

RELS 240.01 “Buddhist Traditions” (9:25-10:40 am in ECTR 219, fall 2021)

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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.” This 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 the Buddhism practiced in India, Thailand, Tibet, and the U.S.A. on those societies’ own terms, and to evaluate their traditions in a manner that is 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 form of spirituality intended to reduce stress, foster inner peace, and achieve “oneness.”

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, gender roles, and race). We will trace the transmission and transformation of Buddhism from India into Thailand, Tibet, and America. We will rely on classical texts in the required readings, but we will also read two books, a Buddhist travelogue and a novel about American siblings who seek spiritual redemption. We will also watch documentaries that illustrate how Buddhist ideas and practices are woven into many aspects of Asian and American life. You should treat these films as visual “texts” that require careful viewing and critical interpretation.



Course goals and student learning outcomes

- to gain empathy for the key ideas, values, and practices of Buddhism
- to develop close reading and interpretive skills by reading Buddhist texts, place them in their social and historical context, and analyze their multiple religious dimensions
- to grasp the dynamic process of borrowing, interaction, and conflict between Buddhism and other religions in Asia and America
- to demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft an argument in defense of a thesis

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This course also satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes** for the Humanities:

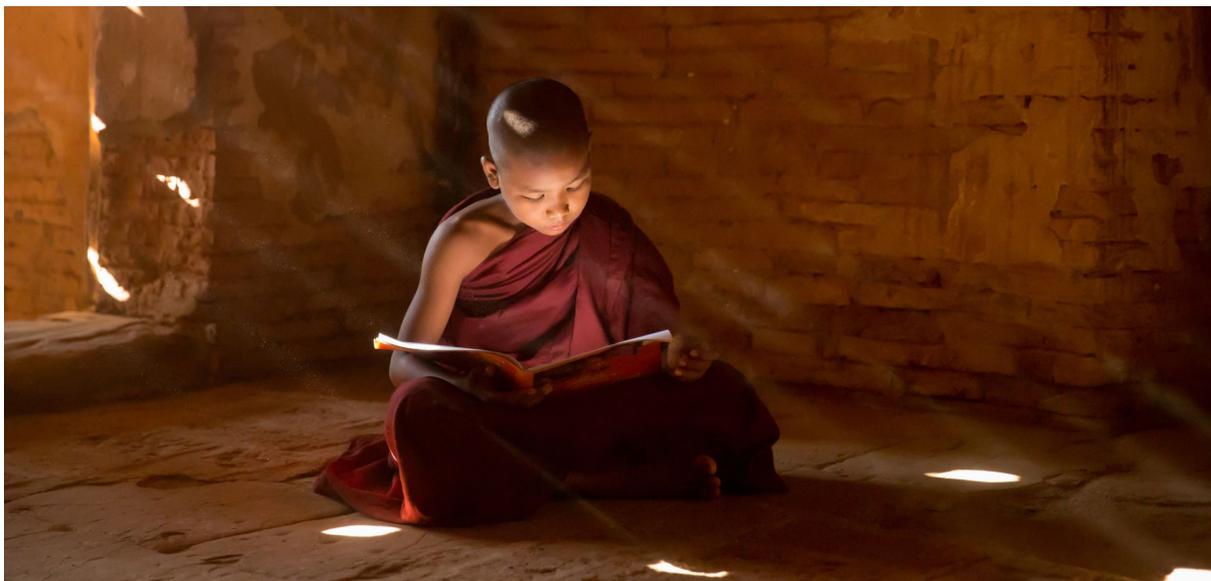
- 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, and valued in various expressions of human culture;
- 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These two General Education learning outcomes will be demonstrated on the **final exam essay** (10%)

Required Texts

- Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 2013
- Donald S. Lopez, *The Story of Buddhism*, HarperOne, Reprint edition, 2009
- John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* 3rd edition, Cengage, 2008
- J. D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*. Little, Brown and Co., 1961
- Tim Ward, *What the Buddha Never Taught*, Changemaker Books, 2013--20th Anniversary edition

• There are also **Electronic Readings (ER#1-20)**, pdf selections from Buddhist texts, scholar’s articles and short stories on Buddhism, available on **OAKS** under **RELS 240**, 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. *The correct ER# for each article is listed on this syllabus and OAKS, not on the first page of the article itself.*



Course Requirements

This course presumes no previous experience in the study of Buddhism or religious studies, but it has as a prerequisite the desire to read challenging 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**

You should read the assignment *before* we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures and absorb new ideas. When there is an assignment from the ER material on OAKS you should print it out and bring it to class. We pay close attention to these readings and “unpack” them in class.

