HISTORY 438: BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY  
(Also cross-listed as LANGASIA 438 and RELIG ST 438)  
Spring 2005, 3 credits  
Tuesday and Thursday 11:00-12:15, Rm. 1651 the George Mosse Humanities Building  
Thongchai Winichakul

For more than a thousand years, the mainland Southeast Asia (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand today) have been the homeland of Theravada Buddhism, an “order” of Buddhism distinctive from the Mahayana and the Tibetan ones. Despite Westernization and secularization since the nineteenth century, this religious tradition remains strong among nearly 150 million people today. We cannot understand the peoples and cultures of the region without understanding their strong religious tradition.

The course is NOT for a study of the philosophy or tenets of Theravada Buddhism. Rather, it is a cultural history focusing on Theravada Buddhism as a “civic” religion and its dynamism in the cultures of those countries. The main subjects of the course are: 1) a history of Theravada Buddhism and its coming to Southeast Asia; 2) basic tenets of Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism as a civic religion in popular culture; 3) Buddhist political culture in history; 4) the transition during the colonial and “modernizing” period in the 19th century; 5) Buddhisms in the age of modern nations and economies. The focus is on Thailand and Burma, the major parts of the region’s history and religious developments.

Class: Two 75-min lectures weekly  
Office Hours: Tuesday 10-11 and 2:30-3:30, or by appointment. 5211 Humanities, 263-8931  
<twinchai@wisc.edu>  
Exams: Three take-home exams (30-30-40). See exam schedule in this syllabus.

Required Textbooks: (available at the University Book Store)  
- The History 438 Reader - available at the Humanities Copy Center, Rm. 1650 Humanities.

All weekly readings are either in the required books or in the History 438 Reader or available on-line. All textbooks and the Reader are also available in the Reserves. (Some readings this year can also be found in the Readers of History 438 of previous years – check in the Reserves as well.) Many journal articles (marked @) are accessible on-line via the library databases, therefore NOT included in the Reader.
INTRODUCTIONS

WEEK 1 (Jan 18) The course: objectives, exams, assignments, etc.
(Jan 20) Intro to Buddhism (video: “Buddhism: Footprint of the Buddha”)

THE BUDDHA AND EARLY HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

WEEK 2 (Jan 25) The Buddha: his biography or the mythical story of his life
- Armstrong, Karen. *Buddha*. (The whole book should be finished by this week)
(Jan 27) Two major “orders” (*nikaya*): Mahayana & Hinayana (Theravada)

BUDDHISM: BASIC TENETS AND IDEAS

WEEK 3 (Feb 1) The Four Noble Truth, Nirvana
- Armstrong, Karen. *Buddha*. 98-121, and in various places about Nibbana
(Feb 3) Karma and merit
- Keown, Damien. *Buddhism*. 31-34, 39-45, 102-115

THE SANGHA (MONASTIC ORDER)

WEEK 4 (Feb 8) Monks and monastic life, the *sangha* organization
(Feb 10) Female monks and Buddhist “nuns”

BUDDHISM AS A CIVIC RELIGION IN POPULAR CULTURE

WEEK 5 (Feb 15) Cosmology and social hierarchy
****First take-home exam questions. Due in one week.****
(Feb 17) “Syncretic Buddhism”, monks and magic
(video: Cambodians in America)
- Keyes, Charles. *Golden Peninsula*.113-123
- Swearer, Donald. *Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*. (Chapter 1). 5-61.
BUDDHISM COMING TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

WEEK 6  (Feb 22)  Intro to Southeast Asia, and its history in brief

  ****First take-home exam dues Feb 22, deadline, 12:30 p.m.****


(WEB 24) Mahayana and Theravada to Southeast Asia

WEEK 7  (Mar 1)  Theravada Buddhism to Southeast Asia (cont.)

SACRED SOCIETY, MORALIST POLITY

(MAR 3)  Human World in Cosmographic Context

WEEK 8  (Mar 8)  Buddhist Polity (1): the ideology -- merit and power
- Swearer, Donald. *Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*. pp. 64-95.

