

9-2002

## RELS 232.01: Introduction to Buddhism

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# INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

## Course Objectives:

1. To gain an understanding of the Buddhist tradition: its 2,500-year history, world-view, teachings, forms of practice, and its place in the contemporary world.
2. To explore our own personal views about the place of religion and philosophy in human life by contrasting those views with what we find in our encounter with the Buddhist tradition.

## Some Assumptions and Intentions:

1. Religions are *not* all the same. Nor do all religions worship the same God, each in its own way.
2. Religious practices and perspectives are the cumulative effort of various peoples to establish a deeper connection with the reality in which they live.
3. There are many reasons to study the religious beliefs and practices of alien cultures. We do this:
  - to understand better the others with whom we share this planet
  - to understand better ourselves and our own views
  - to gain a broader and deeper appreciation of the richness of human experience.
4. **My job as instructor** is to *articulate*, not to *advocate*—it is to help you see and hear what Buddhism is about, not to convince you that Buddhists are right or that you should become a Buddhist. I will do my best to give you a clear understanding of what Buddhists believe and do, leaving it to you to decide what relevance that has to you personally. My approach will be both sympathetic and critical. I will help you understand why Buddhists see the world in the way they do by presenting Buddhism in its best light, but I will also point out where Buddhist beliefs and practices run contrary to prevailing views and values in our culture. While I am myself a practicing Buddhist, I have no expectation that you will become a Buddhist, only that you will seek to understand what it is like to view the world as a Buddhist.
5. **Your job as student** is to be *receptive* in order to *understand*—it is to approach your encounter with this alien tradition with an open mind, suspending, for the moment, any tendency you might find in yourself to actively resist or dismiss the Buddhist view of the world—or, alternatively, to adopt that view prematurely as your own in a superficial and unreflected way. To understand this tradition, you must be willing to engage in a dialogue with it, which means considering its views and your own both sympathetically and critically. To do this well you must *study*, which is to say that you will need to read actively and carefully, you will need to relate what you've read to what you hear in the lectures, and finally you will need to synthesize and articulate all of that in the exam essays. If you do this conscientiously, I can promise that you will learn a great deal from this course.

## INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

**Instructor:** Alan Sponberg <sponberg@selway.umt.edu>  
Office: Rm. 150, Liberal Arts Bldg.  
Hours: MF 1:10-2:00  
W 10:30-11:30, or by apt. (ph: 243-2803)

**Course Website:** <http://www.cas.umt.edu/religious/Medbud>

**Course Requirements:** Attendance, reading, 3 mid-term essay-question exams (Sept. 27, Oct. 16, and Nov. 6—each counting for 22% of the course grade), and a *comprehensive* essay-question final exam (34% of course grade). Note also that the nature of this course makes it very important that you attend class regularly and that you keep up with the assigned readings (60-75 pg/week), a number of which may need to be read more than once due to the unfamiliar nature the subject. Please do *not* take the course if you will be unable to meet these requirements. Students taking the course on a **pass/no-pass basis** will need a C-average (>70%) to receive credit

**Policy on Make-up Exams:** Make-up exams will be given only for unavoidable and excusable absence (illness, etc.—*not* over-sleeping, late return from week-end trip, weddings, reunions, or alien abduction, etc.), and only if you contact me *prior* to the scheduled time of the exam. My voice mail is available 24-hours/day at 406-243-2803. With prior approval, the usual make-up assignment for a missed exam will be a one-half hour oral exam in my office.

**The final exam** for this course is scheduled in the *Course Schedule* for **Wed., Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>, (8:00-10:00am)**. Please understand clearly that you cannot pass the course if you are not present for the final exam, which means you must take special care to make your holiday travel plans accordingly. If you neglect to make your reservations early enough to get a flight that allows you to take the final exam., it will not be possible to schedule a make-up exam.

**Attendance** is a requirement for this course. To do well on the exams you must attend lectures. In a large class like this it is very disruptive to have people coming and going throughout the class period. As a courtesy to me and your classmates, I will expect you to **arrive on time and stay until the class is over**. If you are unable to do this, it would be best to miss the class entirely or not to take the course to begin with.

**Books to purchase at the Bookstore** (Library copies are on reserve at Mansfield Library)

Kevin Trainor (ed.): *Buddhism* (Oxford UP)

Sangharakshita: *Guide to the Buddhist Path* (Windhorse)

Faculty Pack of Additional Readings: available from UC Bookstore (ask if none are on the shelf)

**Optional Course on Buddhist Meditation:** Students who wish to may also enroll concurrently in RS 233: Traditions of Buddhist Meditation (3 cr. hr.); note that RELS 233 is not a requirement for taking this course (RS 232), though it will definitely add to your experience and understanding of Buddhism.