- **Participation in class discussions (10%)**

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. You cannot participate if you are not present. Quality counts more than quantity, but you must speak to contribute. If you are worried about participation, meet with me soon after class or during office hours to strategize.

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- **Attendance Policy**

This is a face-to-face class that will meet in person in ECTR 219. Attendance will be taken for each class and a perfect attendance record will raise your participation grade. You are allowed **3 absences; 4 or more** absences will negatively affect your grade. At **8 absences** you will be **dropped** from the course. If you have a legitimate excuse (illness, family emergency) please contact me or 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 class material and lectures 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 or typed 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; — = 70

- **Two Quizzes on 9/9 and 11/9 (5% each, or 10% of final grade)**

- **Midterm on 10/7 (15%) and Final Exam on 12/9 (20%, for 35% of final grade)**

The quizzes and exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, identification and explanation of scriptural passages. Review sheets will always be provided before each quiz or exam. If you miss a quiz or exam and provide a legitimate excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they can be harder than the original. An unexcused missed exam counts as a **0**. The Final will include a take-home essay worth 10% of grade.

- **Two Short Essays of 2 pages (7.5% each, or 15% of final grade)**

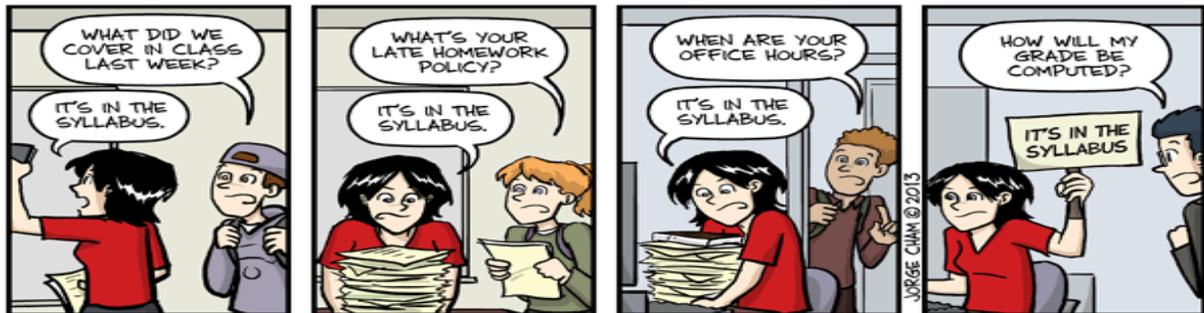
These two essays will be based upon assigned topics and may not exceed two pages each. The first paper will focus on the practice of meditation in a Thai Buddhist monastery and it is due in class on **9/23**; the second paper will be based upon the novella *Franny and Zooey* and it is due in class on **10/26**. *Late papers are not accepted* since the essay topic will be discussed in class.

- **Term Paper of 6 pages based on an assigned topic due in class on 11/18 (15% of final grade)**

Grading Scale: A = 100-93 A- = 92-90 B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83 B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-77
C = 76-73 C- = 72-70 D+ = 69-67 D = 66-63 D- = 62-60 F = 59-below

- **Religious Observances and Accommodation**

The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. Religious observances will be accommodated. If you need to be absent for any given class for a specific observance, please submit requests in writing to me by the end of the second week of class (September 2) so we can agree upon accommodations.



