**Course Description**

It’s time to wake up! The goal of this course is to familiarize you with the religious traditions that derive from the teachings of the Buddha, the “Awakened One.” Such a survey course is not intended to steer you toward or away from any particular Buddhist tradition, nor is it intended to foster any spiritual search in which you might be personally engaged. Rather, its goal is for you to achieve an accurate understanding of Buddhism as practiced in India, Thailand, and Tibet on those societies’ own terms, and to evaluate their traditions in a manner that is both sympathetic and properly critical. In this course you will discover how Buddhism is a diverse tradition of great complexity and you will see how its dimensions evolved to answer the needs of people of different cultures and historical periods. We will also work to undo a few of the common misunderstandings in the West about Buddhism being a timeless form of universal wisdom, or a spiritual practice intended to reduce stress.

This course will introduce a number of enduring themes relating to Buddhist philosophy (e.g. the status of the self and enlightenment), Buddhist practice and ethics (e.g. monastic life, meditation, making merit and rituals), and politics and society (e.g. Buddhist kingship, Buddhist gender roles and race). We will trace the transmission and transformation of Buddhist beliefs and practices from India into Thailand, Tibet, and finally America. We will rely extensively on primary texts in the required readings, but we will also read two compelling books (a spiritual travelogue and a novel) about western spiritual seekers. We will also watch films and documentaries, which illustrate how Buddhist ideas and practices are woven into many aspects of life in Asia. You should consider these films as “texts,” for their content will be covered in exams.

**Course goals and learning outcomes**

- to acquire religious literacy in the key ideas and practices of Buddhism and a familiarity with how they have changed and developed over time;
- to recognize the diversity of Buddhism by reading primary sources and analyzing their multiple dimensions from different disciplinary perspectives;
- to foster an awareness of how religion and culture shape your perceptions and the values that you take for granted and to challenge your ethnocentric assumptions about Buddhism as a religion;
- to demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft an argument in defense of a thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources.

This course also satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes**:  
1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, and valued in various expressions of human culture;  
2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These two General Education learning outcomes will be demonstrated on the **final exam essay**.

**Required Texts**


There are also **20 Electronic Readings**, pdf selections from Buddhist texts, scholarly articles and creative short stories on Buddhism, available on OAKS under RELS240, which registered students can access after they login to MyCharleston (http://my.cofc.edu) Please download all 20 pdf files onto your computer or a memory stick, **print out each article**, and bring it to class on the day that it is due.
Course Requirements

The course presumes no previous experience in Buddhism or religious studies, but it has as a prerequisite the desire to read challenging and unusual materials about Buddhism and Asian cultures and to engage in conversation about these readings. These expectations are explicitly identified in the following points.

- **Completion of required reading assignments PRIOR to lecture**
  It is strongly recommended that you read the assignment before we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures. When there is an assignment from the ER material on OAKS you should bring it to class with you.

- **Regular attendance at lecture and participation in class discussions**
  Whatever you get out of this course is directly related to how much you put into it. Please come to class with ideas and questions that can help our class engage in meaningful discussion. Attendance records will be kept for each class. There will be 3 allowed absences; 4 or more absences will negatively affect your grade. At 8 absences you will be dropped from the course and earn a WA grade. If you have a legitimate excuse (illness, emergency) please let me know and contact the Undergraduate Dean’s office to document the reason for your absence. You are responsible for making up any absences; please get any notes on missed lecture material from classmates.

- **Weekly Reflection Cards (15% of grade)**
  Every day marked RC# due you are to bring to class a thoughtful written reflection and/or question related to the assigned reading for that week. The reflection should be written on a 3x5 or 5x7 card and be based on an issue that you have found thought provoking, challenging, or interesting. Questions should not simply ask for factual information, but raise questions of interpretation, while your reflections should explore significant issues or express concerns about the topic that are important to you.

