

**RELS 240.01 “Buddhist Traditions” (10:50-12:05 in ECTR 219, fall 2023)**

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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. 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 and scriptures, 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 acquire religious literacy by learning the key ideas, values, and practices of Buddhist traditions
- to develop close reading and interpretive skills by reading Buddhist texts, place them in their social, historical, and religious contexts, and analyze their multiple religious dimensions
- to demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft an argument in defense of a thesis

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%)

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### Four Required Texts

- 1) Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford, 2013
- 2) Donald S. Lopez, *The Story of Buddhism*, HarperOne, Reprint edition, 2009
- 3) J. D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*. Little, Brown and Co., 1961
- 4) Tim Ward, *What the Buddha Never Taught*, Changemaker Books, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition 2013

• There are also **Electronic Readings (ER#1-42)**, pdf selections from Buddhist texts, scholar’s articles and short stories on Buddhism, available on **OAKS** (<https://lms.cofc.edu/d2l/home>), which registered students can access after they login to **MyPortal** (<http://myportal.cofc.edu>) Please **download** all ER files, **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.*



### 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.

- **Attendance Policy**

This class 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 earn a failing grade. You are responsible for making up any absences; please get any notes on missed class material and lectures from classmates. One form of disruption occurs when students arrive late or leave early; please don’t leave in the middle of class unless you absolutely must!

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- **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 9/7 and 11/7 (5% each, or 10% of final grade)**

- **Midterm on 10/5 (15%) and Final Exam on 12/11 (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 2-3 pages (10% each, or 20% of final grade)**

These two essays will be based upon assigned topics and may not exceed two or three pages each. The first **three-page paper** will focus on the practice of meditation in a Thai Buddhist monastery and it is due in class on **9/21**; the second **two-page paper** will be based upon the novella *Franny and Zooey* and it is due in class on **10/24**. *Late papers are not accepted* since the essay topic will be discussed in class.

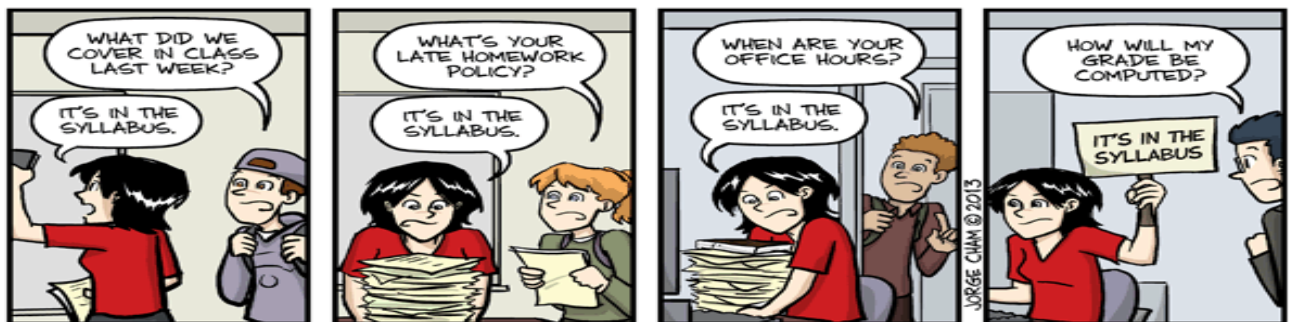
- **Creative Project due in class on 11/18 (10% of final grade)**

For this project you will creatively adapt key themes from the course into a new form of media. The project will include a creator’s statement that explains what you sought to accomplish, the sources that inform your project (a Buddhist sacred text or a key idea like *karma & rebirth*), and how you reinterpret them. *Franny & Zooey* and stories like “Buddherotica,” “Kamadhatu,” and “Greyhound Bodhisattva,” can serve as inspiration for your own creative adaptation of Buddhist stories, ideals, sacred texts, or practices.

**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 (August 31) so we can agree upon accommodations.



**IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS**

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

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### 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**

- **Continuity of Learning—Dealing with Hurricanes and Pandemics**

This course is a **100% in-person class**. Our class will meet twice a week in **ECTR 219**. Attendance is required, and roll will be taken each day. However, it is quite possible that our class will be interrupted by the inclement weather and then we will pivot to online course delivery. In fact, it is very likely that hurricanes will force us to cancel and/or make up one or more class days this semester. Please purchase your books ASAP, so you have them. If and when classes are canceled and rescheduled, pay close attention to your CofC email. If classes are suspended due to extreme weather, I will announce on OAKS and by your CofC email a detailed plan for a change of modality to ensure continuity of learning.