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

Course Resources

I encourage you to utilize the academic support services offered by the [Center for Student Learning](#) and the [Writing Lab](#) for assistance in study strategies and essay writing consultation. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information on the Center for Student Learning call 843.953.5635. Here is a link for help on writing an essay for [Religious Studies](#).

- **Universal Learning and SNAP program:** I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices and our interactions be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen carefully are crucial to universal learning. Any student eligible for or needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be made. For more information on the SNAP program, see the Center for Disability Services at <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu> or 843.953.1431

- **Coronavirus and Continuity of Learning—Dealing with the Pandemic and Hurricanes**
For now, this course is a **100% in-person class**. Our class will meet twice a week in **ECTR 219** and **masks are required at all times for attendance**. Only students in quarantine/isolation due to a Covid-positive test will be allowed to join the class by Zoom. Please do not take advantage of the pandemic to skip class. In-person attendance is required, for this is not a hybrid course. Before the drop/add deadline, students should decide whether this course plan matches their own circumstances.

However, it is quite possible that our class will be interrupted by the pandemic or by inclement weather and then we will pivot to online course delivery. In fact, it is very likely that hurricanes or the pandemic will force us to cancel and/or make up one or more class days this semester. As far as our class is concerned, get your books ASAP, so you have them. If and when classes are canceled and rescheduled, please pay close attention to your CofC email. If in-person classes are suspended due to extreme weather or the health pandemic, I will announce on OAKS and by your CofC email a detailed plan for a change of modality to ensure continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and internet access. **How should we behave online & in class?**

- **Ethical Guidelines for behavior in class and Netiquette for online interaction**

Be patient and forgiving. Go easy on each other. We all make mistakes. We’re all learning together.

Be professional and help each other. If a peer raises a question, and you know the answer, help them!

Be kind. Treat each other with the full respect and dignity each of you deserve.

Be ethical. Racist, sexist, homophobic, or any language or behavior that dehumanizes or degrades others will not be tolerated. Period.

Cite your sources. When you are building off or borrowing from others’ ideas, give them the credit they deserve, whether it’s from a classmate or an assigned reading.

- **Academic Integrity**

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s action are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by me as the instructor. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a **XF grade** in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years. If you are unfamiliar with the [Honor Code](#) or what [plagiarism](#) is, please click on the links.

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

The following abbreviations will be used in listing the schedule of required readings for each class: **ER#1** refers to the 1st Electronic Reading assignment on OAKS; **RC#1** due = 1st Reflection Card; **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*.



A Zen Parable on Learning about 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?"

8/24 What is “Buddhism?” How do we study it at a secular school? How can we empty our “cups?”
(Review this syllabus)

8/26 On Blind Men and Elephants: How is Buddhism like an Elephant?
(ER#1: “The Blind Men & Elephant;” BVSI: Chapter 1; SoB: Introduction) **RC#1 due**

Life of the Buddha as Sacred Story and Drama

8/31 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;” EB: 7-23) **RC#2 due**

9/2 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)
In class viewing of film excerpts from *Little Buddha* (w/ Keanu Reeves as Buddha Himself!)

9/7 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**

Teachings of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma

9/9 The Buddhist Cosmos: The Wheel of Life, Death, and Rebirth
(BVSI: Chapter 3; and EB: 36-41, 110-113) **Quiz #1 on the life and death of the Buddha**

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9/14 The Buddha’s First Sermon on the Middle Way
(BVSI: Chapter 4; EB: 42-45, 98-99; WBNT: Chapter 1) **RC#4 due**

9/16 Missing Person Report: The Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self and Nirvana
(WBNT: Chapter 2; and EB: 99-104, 114-18)

Meditation: Putting the Dharma into Practice

9/21 Two Types of Meditation: The Practice of Calm and Insight
(BVSI: Chapter 7; ER#6: “Buddhist Meditation,” EB: 128-136) **RC#5 due**
Film clips to view in class: *Footprints of the Buddha*

9/23 Embodying the Dharma, Taming the Monkey Mind, and Samadhi Suicide
(WBNT: Chapters 3-4; and Chapter 9, pp. 166-179)
2-page essay due in class: *What the Buddha Never Taught* about practicing meditation

