Exile*, plus the following associated readings
 - b. Selections from *My Land and My People*, by the Dalai Lama
 - c. Melvyn Goldstein, “The Future” from *The Snow Lion and the Dragon*
 - d. Pankaj Mishra, “The Last Dalai Lama?”
 - e. Eliot Sperling, “The Dalai Lama as Dupe”

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING SCALE (TOTAL CLASS POINTS = 100)

1. Reading questions: Every other class period, you will submit a question on the reading. They should be uploaded to the appropriate reading question submission forum on Moodle. There are 27 total class periods. Everyone should submit a question for Friday, February 5th. Starting on Wednesday, February 10th, students surnamed A-H will submit questions for Wednesday classes and I-Z will submit for Friday. Starting on Wednesday, March 24th, I-Z will submit on Wednesdays and A-H on Fridays. Consult the Reading Question Assignment Guide on Moodle for more instructions. (14 @2 points each = 28 points)
2. One 6-8 page paper on one of the first three books, and one 8-10 page paper on a topic of your choosing. Consult the assignment guides on Moodle for more instructions. (20 points and 27 points).
3. An audio-visual presentation on your research topic. Consult the assignment guide on Moodle for more instructions. All presentations are to be posted on Moodle by the end of the day on Friday, April 30th. (15 points)
4. A 2-4 page written reflection on another student's AV presentation. Consult the assignment guide on Moodle for more instructions. (10 points)

DUE DATES

1. Reading questions are due by 9pm the night before the relevant class.
2. 6-8 page paper is due on March 31st by 5pm. I will accept early submissions.
3. 8-10 page final paper is due on April 23rd by 5pm. I will accept early submissions.
4. AV presentation on your final paper is due by 5pm on April 30th. I will accept early submissions.
5. 2-4 page written reflection on another student's presentation is due by 5pm on Friday, May 7th. I will accept early submissions.

WRITTEN WORK SPECIFICATIONS AND SUBMISSION

Written work should be written in a standard 12 point font, 1 inch margins all around., in a .doc file. Written work should be submitted at the "Submit Written Work Here" function on our Moodle page.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance and participation is expected.

ACADEMIC HONESTY & INTEGRITY [PLAGIARISM POLICY]

It is your responsibility to learn how to document and acknowledge those whose words and ideas you have drawn upon or used in your work. Please study the section on Honesty in Academic Work and Violations of Academic Integrity in the Course Catalog. If you have any questions about the policy, please come talk with me about it. A basic rule for using sources: when it doubt, quote and cite.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have any accessibility requirements, please contact Erin Salva, the Director of Student Accessibility and Support Services (SASS), as soon as possible to verify your eligibility for accommodations and confirm the nature of the accommodations you need. [salvae@kenyon.edu; 740-427-5453] Please also speak with me as soon as possible about what SASS approved accommodations need to be made.

ASSIGNMENTS

I will grant extensions on the two papers as long as the extension is requested more than 24 hours before the paper's due date. No extensions will be granted on the reading questions. Late assignments will suffer a grade reduction commensurate with their lateness.

COMMUNICATING WITH ME

I am available during the office hours listed at the top of this syllabus, as well as over email. You can expect to receive a response to any email you send me within 36 hours, except over weekends and holidays when the response clock is on pause.

LIBRARY

The Religious Studies library liaison is Karen Greever, whose office is room A-15 in Library A. You can ask her for help with any questions about using the library for our course. For references, you might start by looking at our Department's library resource guide at <http://kenyon.libguides.com/rlst>.

TITLE IX

As a professor at Kenyon College, I am a mandatory Title IX reporter. This means that if you tell me of an incident of sexual misconduct or harassment, involving you or any other student or Kenyon employee, I am legally obligated to report it to the Title IX Coordinator here at Kenyon. If you would like to discuss an incident of sexual misconduct or harassment with someone who is not obligated to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, you may talk with the staff of the Cox Counseling Center or with either of our two campus chaplains, Marc Bragin and Rachel Kessler.