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 Theravada Buddhism. Rather, it is a cultural history of the Theravada Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. 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) Buddhism in the age of modern nations and economies. The focus is on Thailand and Burma, the major Buddhist countries in the region.

**Class:** Two 75-min lectures weekly

**Office Hours:** Wed 1:30-3:30, or by appointment. 5211 Humanities, 263-8931

<twinicha@wisc.edu>

**Exams:** Three take-home exams (30-30-40).

- **First take home:** question will be given Feb 19. Due Feb 25, 12:30 PM.
- **Second take home:** question will be given Mar 27. Due Apr 3, 12:30 PM.
- **Final take-home:** questions and instructions will be given in class May 6 or May 8.

**Required Textbooks:** (available at the University Book Store)


All weekly readings are either 1) in the required textbooks, or 2) in the E-Reserves for this class (accessible via “My UW”), or 3) are journal articles (marked @ in this syllabus) that can be accessible on-line via the library journal databases.

All textbooks are also available in the Reserves. (Some readings can also be found in the Readers of History 438 of previous years – check in the Reserves as well.)
INTRODUCTIONS

WEEK 1 (Jan 22) The course: objectives, exams, assignments, etc.
   (Jan 24) Intro to Buddhism (video: “Buddhism: Footprint of the Buddha”)

THE BUDDHA AND EARLY HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

WEEK 2 (Jan 29) The Buddha: his biography or the mythical story of his life
   - Armstrong, Karen. Buddha. (The whole book should be finished by this week)
   (Jan 31) Two major “orders” (nikaya): Mahayana & Hinayana (Theravada)
   - Reynolds, Frank E. and Regina T. Clifford, “Theravada Buddhism”, in Encyclopedia of
   - Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 59-72.

BUDDHISM: BASIC TENETS AND IDEAS

WEEK 3 (Feb 5) The Four Noble Truth, Nirvana
   - Armstrong, Karen. Buddha. 98-121, and in various places about Nibbana
   (Feb 7) Karma and merit
   - Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 31-34, 39-45, 102-115
     in Buddhist Ethics, ed. Russell Sizemore and Donald Swearer, 124-143.
   - Keyes, Charles, “Merit Transference in the Kammic Theory of Popular Theravada Buddhism,”

THE SANGHA (MONASTIC ORDER)

WEEK 4 (Feb 12) Monks and monastic life, the sangha organization
   - Harvey, Peter. An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics, 88-97, 203-206.
   - Tambiah, S.J. The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets. 53-77.
   (Feb 14) Female monks and Buddhist “nuns”

BUDDHISM AS A CIVIC RELIGION IN POPULAR CULTURE

WEEK 5 (Feb 19) Cosmology and social hierarchy
   (Feb 21) “Syncretic Buddhism”, monks and magic
   (video: Cambodians in America)
     (1977): 241-266 @
   - Keyes, Charles. Golden Peninsula.113-123
   - Swearer, Donald. Buddhist World of Southeast Asia. (Chapter 1). 5-61.
     Ethnologist, 14:4 (Nov. 1987): 693-711 @
BUDDHISM COMING TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

WEEK 6 (Feb 26) Intro to Southeast Asia, and its history in brief
- (Feb 28) Mahayana and Theravada to Southeast Asia
  - Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 73-87.

WEEK 7 (Mar 4) Theravada Buddhism to Southeast Asia (cont.)
- Than Tun, “Religion in Burma 1000-1300” in Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma, ed. Paul Strachan. 23-45

SACRED SOCIETY, MORAL POLITY
(Mar 6) Human World in Cosmographic Context
- Donald Swearer, “The Northern Thai City as a Sacred Center” in City as Sacred Center, ed. Diana L. Eck, 88-113.

WEEK 8 (Mar 11) Buddhist Polity (1): the ideology -- merit and power
- Swearer, Donald. Buddhist World of Southeast Asia. pp. 64-95.
- (Mar 13) 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 Spring Recess

WEEK 10 (Mar 25) Buddhism and legitimation of power
- Schober, Juliane “A Tooth Relic and the Legitimation of Power” in The Life of Buddhism 45-59
  (Mar 27) Buddhist millennialism and peasant rebellion
BUDDHISM UNDER COLONIALISM (19th to early 20th c.)

WEEK 11 (Apr 1) Colonialism and politicized Buddhism in the 19th c. Burma
(Apr 3) Buddhist anti-colonial movement in Burma (late 19th -early 20th c.)
- Sarkisyanz, E. *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*. 110-179

WEEK 12 (Apr 8) 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 @
(Apr 11) The sangha and nation-building in Siam (late 19th to early 20th c.)

BUDDHISM AND MODERN NATIONS

WEEK 13 (Apr 15) Modernization and the changing roles of monks
(Apr 17) Modernization and the changing roles of monks
- Swearer, Donald. *Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*, 107-146.

WEEK 14 (Apr 22) Bourgeoisie and new sects in Thailand
(Apr 24) The radical Buddhists

WEEK 15 (Apr 29, May 1) Buddhism under the military regimes in Burma
- Schober, Juliane “A Tooth Relic and the Legitimation of Power” in *The Life of Buddhism* 45-59
WEEK 16 (May 6) Buddhism and tragic revolution in Cambodia
Buddhism in Laos after revolution

(May 8) Final remarks