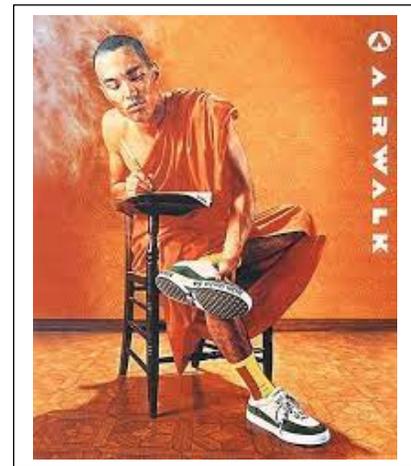
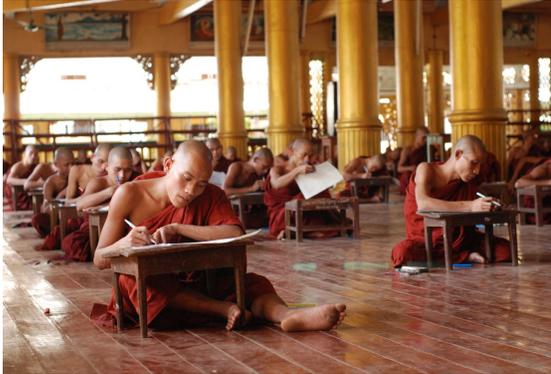
The Buddhist Monastic Community: Bodily Discipline, Social Discipline

9/28 Buddhist Councils and Economics: Making Merit and Money for the Sangha
(WBNT: Chapters 7-8 & 10; and EB: 126-128) **RC#6 due** video: “The Buddha as Businessman”

9/30 The Monastic Code: Ritualized Rules and Regular Transgressions
(WBNT: Chapter 5; ER#7-8: “Vinaya Vignettes” & “Memorizing the Buddha,” EB: 75-81, 88-91)

10/5 Monks and Nuns: Buddhist Attitudes towards Gender and Sexuality
(SoB pp. 151-165; EB: 63-70; ER#9-10: “Gotami’s Story” & “Bowing Not Scraping”) **RC#7 due**

10/7 **Midterm Exam in Class** (review Study Guide)



Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy and Practice

10/12 Retracing the Footsteps of the Buddha, Looking Ahead to Mahayana Buddhism
(BVSI: chapter 5; EB: 173-181; begin reading *Franny and Zooey*) **RC#8 due**

10/14 The Ethics of the Bodhisattva: Compassion and Skillful Means
(SoB: 64-72, “Hinayana and Mahayana,” EB: 145-151; and ER#11: “Adam Yauch”)

10/19 **Fall Break!**

10/21 Mahayana Philosophy: Emptiness, Illusion, and Non-Dualism
(EB: 154-162; SoB: 72-83, “The Bodhisattva,” read more from *Franny and Zooey*) **RC#9 due**

10/26 Compassion and Skillful Means revisited
(Finish *Franny and Zooey*) **2-page essay on *Franny & Zooey* due in class**

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The Mahayana Multi-Verse: Visions of Pure Land Paradises & Zen Monastic Life

10/28 The Mahayana Pantheon and Visions of Amitabha’s Paradise

(EB: 188-190, 197-200; and SoB: 83-92, “Other Buddhas, Other Worlds”) **RC#10 due**

11/2 Pure Land Buddhism: Faith in an “Other Power”

(SoB: 230-242, “The Pure Land”, and EB: 290-292, 318-20);

11/4 Zen Monasticism: Site of Enlightenment or Buddhist Boot Camp?

