Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem

Buddhist Theories & Practices for Living
Lectures Mondays & Wednesdays 4-5:15 PM, Humanities Bldg 1651
Professor Anne Hansen, Teaching Assistant Tyler A. Lehrer

Taking Refuge in the Buddha, Dharma & Sangha is a practice that crosses the diverse times and spaces that constitutes the Buddhist world.
AN OVERVIEW. This course introduces Buddhism across Asia, from India at the time of the Buddha to 1960s US and Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Our starting point will be the central Buddhist ritual of taking refuge in the “Triple Gem”: the Buddha, his teachings known as the Dharma, and the Sangha, communities and individuals who call themselves Buddhist. We’ll examine and discuss interpretations of the Triple Gem through a variety of primary sources, from sermons, stories and Beat poetry to Buddhist art in the Chazen Museum.

OUR APPROACH. Our course uses a “history of religion” approach, which means that we will examine actual Buddhist communities and individuals and what they have taught, said, chanted, written, practiced, painted, dreamed, built, organized, prayed, preached, and found meaningful; their assumptions about the world, what is worth knowing, what is obvious, and what is unknowable; how they have viewed and formed families and other relationships; their ethical values; their forms and genres of expression. Historians of religion want to do more than study how people in the past have lived; rather, they want to get inside their heads, see through their eyes, and learn how they understood what it means to be human.

“To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one’s mind — this is the teaching of the buddhas.”

-DHAMMAPADA

In order to achieve this goal of “seeing through Buddhist eyes,” we will adopt one of the most ubiquitous Buddhist practices and categories of knowledge to organize our inquiry into Buddhism: taking refuge in the Triple Gem. Our study will consider the Triple Gem in a number of different Buddhist historical and cultural moments: early Buddhism in ancient India; the flow of Indian Mahayana Buddhist ideas and practices along the Silk Road; the development of Chinese Ch’an Buddhism in the T’ang Dynasty; Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan; Theravada Buddhism in nineteenth and early twentieth century Thailand; the Euro-American Beat Generation encounter with Buddhism in the 1950s; Socially Engaged Buddhism in 1960s-70s Southeast Asia; and global Buddhism in the contemporary world. Our sources will include the legend of a ferocious and devout...
Buddhist king of India named Asoka as well as inscriptions he left on cave walls and rock pillars in the 3rd century BCE; devotional, ritual biographies of the Buddha from Sri Lanka and Thailand; parables and paintings from China. We will read reflections on daily life recorded by 18th century Zen poet-monk Ryokan and Beat era writers’ experiences in a Japanese monastery in the 1950s. We will also read and discuss Buddhist chants, prayers, ritual texts, sermons, memoirs, meditation instructions, tattoos, and poetry.

**COURSE THEMES.** Contemporary Americans tend to associate Buddhism with the cultivation of mindfulness through meditation practice. How and why did this late 20th century American interpretation of Buddhism develop? While mindfulness and meditation are important Buddhist ideas and practices, they are far from the only strategies Buddhists have used to construct meaningful lives. Throughout the course, our study of Buddhism will emphasize:

- tracing out the diversity of Buddhist histories and cultures by examining primary sources from a number of different historical moments, especially periods when Buddhist communities developed new interpretations and/or technologies of knowledge production;

- central ideas related to Buddhist understandings of the “Triple Gem,” which will help us see not only how Buddhist think and act in their efforts to construct meaningful and happy lives, but also how different people in different places reworked received ideas and practices to make them relevant to their own time;

- Buddhism as ever-changing and localized yet simultaneously recognizable as a trans-historical and trans-local tradition through shared theories, practices, preoccupations, images, and ideas;

- and finally, how religion writ large functions in peoples’ lives and cultures as an attempt to find and/or construct meaningful and happy lives. While we won’t make explicit comparisons to other religious traditions in this course, our study is meant to provide you with a history of religions approach that might be applied to the study of other religions besides Buddhism.
LEARNING OUTCOMES. What you gain from this course depends in part on your level of effort. Students who are engaged in the course and prepared for class can expect to:

- Learn to “see through Buddhist eyes,” a central aim of the history of religions approach or “methodology” we’ll employ in this course.