  (MAR 10)  Buddhist Polity (2): kingship and state (13th-18th c.)
- Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 113-118.
- Swearer, Donald and Sommai Premchit, “The Relation Between the Religious and Political Orders in Northern Thailand (14th-16th centuries)” in *Religion and Legitimation of Power* 20-33.

WEEK 9  (Mar 15)  Buddhism and legitimation of power
- Schober, Juliane “A Tooth Relic and the Legitimation of Power” in *The Life of Buddhism* 45-59

  (MAR 17)  Buddhist millennialism and peasant rebellion

  ****Second take-home exam questions given. Due Mar 31.****
WEEK 10  (Mar 22, 24)  Spring Recess

COLONIAL TRANSITION (19th to early 20th c.)

WEEK 11  (Mar 29)  Colonialism and politicized Buddhism in the 19th c. Burma
                (Mar 31)  Buddhist anti-colonial movement in Burma (late 19th -early 20th c.)
- Keyes, Charles.  Golden Peninsula.  259-299
- Sarkisyanz, E.  Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution.  110-179
  ****Second take-home exam dues, deadline 12:30 p.m.****

WEEK 12  (Apr 5)  No class. TW’s important business
                (Apr 7)  Modern Buddhism in the 19th c. Siam
- Excerpts from Alabaster, Henry.  The Modern Buddhist, Being the Views of a Siamese
  Minister of State on His Own and Other Religions (c. 1870).
- Reynolds, Craig J.  “Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History, With Special Reference to
  Nineteenth Century Culture Change,”  Journal of Asian Studies 35 (1976): 203-220 @

WEEK 13  (Apr 12)  The sangha and nation-building in Siam (late 19th to early 20th c.)
- Kirsch, A. Thomas.  “Modernizing Implications of Nineteenth Century Reforms in Thai
  Sangha,” in Religion and Legitimation of Power.  52-65
- Keyes, Charles F.  “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,”  Journal of Asian Studies,
  30 (1971): 551-568 @

BUDDHISM AND MODERN NATIONS

(Apr 14)  Modernization and the changing roles of monks
- Swearer, Donald.  Buddhist World of Southeast Asia, 107-146.
- Charles Keyes, “Moral Authority of the Sangha and Modernity in Thailand: Sexual Scandals,
  Sectarian Dissent, and Political Resistance”, in Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New
  Millennium, 1999, pp.121-47.

WEEK 14  (Apr 19)  Bourgeoisie and new sects in Thailand
  (Apr 1990): 395-408 @
- Zehner, Edwin.  “Reform Symbolism of a Thai Middle-Class Sect: the Growth and Appeal of
  the Thammakai Movement”,  Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 21:2 (1990): 402-426.  @
- Taylor, J.L.  “Buddhist Revitalization, Modernization, and Social change in Contemporary
(Apr 21)  The radical Buddhists
- Donald Swearer.  “Sulak Sivaraksa’s Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society”,  Crossroad, 6, 2
WEEK 15  (Apr 26)  Buddhism and tragic revolution in Cambodia
- Keyes, Charles F. “Communist Revolution and the Buddhist Past in Cambodia” in Asian
  Visions of Authority: Religion and Modern States of East and Southeast Asia. 43-73.
  (Apr 28)  Buddhism in Burma under the military regimes and in Laos after revolution
- Stuart-Fox, Martin and Rod Bucknell. “ Politicization of Buddhist Sangha in Laos” Journal of

WEEK 16  (May 3)  Final remarks and Final take-home exam questions.
  (May 5)  (If necessary).

Final take-home exam: instructions to be given in the May 3 class.
(There is NO sit-in exam as scheduled in the Timetable.)
MATERIALS IN THE READER FOR HISTORY 438/ SPRING 2005
(Cross-listed with Langasia 438 and Relig St 438)

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7
- Than Tun, “Religion in Burma 1000-1300” in Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma, ed. Paul Strachan. 23-45

Week 8

Week 9

Week 11

Week 12
- Excerpts from Alabaster, Henry, trans. The Modern Buddhist, Being the Views of a Siamese Minister of State on His Own and Other Religions, London, 1870. pp. 8-11, 24-29, 34-37, 82-85, 90-91.

Week 13

Week 14

Week 15

A Document for exam
- City Slave (pseu.) “The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves.” Unpublished translated paper.