- **Code of conduct for this class—the renunciation of technology**

This class will be modelled on how Buddhist monks and nuns study sacred texts while at a monastery. Their texts are not consumed on computers, tablets, or cell phones, but as books printed on paper. So, leave your computers, tablets, and cell phones at home and bring the assigned reading printed on pages that you can annotate in class with pen or pencil. You should also bring a notebook to class in which you can take notes on the lectures but also jot down your thoughts and responses to our class discussion. You are encouraged to put yourself on a “digital diet” and renounce attachment to social media.

#### **How should we behave in class?**

*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.

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy and Academic Integrity**

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the University’s academic regulations. The use of Automated Writing Tools, including ChatGPT and similar artificial intelligence tools (GAI), is strictly prohibited in this course and will be considered plagiarism and a violation of Academic Integrity as outlined in the CofC Honor Code. Where I detect possible use of such tools, I will contact you and arrange to meet so you can explain your research and writing process behind the work. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are also violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. 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 required readings: **ER#1** refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> E-Reading assignment on OAKS; **BVSI** refers to *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*; **SoB** refers to *The Story of Buddhism*; **WBNT** refers to *What the Buddha Never Taught*; **RC#1** due = 1<sup>st</sup> Reflection Card



### 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?"*

8/22 What is “Buddhism?” How do we study it at a secular school? How can we empty our “cups?” (Review this syllabus, discuss the Zen parable above)

8/24 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

8/29 Comparing Versions of Buddha’s Biography: From Fruitful Dreams to the Awakened One (BVSI: Chapter 2; ER#2-4: Buddhertica; Life of Gotama Buddha; Signs of Suffering) **RC#2 due**

8/31 The Ministry of the Buddha and His First Disciples (ER#5-7: The Early Life of the Buddha; Prince of the Ascetics; Tales of Conversion) In class viewing of excerpts from film *Little Buddha* (w/ Keanu Reeves as Buddha Himself!)

9/5 The Buddha’s Final Days and Passing Away: Making His Absence Present (ER#8-9: Final Days; The ‘Death’ and Parinirvana of the Buddha) **RC#3 due**

### Teachings of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma

9/7 The Buddhist Cosmos: The Wheel of Life, Death, and Rebirth (BVSI: Chapter 3; ER#10: Viewing the Cosmos; The Evolution of the World)

**Quiz#1 in class on the life and death of the Buddha**

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9/12 The Buddha’s First Sermon on the Middle Way  
(BVSI: Chapter 4; WBNT: Chapter 1; ER#11: Realizing the Four Noble Truths; The Loss and Preservation of the Dharma) **RC#4 due**

9/14 Missing Person Report: The Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self and Nirvana  
(WBNT: Chapter 2; ER#12: Suffering, Impermanence, No-Self; The Cessation of Suffering)

**Meditation: Putting the Dharma into Practice**

9/19 Two Types of Meditation: The Practice of Calm and Insight  
(BVSI: Chapter 7; ER#13-14: Buddhist Meditation; Mindfulness) **RC#5 due**  
Film clips on meditation to view in class: *Footprints of the Buddha*

9/21 Embodying the Dharma, Taming the Monkey Mind, and Samadhi Suicide  
(WBNT: Chapters 3-4 & end of Chapter 9, pp. 164-179)  
**3-page essay due in class:** *What the Buddha Never Taught* about practicing meditation

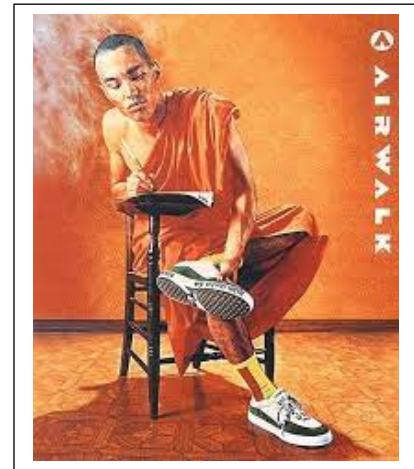
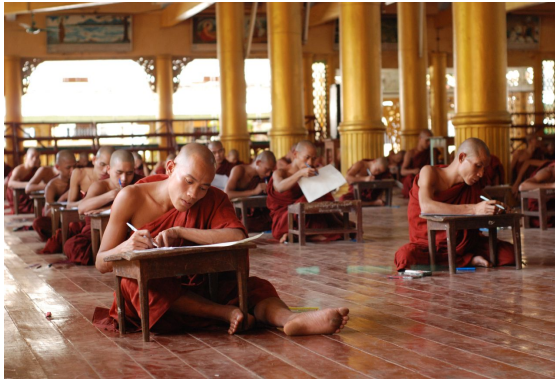
**The Buddhist Monastic Community: Bodily Discipline, Social Discipline**