  Grades for RC are: + (100); √+ (90); √ (80); √- (75); and — (70)

- **Two Quizzes on 1/29 and 4/2 (5% each, or 10% of final grade)**

- **Midterm and Final exam (20% each, or 40% of final grade)**
  The Quizzes and Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, identification and explanation of key scriptural passages, and short essay. If you miss a quiz or exam and provide a legitimate excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they are harder than the original tests. An unexcused missed exam counts as a 0.

- **Two Short Essays of 2 pages (7.5% each, or 15% of final grade)**
  These two essays will be based upon assigned topics and may not exceed two pages each. The first paper will focus on the practice of meditation in a Thai Buddhist monastery (based on What the Buddha Never Taught) and it is due on 2/12 in class; the second paper will be based upon the novella Franny and Zooey and it is due in class on 3/19. Late papers are not accepted since the essay topic will be discussed in class.

- **Term Paper of 6-7 pages (20% of final grade)**
  The term paper will be based upon a topic to be assigned in advance. It is due without fail on 4/14.

  **Academic Integrity and the Honor Code:** There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a failing grade for the entire course. A student found responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty.

  **SNAP students:** If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please provide me with a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information on the SNAP program, see: [http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu](http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu)

**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>below 61</td>
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Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

The following abbreviations will be used in listing the schedule or required readings for each class:
ER#1 refers to the 1st reading assignment listed on OAKS; BVSI refers to Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction; SoB refers to The Story of Buddhism; EB: 7-23 refers to pages from The Experience of Buddhism anthology; WBNT refers to What the Buddha Never Taught; RC#1 due = 1st Reflection Card.

Week 1  Introduction to the Study of Buddhism
Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a college student who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor’s cup full, then kept on pouring. The student watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. “It’s full! No more will go in!”
“Like this cup,” Nan-in replied, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

1/13 What is “Buddhism?” How do we study it at a secular school? How can we empty our “cups?” (Review syllabus, exercise in oral transmission of the “essence” of Buddhism)

1/15 On Blind Men and Elephants: How Buddha got Ism-ed (ER#1: “The Blind Men & Elephant;” BVSI: chapter 1; and SoB: chapter 1) RC#1 due

Week 2  Life of the Buddha as Sacred Story and Drama

1/20 Comparing Versions of Buddha’s Biography: From Fruitful Dreams to the Awakened One (BVSI: chapter 2; and ER#2-3: “Buddherotica” & “Life of Gotama Buddha;” and EB: 7-23)

1/22 The Ministry of the Buddha and His First Disciples (ER#4-4a: “The Early Life of the Buddha;” “Prince of the Ascetics;” and EB: 56-60) film: excerpts from Little Buddha (w/ Keanu Reeves as Buddha Himself!) RC#2 due

Week 3  Commemorating the Life, Enlightenment, and Death of the Buddha

1/27 The Buddha’s Final Days and “Passing Away:” Making His Absence Present (ER#5: “Final Days;” and EB: 1-7, 45-50) RC#3 due

1/29 The Buddhist Cosmos: The Wheel of Life, Death, and Rebirth (BVSI: chapter 3; and EB: 36-41, 110-113) images and handout: Tibetan Wheel of Life Quiz #1 on the life and death of the Buddha

Week 4  Teachings of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma

2/3 The Buddha’s First Sermon on the Middle Way (BVSI: chapter 4; EB: 42-45, 98-99; and WBNT: chapter 1)

2/5 Missing Persons Report: The Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self and Nirvana (WBNT: chapter 2; and EB: 99-104, 114-18) RC#4 due

Week 5  Meditation: Putting the Dharma into Practice

2/10 Two Types of Meditation: The Practice of Calm and Insight (BVSI: chapter 7; ER#6: “Buddhist Meditation;” and EB: 128-136) film: Footprints of the Buddha RC#5 due
2/12 Embodying the Dharma, Taming the Monkey Mind, and Samadhi Suicide
(WBNT: chapters 3-4; and chapter 9 pp.187-193)
2-page essay due in class: What the Buddha Never Taught about practicing meditation