(SoB: 242-248 on “Zen”; EB: 296-300; ER#12-12a: “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk” and “Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra”) **RC#11 due**

Tantra in India and Tibet

11/9 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**

11/11 Tantric Rituals: Mudra, Mantra, Mandala and Guru Devotion

(ER#13: Introduction to *The Guru Drinks Bourbon?* and EB: 210-20) **RC#12** film: *Wheel of Time*



11/16 The Tibetan Tulku Transplanted to America... via Greyhound

(ER#14-14a: “Divine Birth & Absent Mother” & “Greyhound Bodhisattva”) **RC#13** film: *Tulku*

Re-Presenting Buddhism in America: Making the Familiar Seem Strange

11/18 Gaining Insight and Freedom from the Prison of Samsara in Alabama

(ER#15: “Inside Donaldson”) film: *The Dhamma Brothers*. **Term paper due in class**

11/23 Buddhist Modernism: Is Buddhism really compatible with science and psychology?

(ER#16: “Buddhist Modernism;” and BVSI: Chapter 9)

11/25 **Thanksgiving: give thanks and eat turkey (or tofurkey)**

11/30 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** **In-class course evaluations**

12/2 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**

12/9 Exam on **December 9th from 8:00-10:00 am** in ECTR 219

List of Sources for Electronic Readings (pdf articles) on OAKS

Please use this information in your bibliography when you cite these sources for any of your papers.

Sources listed in **bold font** are cited in multiple ER listings.

1. John Godfrey Saxe, “The Blind Men and the Elephant” in *Communications, the Transfer of Meaning* by Don Fabun (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 13.
2. Jeff Wilson, “Buddherotica,” from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree and Other Works of Buddhist Fiction*, ed. by Kate Wheeler (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), pp. 59-61.
3. “Life of Gotama Buddha” selections from *The Buddhacarita* in *Anthology of World Scriptures*, ed. by Robert E. Van Voorst (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 3rd Edition, 2000), pp. 77-82.
4. Zeff Bjerken, “The Early Life of the Buddha” based on various biographies of the Buddha, pp. 1-8.
- 4a. Charles Johnson, “Prince of the Ascetics” from his *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice* (Boston: Shambhala, 2014), pp. 131-140.
5. John Strong, “Final Days, Parinirvana, and the Nirvana of Relics” in *The Buddha: A Short Biography* (Oxford: One World, 2001), pp. 125-141.
6. Shinzen (Steven) Young, “Buddhist Meditation,” appendix of *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd edition, edited by Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson (Wadsworth, 1982), pp. 226-235.
7. Kate Wheeler, “Vinaya Vignettes: Or, Why the Buddha Had to Make Some Rules,” from *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* Vol. 3.4 (Summer 1994), pp. 84-89.
8. Keith Heller, “Memorizing the Buddha” from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 149-166.
9. Jonathan S. Walters, “Gotami’s Story,” from *Buddhism in Practice* ed. by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 113-138.
10. Kate Wheeler, “Bowing Not Scraping” in *Tricycle* Vol. 3.2 (Winter 1993), pp. 26-32.
11. Adam Yauch, “Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys,” in *Tricycle* Vol. III.4 (Summer 1994), p. 30.
12. Morinaga Soko, “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk,” from *Zen Tradition and Transition*, ed. by Kenneth Kraft (New York: Grove Press, 1988), pp. 13-29.
- 12a. Charles Johnson, “Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra” in *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice* (Boston: Shambhala, 2014), pp. 151-160.
13. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, “Introduction” to *The Guru Drinks Bourbon?* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2016), pp. 1-23.
- 14a. June Campbell, “Divine Birth and the Absent Mother” from *Traveller in Space: In Search of Female Identity in Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1996), pp. 68-96.
- 14b. Francesca Hampton, “Greyhound Bodhisattva” from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 175-196.
15. Jenny Phillips, “Inside Donaldson” from *Letters from the Dhamma Brothers: Meditation Behind Bars*, (Onalaska WA: Pariyatti Press, 2008), pp. 3-31.
16. David L. McMahan, “Buddhist Modernism,” from *Buddhism in the Modern World* ed. by David McMahan, (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 160-175.
17. Jan Nattier, “Visible and Invisible: The Politics of Representation in Buddhist America” from
18. bell hooks, “Waking Up to Racism,” from *Tricycle* Vol 4.1 (Fall 1994), pp. 42-45.
19. Charles Johnson, “Why Buddhism for Black America Now?” in *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice* (Boston: Shambhala, 2014), pp. 63-78.
20. Victor Hori, “Sweet and Sour Buddhism,” from *Tricycle* Vol 4.1 (Fall 1994), pp. 48-52.