9/26 Buddhist Councils and Economics: Making Merit and Money for the Sangha  
(WBNT: Chapters 7-8 & 10; ER#15: Making and Sharing Merit) **RC#6 due**  
At home, watch video: “The Buddha as Businessman”

9/28 The Monastic Code: Ritualized Rules and Regular Transgressions  
(WBNT: Chapter 5; ER#16-18: Vinaya Vignettes; Memorizing the Buddha; Regulation of the Sangha)

10/3 Monks and Nuns: Buddhist Attitudes towards Gender and Sexuality  
(SoB pp. 151-165; ER#19-21: Bowing Not Scraping; Gotami’s Story; The Acceptance of Women into the Order) **RC#7 due**

10/5 **Midterm Exam in Class** (review Study Guide)



**Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy and Practice**

10/10 Retracing the Footsteps of the Buddha, Looking Ahead to Mahayana Buddhism  
(BVSI: Chapter 5; ER#22: The Bodhisattva Path; begin reading *Franny and Zooey*) **RC#8 due**

10/12 The Ethics of the Bodhisattva: Compassion and Skillful Means  
(SoB: 64-72; ER#23-24: Some Mahayana Perspectives; Adam Yauch)

10/17 **Fall Break!**

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10/19 Mahayana Philosophy: Emptiness, Illusion, and Non-Dualism  
(SoB: 72-83; ER#25: The Heart Sutra & Nagarjuna’s Verses; read more *Franny and Zooey*) **RC#9**

10/24 Compassion and Skillful Means revisited  
(Finish *Franny and Zooey*) **2-page essay on *Franny & Zooey* due in class**

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

10/26 The Mahayana Pantheon and Visions of Amitabha’s Paradise  
(SoB: 83-92; ER#26: Life Span of the Tathagata; Savior Buddhas and Pure Lands) **RC#10 due**

10/30 Pure Land Buddhism: Faith in an “Other Power”  
(SoB: 230-242)

11/2 Zen Monasticism: Site of Enlightenment or Buddhist Boot Camp?  
(SoB: 242-248; ER#27-29: My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk; Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra; and Ordination at Pao-Hua Shan) **RC#11 due**

**Tantra in India and Tibet**

11/7 The Magic of Liberation: “Crazy” Saints and Tantric Iconoclasm  
(SoB: 213-230; ER#30: Tantric Buddhism, or the Vajrayana; Milarepa’s Quest)  
**Quiz #2 on Mahayana Buddhism**

11/9 Tantric Rituals: Mudra, Mantra, Mandala and Guru Devotion  
(ER#31-32: *The Guru Drinks Bourbon?* and Offering the World Mandala to One’s Guru) **RC#12**  
Film clips in class: *Wheel of Time*

11/14 The Tibetan Tulku Transplanted to America... via Greyhound  
(ER#33-34: Divine Birth & Absent Mother; Greyhound Bodhisattva) **RC#13** film: *Tulku*

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

11/16 Gaining Insight and Freedom from the Prison of Samsara in Alabama  
(ER#35: Inside Donaldson) film in class: *The Dhamma Brothers*. **Creative Project Due in class**

11/21 Buddhist Modernism: Is Buddhism really compatible with science and psychology?  
(ER#36: Buddhist Modernism; BVSI: Chapter 9)

11/23 **Thanksgiving: give thanks and eat turkey (or tofurkey)**

11/28 Buddhism in America: Asian Immigrants and the Buddhist Syncretism of Smokey the Bear’s Sutra  
(ER#37-39: Visible and Invisible; Buddhism: The West; The Pacific Buddha’s Wild Practice )  
**RC#14 In-class course evaluations**

11/30 Dharma, Diversity & Race: Being Buddhist and a Minority in America  
(ER#40-42: Waking Up to Racism; Why Buddhism for Black America Now? Sweet and Sour Buddhism) **RC#15**

**12/11 Exam on December 11 from 1:00-3:00 pm in ECTR 219**

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**List of Sources for E-Readings on OAKS**--Please use this information when you cite these sources for any of your papers. Sources listed below in **bold font** are cited in multiple ER assignments.