RS 233. 01: Monday 3:10-5:00 GBB L04

RS 233.02: Wednesday 3:10-5:00 GBB L04

RS 233 is open only to students currently or previously enrolled in this course (RS 232).

RS 233 will also be offered Spring Semester, 2003—one section only: Wednesday, 3:10-5:00

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## Schedule of Readings

Readings should be *completed* by the date indicated.  
\*Asterisk indicates item is in the FacPac

### I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1 Sept. 4 *Buddhism*: "Introduction," pp.6-9—Note the **Glossary** at the end of the book.  
\*"Introduction" to *Entering the Stream*, ed. by Samuel Bercholz and & Sherab Chodzin Kohn  
\*"Basic Teachings" and "The Buddha's Teaching" by Bhikkhu Bodhi from *Entering the Stream*
- 2 Sept. 6 *Buddhism*: "Ancient India—Belief and Society," pp.12-21  
\*\*"Antecedents to Buddhism"
- 3 Sept. 9 *Guide*: "Preface" & "The Approach to Buddhism" pp. 9-22  
\*\*"Approaches to Buddhism" & "Essence of the Dharma"

### II. THE BUDDHA

- 4 Sept. 11 *Buddhism*: "The Career of Siddhartha" pp. 22-41  
*Guide*: "Who is the Buddha?" pp.
- 5 Sept. 13 \**Life of the Buddha*, "Birth and Early Years" & "Struggle for Enlightenment"
- 6 Sept. 16 Re-read the last three pages of the previous assignment  
\*"The Mission and the Death"  
\*"Everyone has a View"
- 7 Sept. 18 *Buddhism*: "Depicting the Buddha" pp. 42-45  
*Guide*: "Archetypal Symbolism in the Biography of the Buddha" pp. 33-44

### III. BASIC TEACHINGS

- 8 Sept. 20 *Buddhism*: "The Human Condition" pp. 58-79  
\*"Where Buddhism Begins" & "Problem of Desire" & "Desire for the Eternal"
- 9 Sept. 23 *Guide*: "The Goal of Nirvana" & "Enlightenment" pp. 193-196  
\*"Selected Texts: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma"  
Video Documentary: "Footprint of the Buddha" VT 07430----Pt. 1  
**Last Day to Drop** with refund
- 10 Sept. 25 *Guide*: "Word of the Buddha" & "Wrong View, Right View, Perfect View" pp. 65-69  
\*"Words of the Buddha" and "The Metta Sutta"  
Video Documentary: "Footprint of the Buddha" VT 07430—Pt. 2

#### Sept. 27 **First Exam**

- 11 Sept. 30 Re-read *Buddhism*: pp. 70-71  
\*"Moral Conduct, Concentration, and Wisdom"
- 12 Oct. 2 *Buddhism*: "Morality" pp. 72-73  
*Guide*: from "Criterion of Ethics" through "Awareness" pp. 127-141  
\*"Buddhist Precepts"—Diagram

- 13 Oct. 4 *Buddhism*: “Meditation” pp. 74-75 & “Mental Cultivation” pp. 80-89  
\*“Why Meditate” & “The Practice of Recollection”
- 14 Oct. 7 *Guide*: from “A System of Meditation” through “The Dhyanas” pp. 145-167
- 15 Oct. 9 *Buddhism*: “Wisdom” pp. 76-79; Re-read “The Six Realms” pp. 62-63  
*Guide*: from “The Wheel” through “The Twelve Links” pp. 71-84 (bring book to class)  
\*“Vicious Circle of Samsara & The Spiral Path”—Diagram (bring to class)
- 16 Oct. 11 *Guide*: “Stopping the Wheel” & “The Spiral Path” pp. 85-95  
\*“Vicious Circle of Samsara & The Spiral Path”—Diagram (bring to class)
- 17 Oct. 14 *Guide*: “Three Characteristics of Existence” pp. 177-182  
Review *Guide*, pp. 82b-83a on “Who or what is reborn?”  
\*Re-read from 9/4 assignment “Buddha’s Teaching” p. 63: “Continuity through the sequence. . . .”  
\*“Freud and Dr. Buddha”  
**Last Day to Drop** without refund.