Gaining literacy in Buddhist terms

The study of an Asian religion like Buddhism is a lot like studying a foreign language: gaining “religious literacy” occurs after acquiring a new vocabulary as well as mastering its “grammar” (the seven inter-related dimensions of the Buddhist religion). On the next page are terms that you need to know in order to do well on quizzes & exams. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments and write down their meanings.



Terms used in the academic study of religions and 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, schism
Eremitic, cenobitic, ordination, soteriological inclusiveness, ascetic misogyny, institutional androcentrism
Reification, apophatic, Sinicization, antinomian, iconoclasm, transgressive sacrality, homeopathic “cures”
Orientalism, Buddhist modernism, neo-colonialism, spiritual materialism, Buddhism & race

Terms from Buddhist traditions

Shakyamuni, Siddhartha, Gotama, Bodhisattva, Jina, Tathagata, cakravartin, shramana, kshatriya
Ashvagoshā, *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, stupa, Wheel of Life, 6 Rebirth Realms, Mt Meru, Three Defilements
Middle Way, Four Noble Truths, Three Marks of Existence, Eight-fold Path, Nirvana, Arhat
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, Ashoka, cakravartin, Nikaya, Three Councils
Merit-making rituals, merit transfer, Pratimoksha, Uposatha, Sangha expulsion, laity, Mahaprajapati

Mahayana vs. Hinayana, Arhat vs. Bodhisattva, *Perfection of Wisdom*, *Heart Sutra*, *prajna*, mantra
Bodhisattva vow, *bodhicitta*, *upaya*, *Lotus Sutra*, Six Perfections, 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,” mind-to-mind transmission

Tantra, Vajrayana, Siddha/siddhi, Guru/lama, twilight language, Lakshminakaradevi
Transforming the body/speech/mind with mudra/mantra/mandala, deity yoga, grasping the divine pride
Vajrapani, exorcism of heroin demon, Three Bodies of a Buddha, Tulku, mandala visualization
Dharma Brothers, *anapana*, S. N. Goenka, ten-day vipassana session, noble silence, “inner storm”
Elite/Evangelical/Ethnic Buddhism, Soka Gakkai, Gary Snyder, *Smokey the Bear Sutra*
Charles Johnson, bell hooks, Chinese vs. White American response to meditation

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About Me...

I grew up on the west coast in beautiful Santa Barbara California, went to Reed College in Portland Oregon (where I majored in religion), earned a MA degree in religious studies at UC Santa Barbara, before I moved to Ann Arbor Michigan to pursue degrees in Buddhist Studies (I have a PhD in B.S.!). Since graduating from college, I have spent many years living in Buddhist monasteries and traveling throughout India, especially in the Himalayas of North India. Over the past ten years I have led CofC students to Northern India to study how the religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are adapting to modernity and globalization. When not at work, I enjoy watching sports (especially CofC basketball games—go Cougs!), biking, canoeing, and hiking in the mountains, and going on long road trips in the South, in the Pacific Northwest, and in western Canada.

I joined the Department of Religious Studies at CofC in 1999, when I was hired to teach courses in Asian religions (Buddhism, Religion and Society in India and Tibet, Religions of China and Japan, Hinduism, Sacred Texts of the East, Tibetan Buddhism). But I also teach thematic courses on “Religion, Art & Culture,” “Religion and Globalization,” and “Religion and Violence.”

I believe that learning about different religions should be an intellectual adventure that engages the imagination, and I have chosen reading material and films that I hope you will find fascinating. I expect students to come prepared and make meaningful contributions to our class discussions. If you are experiencing challenges that make it difficult for you to do so, I encourage you to meet with me privately so that we can work together to develop a solution.



Introducing CofC students to the Buddhist Wheel of Life in Ladakh, North India, 2016