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, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2000), pp. 77-82.
4. John Strong, “Signs of Suffering,” “The Great Departure: Two Versions” in *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2008), pp. 9-23.
5. Zeff Bjerken, “The Early Life of the Buddha” based on various biographies of the Buddha, pp. 1-8.
6. 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.
7. J. Strong, “Tales of Conversion” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 56-60.
8. J. Strong, “Final Days, Parinirvana, and the Nirvana of Relics” in *The Buddha: A Short Biography* (Oxford: One World, 2001), pp. 125-141.
9. J. Strong, “The ‘Death’ and Parinirvana of the Buddha” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 45-49.
10. J. Strong, “Viewing the Cosmos” and “The Evolution of the World” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 36-41; 110-113.
11. J. Strong, “Realizing the Four Noble Truths” and “The Loss and Preservation of the Dharma” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 42-45; 98-99.
12. J. Strong, “Suffering, Impermanence and No-Self” and “The Cessation of Suffering” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 99-104; 114-118.
13. Shinzen (Steven) Young, “Buddhist Meditation,” appendix of *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson (Wadsworth, 1982), pp. 226-235.
14. J. Strong, “Mindfulness” and “How to Meditate” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 128-136.
15. J. Strong, “Making and Sharing Merit” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 126-128.
16. 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.
17. Keith Heller, “Memorizing the Buddha” from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 149-166.
18. John Strong, “Regulation of the Sangha” and “Walls Make Good Neighbors” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 78-83, 88-91.
19. Kate Wheeler, “Bowing Not Scraping” in *Tricycle* Vol. 3.2 (Winter 1993), pp. 26-32.
20. Jonathan S. Walters, “Gotami’s Story,” from *Buddhism in Practice* ed. by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. pp. 113-138.
21. J. Strong, “The Acceptance of Women into the Order” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 63-70.
22. J. Strong, “The Bodhisattva Path” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 173-181.
23. J. Strong, “The Dharma: Some Mahayana Perspectives” in *Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 145-150.
24. Adam Yauch, “Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys,” in *Tricycle* Vol. III.4 (Summer 1994), p. 30.
25. J. Strong, “The Heart Sutra” and “Nagarjuna: Verses on the Noble Truths and on Nirvana” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 154-55; 157-162.
26. J. Strong, “Life Span of Tathagata” and “Savior Buddhas & Pure Lands” in *Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 188-190; 197-200.
27. 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.
28. Charles Johnson, “Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra” in *Taming the Ox*, pp. 151-160.
29. J. Strong, “Ordination at Pao-Hua Shan” in *The Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 296-300.
30. J. Strong, “Tantric Buddhism, or the Vajrayana” and “Milarepa’s Quest” in *Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 206-210; 271-277.
31. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, “Introduction” to *The Guru Drinks Bourbon?* Boulder: Shambhala Pub. 2016, pp. 1-23.
32. J. Strong, “Offering World-Mandala to One’s Guru” in *Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 210-215.
33. 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.
34. Francesca Hampton, “Greyhound Bodhisattva” from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 175-196.
35. Jenny Phillips, “Inside Donaldson” from *Letters from the Dhamma Brothers: Meditation Behind Bars*, (Onalaska WA: Pariyatti Press, 2008), pp. 3-31.
36. David L. McMahan, “Buddhist Modernism,” in *Buddhism in the Modern World*. New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 160-175.
37. Jan Nattier, “Visible and Invisible: The Politics of Representation in Buddhist America” from
38. J. Strong, “Buddhism: The West” and “Smokey the Bear Sutra” in *Experience of Buddhism*, pp. 341-344.
39. Charles R. Strain, “The Pacific Buddha’s Wild Practice: Gary Snyder’s Environmental Ethic” in *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship* ed. by Duncan Ryuken Williams and Christopher S. Queen, pp. 143-161.
40. bell hooks, “Waking Up to Racism,” from *Tricycle* Vol 4.1 (Fall 1994), pp. 42-45.
41. Charles Johnson, “Why Buddhism for Black America Now?” in *Taming the Ox*, pp. 63-78.
42. Victor Hori, “Sweet and Sour Buddhism,” from *Tricycle* Vol 4.1 (Fall 1994), pp. 48-52.





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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 last dozen 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**