Oct. 16 **Second Exam**

#### IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM—

##### A. “HINAYANA” & MAHAYANA

- 18 Oct. 18 *Buddhism*: “The New Community” pp. 46-55 & “The Buddhist Community” pp. 90-105
- 19 Oct. 21 *Buddhism*: “Buddhism in Practice” & “Theravada Buddhism” pp. 106-131
- 20 Oct. 23 *Buddhism*: “Assembling the Dharma” pp. 176-196  
\*“Saramati’s *Entering into the Great Vehicle*”
- 21 Oct. 25 *Buddhism*: “Mahayana Buddhism” pp. 132-143  
*Guide*, “The Bodhicitta” & “How the Bodhicitta Arises” & “Enlightenment, Eternity & Time” pp. 183-192  
\*“Flawless Purity: A Dialogue with the Laywomen Gangottara”—read carefully the endnote about nirvana
- 22 Oct. 28 *Buddhism*: “Mahayana Scriptures” pp. 196-207  
\**Lotus Sutra*: Rain of the Dharma and Skilled Physician Parables  
\**Tathagata-garbha Sutra*
- 23 Oct. 30 \* “Teachings of the Great Vehicle”  
*Buddhism*: re-read “Emptiness” pp. 140-141  
\*“*Heart Sutra* & Commentary”
- 24 Nov. 1 \* “Prajnaparamita—The Book that Became a Goddess”  
*Buddhism*: “Visualization” pp. 86-87  
\* “The Development of Buddhist Visualization”  
Videos: Visualization and Mandalas—VT 5663-5664
- 25 Nov. 4 \* “Entering the Mandala”  
\* “Mandala of the Five Buddhas” (diagram)  
*Guide*, “The Symbolism of the Five Buddhas” & “Five Wisdoms” pp. 45-61

Nov. 6 **Third Exam**

## B. VAJRAYANA

- 26 Nov. 8 *Buddhism*: “Tantra—The Diamond Vehicle” pp. 162-173 & “Tantric Writings” pp. 208-211  
\*“Tantric Teachings” and “The Tempress and the Monk”  
\*“The Tantric Approach”
- Nov. 11 **Veteran's Day Holiday—no class**
- 27 Nov. 13 \*“Tantra” (Part 1: pp. 219-256---book, not FacPac, page numbers)
- 28 Nov. 15 \*“Tantra” (Part 2: pp. 256-279---book, not FacPac, page numbers)
- 29 Nov. 18 \*“Vajrasattva—Prince of Purity”  
\*“Death and Dying in Tibetan Buddhism” (Part 1: pp. 283-293—book, not FacPac, page numbers)  
In-class Video: “Tibetan Book of the Dead” VT 6095
- 30 Nov. 20 \*“Death and Dying in Tibetan Buddhism” (Part 2: pp. 293-309—book, not FacPac, page numbers)  
In-class Video: “Tibetan Book of the Dead” VT 6095

## C. BUDDHISM TODAY

- 31 Nov. 22 *Buddhism*: Re-read: “Theravada Buddhism” pp. 120-131  
Read: “Pure Lands” & “Chan and Zen” pp. 144-161  
In-class Video: “Land of the Disappearing Buddha” VT 7436
- 32 Nov. 25 *Buddhism*: “The Expanding Community” pp. 214-221  
\*“The Great Conversion—Dr. Ambedkar and the Buddhist Revival”  
\*“Sangharakshita: Adaptation”
- Nov. 27-29 \*\*\*\*\***Thanksgiving Holiday**\*\*\*\*\*
- 33 Dec. 2 *Buddhism*: “Women in Modern Buddhism” pp. 222-225  
\*“Women in Buddhism”
- 34 Dec. 4 \*“Spirituality, Sexuality and Gender in Buddhism”
- 35 Dec. 6 *Buddhism*: “Government and Politics” pp. 236-237"  
Re-read: “Lamas and tulkus” pp. 170-171  
\*“The Twentieth Century” (Part 1, pp. 158-169—book, not FacPac, page numbers)  
In-class Video: “The Dalai Lama—Soul of Tibet” VT 11281
- 36 Dec. 9 \*“The Twentieth Century” (Part 1, pp. 169-187)—book, not FacPac, page numbers)  
\*“Faces of the Dalai Lama”
- 37 Dec.11 \*“Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement”
- 38 Dec. 13 \* “Nhat Hanh: Engagement”  
\* “The Edicts of Ashoka”  
\* Gary Snyder: “Buddhism & Planetary Culture”

**FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM:** Wednesday, **December 18**, 8:00am-10am (meet in our usual classroom)