Week 6 The Buddhist Monastic Community: Bodily Discipline, Social Discipline

2/17 Buddhist Councils and Economics: Making Merit and Money for the Sangha
(WBNT: chapters 7-8 & 10; and EB: 126-128) video: “The Buddha as Businessman”

2/19 The Monastic Code: Ritualized Rules and Regular Transgressions
(WBNT: chapter 5; ER#7-8: “Vinaya Vignettes” & “Memorizing the Buddha;” EB: 75-81, 88-91)
RC#6 due

Week 7 Buddhist Nuns & Gender Hierarchies

2/24 Monks and Nuns: Buddhist Attitudes towards Gender and Sexuality
(EB: 63-70; SoB: pp. 151-165; and also ER#9-10: “Gotami’s Story” and “Bowing Not Scraping”)
RC#7 due

2/26 Midterm in Class

3/3-5 Spring Break (take Franny and Zooey with you!)

Week 8 Reviewing Early Buddhism, Introducing Mahayana Buddhism

3/10 Retracing the Footsteps of the Buddha, Looking Ahead to Mahayana Buddhism
(BVSI: chapter 5; EB: 173-181; begin reading Franny and Zooey)

3/12 The Ethics of the Bodhisattva: Compassion and Skillful Means
(SoB: 64-72, “Hinayana and Mahayana;” EB: 145-151; and ER#11: “Adam Yauch”) RC#8 due

Week 9 Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy and Practice

3/17 Mahayana Philosophy: Emptiness, Illusion, and Non-Dualism
(EB: 154-162; SoB: 72-83, “The Bodhisattva;” read more from Franny and Zooey) RC#9 due

3/19 Compassion and Skillful Means revisited
(Finish Franny and Zooey) 2-page essay on Franny & Zooey due in class

Week 10 The Mahayana Multi-verse: Visions of Pure Land Paradises

3/24 The Mahayana Pantheon and Visions of Paradise
(EB: 188-190, 196-200; and SoB: 83-92, “Other Buddhas, Other Worlds”)

3/26 Pure Land Buddhism: Faith in an “Other Power”
(SoB: 230-242, “The Pure Land”, and EB: 289-291, 318-20); RC#10 due
RELS 240.001-002 Buddhist Traditions (Spring 2015 @ ECTR 219)

Week 11  Zen Buddhist Monasticism and Tibetan Iconoclasm

3/31  Zen Monasticism: Site of Enlightenment or Buddhist Boot Camp?
     (SoB: 242-248 on “Zen”; ER#12-12a: “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk” and “Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra”) RC#11

4/2  The Magic of Liberation: “Crazy” Saints and Tantric Iconoclasm
     (SoB: 213-230 on “Tantra;” and EB: 206-210, 271-277)  Quiz #2 on Mahayana Buddhism

Week 12  Tantra in India and Tibet

4/7  Tantric Rituals of Body, Speech and Mind: Mudra, Mantra, and Mandala
     (EB: 210-20)  film: Wheel of Time

4/9  The Tibetan Tulku Transplanted to America…via Greyhound
     (ER#13-14: “Divine Birth & the Absent Mother” & “Greyhound Bodhisattva”) RC#12

Week 13  Meditating in an Alabama Prison and Buddhist Modernism

4/14  Gaining Insight and Freedom from the Prison of Samsara in Alabama
     (ER#15: “Inside Donaldson”) film: The Dhamma Brothers
     Term paper due in class

4/16  Buddhist Modernism: Is Buddhism really compatible with science and psychology?
     (ER#16: “Buddhist Modernism;” and BVSI: Chapter 9) RC#13

Week 14  The Challenges of Re-presenting Buddhism in America

4/21  Buddhism in America: Asian Immigrants and the Buddhist Syncretism of Smokey the Bear’s Sutra
     (ER#17: “Visible and Invisible;” and EB: 341-45) RC#14

4/23  Dharma, Diversity & Race: Being Buddhist and a Minority in America
     (ER#18-20: “Waking Up to Racism;” “Why Buddhism for Black America Now?” and “Sweet and Sour Buddhism”) RC#15

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE

5/2  240.001 (8:00)  Exam on May 2 from 8:00-11:00 am in ECTR 219

5/5  240.002 (10:50) Exam on May 5 from 8:00-11:00 am in ECTR 219
Please use this information in your bibliography when you cite these sources for your term paper. Sources listed in **bold font** are cited in multiple ER listings.