- Learn to seek out and appreciate complexity. It often turns out that our preconceptions and assumptions about Buddhism vastly over-simplify a diverse and complex religious tradition. In fact, the more we know, the muddier things may appear. Accept that not everything you learn is going to be immediately comprehensible.

- Gain insight into Buddhist ways of thinking, organizing knowledge, and navigating the inevitable realities of human existence: birth, death, sickness, aging, suffering, and constant change.

- Recognize the diversity of ideas, values and practices apparent in Buddhist history and cultures.

- Become literate in basic Buddhist concepts. Use this awareness to become an informed, religiously literate global citizen.

- Consider the relevance and applicability of Buddhist resources for the larger human project of living a good and meaningful life. Be open to the possibility of “learning from” not just “learning about” Buddhists.

- Practice and deepen your facility with critical (i.e., analytical) reading, thinking and writing through your study of Buddhist ideas and practices.

- Apply our analytical method of studying religion to understanding your own or other religious traditions.

- Learn to be comfortable with the unfamiliar! Gain confidence in your ability

“Better than a thousand useless words is one useful word, hearing which one attains peace.”

-DHAMMAPADA

Part III of the course examines “Sangha” — a term that refers to the monks, nuns and other practitioners who identify as “Buddhist.”
to process, interpret and use new concepts and vocabularies. While the initial learning curve in this course will be steep for most students, midway through the semester you will notice that you have begun to feel comfortable employing Buddhist concepts and terminology. This is good practice for navigating similar challenges in almost every new academic or work environment you’ll encounter for the rest of your life.

**WORKLOAD.** This is a 4 credit course, open to freshmen. There are no prerequisites or expectations that you have studied history of Asian religions previously but you should enter the course with an openness to reading and analyzing a variety of Buddhist sources that may seem initially unfamiliar and hard to comprehend.

Most students who are engaged in the course begin to feel comfortable using Buddhist concepts (like “Triple Gem,” “karma” and “dukkha”) by mid-semester.

This course meets as a group (or with dedicated online time) for 4 hours per week and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this class.

**ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING.** We recognize that students take this class for different reasons and that you come with different academic backgrounds, skills and majors. To allow you to do your best in this class, you will be able to choose the final assignment (from two options) that works best for your learning style and purposes; both assignments will measure your cumulative learning in the course and be worth 25% of your grade. All other assignments are required. More details and
instructions about assignments and grading will be provided as we go along but here is an overview of what you can expect and how it will be graded. There are 6 components to your grade:

1/ Attendance & participation (10%). Your attendance and participation grade will include an evaluation of your attendance, participation and preparation for discussion section, as well as your responses to several in-class and on-line activities connected to lecture class. You are required to bring assigned reading materials to your discussion section each week since you’ll need to refer to the reading in discussions. You are allowed to miss one discussion section without penalty to your grade but please save it for the week you are sick or in case of other emergencies. Except in cases of documented emergencies (such as hospitalization), you can not make up missed classes.

2/ Facilitating a group discussion - collaborative assignment (5%) You will work in a small group to prepare questions and facilitate a discussion in your discussion section once during the semester. Detailed instructions on this assignment will be provided in your discussion meetings and on the Canvas site.

Weekly primary source analysis (20%). Your weekly analysis will include:

- a 100-150 analysis of a quote you select from the primary source readings each week in response to reading questions provided in your syllabus;
- your ideas about 2-3 key words/concepts from the reading, along with brief definitions of these words/concepts in your own words.