8. Keith Heller, “Memorizing the Buddha” from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 149-166.
Terms and Concepts for the Study of Buddhism

Note: These are technical terms that you must know in order to do well on quizzes and exams. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments and write down their definitions and meanings. This list is subject to change: sarvam anityam or “everything is impermanent,” as Buddhists say.

Life and Teachings of the Buddha
*Upamishads*, samsara, karma, Atman, moksha, yoga, caste, shramana, ksatriya
Shakyamuni, Siddhartha, Gotama, Bodhisattva, Jina, Tathagata, cakravartin
Ashvagosha, *Buddhacarita, Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya*, Four Sights, Rahula, Yashodhara
Great Departure, Mara, bodhisattva-power, asceticism, 3 Watches of the Night,
Bodh Gaya, Sangha, Ananda, Parinirvana, cult of relics
Relic veneration, stupa, Wheel of Life, 6 Rebirth Realms, Mt Meru, Three Defilements (kleshas)
Middle Way, Four Noble Truths, Three Marks of Existence, Eight-fold Path, Nirvana, Arhat

Buddhist Practice, Ethics, and Institutions in India
Mindfulness, vipashyana vs. shamatha, dhyana, supernatural powers, loving kindness meditation
Pali, Sanskrit, Five Aggregates (skandhas), Forest monks, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
Ananda, Sutra, Vinaya, Abhidharma, Tripitaka, schism
Ashoka, cakravartin, Nikaya, Three Councils, laity, merit-making rituals, merit transfer
Pratimoksha, ordination, Upasatha, Sangha expulsion, eremitic, cenobitic, laity
Mahaprajapati/Gotami, soteriological inclusiveness, ascetic misogyny, institutional androcentrism

The origins of Mahayana and the Perfection of Wisdom
Bodhisattva path/vow, *bodhicitta, upaya* and compassion/ethics, *Lotus Sutra*, Beastie Boys
Shunyata vs. svabhava, Nagarjuna, Madhyamika, Two Truths, non-dualism, unlocatable nirvana
3 Bodies of the Buddha, Amitabha/Amitayus, Pure Land/Buddha Field, Sukhavati, nembutsu
Self-power vs. Other-power, faith vs. works, Degenerate Era, mappo
Mahakashyapa, Bodhidharma, patriarch, the Zen “creed,” lineage, mind-to-mind transmission
Hui K’o and Hui neng, sudden and spontaneous enlightenment, niwazume, Roshi

Tantric Buddhism in India/Tibet and Buddhism in America
Tantra, Vajrayana, Marpa & Milarepa, Siddha, Guru/lama, twilight language, Lakshminkaradevi
Tantra as performing art, mudra, mantra, mandala, iconography and iconoclasm
Three Bodies of a Buddha, Tulku, rebirth vs. reincarnation, deity yoga/grasping the divine pride
Dharma Brothers, Elite Buddhism, Evangelical Buddhism, Ethnic Buddhism, Soka Gakkai
Gary Snyder, *Smokey the Bear Sutra*, bell hooks, Charles Johnson, Victor Hori

Terms for the academic study of Buddhism
7 dimensions of religion, empathy and bracketing, creed, demythologization, hagiography “Original Buddhism,” hermeneutics, exegesis, cosmology, purgatory, oral-aural transmission
Asceticism, cosmology, purgatory, orthodoxy, sect, exegesis, canon, creed, sectarianism
Reification, apophatic, sinicization, antinomian, iconoclasm, transgressive sacrality, iconography
Orientalism, spiritual materialism, neo-colonialism, therapeutic individualism, Buddhism & race