All primary source analysis assignments must be submitted each week (except on the 2 weeks you elect to opt out) by Thursday morning at 8am, in advance of discussion section meetings on Thursday and Friday. Late analysis assignments will not be accepted and missing analysis assignments...
cannot be made up since they are intended to help you prepare for discussion class as well as help you stay up-to-date with course materials. You are required to submit 10 out of 12 possible primary source analysis assignments. You may opt out of any 2 primary source analyses throughout the semester without penalty to your grade - but you are expected to still do the reading and come to discussion.

3/ **Take-home essay (20%)**. Your 3-4 page essay will respond to a choice of prompts treating assigned reading/sources for the class. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.

4/ **Online comprehensive mid-term examination during a scheduled class time (20%)**. The 75 minute midterm exam will include multiple choice questions, definitions of key terms and concepts, quote and image IDs, and short essays. A midterm study guide and detailed instructions will be provided prior to the exam.

5/ **Final assignment: choice of an online comprehensive final exam or a 4-5 page take-home comparative essay (25%)**. You will be able to choose the final assignment format that you prefer, either a final exam (an expanded 2 hour version of the midterm) or a second take-home essay responding to a choice of assigned prompts based on course readings. This essay will involve comparative analysis drawing on at least two primary sources we have studied in class.

**HONORS CREDIT.** Please identify yourself to Prof. Hansen before or after class during one of the initial class periods. Students taking the course for Honors credit will write an additional 7-10 page research paper on a topic of your own choosing in coordination with the instructor. Usually Honors students elect to research and write a paper connected with their major/disciplinary interests. Examples might include topics such as the neuroscience of meditation, Buddhist prison reform, the historical origins of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, an analysis or history of a Buddhist art image at the Chazen Museum, Buddhism in Korean and American film, or an exploratory essay on a specialized topic in Buddhist scriptures or sources such as the treatment of sexuality in the *Buddhacarita* or Indian Buddhist cosmology in 19th century Burmese manuscript paintings. The topic and format of the paper must be coordinated with Prof. Hansen during the first 3 weeks of the semester. Prof. Hansen will arrange several times to meet with Honors students as a group during the semester. Please make every effort to

---

**“On hearing the Teachings, the wise become perfectly purified, like a lake deep, clear and still.”**

-DHAMMAPADA

---

**GRADING SCALE used in this class:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-91.9%</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-81.9%</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-76.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-71.9%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-66.9%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
attend these scheduled group meetings but if you are not able to attend, plan to attend office hours at least twice during the semester to confer about your paper topic and progress. Prof. Hansen will be grading your paper.

MEDICAL SCHOOL HUMANITIES PAPERS. Please identify yourself to Prof. Hansen before or after class during one of the initial class periods. Students who are using this course to meet requirements for a Humanities writing intensive course appropriate for medical school admissions requirements should attend the Honors group meetings and/or office hours. Your final assignment will consist of a 10-15 page research paper in lieu of a comprehensive final exam, including the requirement that you submit a first draft version of the paper two weeks prior to the final due date. Even though this is your final assignment, It is essential that you meet with Prof. Hansen within the first three weeks of class (or sooner!) to get started on your paper. Writing a successful research paper of this length requires a good deal of organization and coordination so we need to get started as soon as possible. (If your paper needs to be longer than 15 pages we need to meet separately as soon as possible). Plan to meet with Prof. Hansen several times during the semester to review your progress; she will be grading your final paper, which is worth 25% of your grade.

GRADUATE CREDIT. If you are a graduate student, please identify yourself before or after class during one of the initial class periods. Prof. Hansen is not offering a designated graduate section this spring. Graduate students will have the option of completing the assignments and exams listed above (but will be expected to write 5-7 page rather than 3-4 page paper(s)) OR pursue alternative assignments related to their programs of study and individual research interests. Please arrange to see Prof. Hansen in office hours during the first three weeks of class to plan your assignments and other arrangements.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY. Technologies have advanced in the past few years faster than etiquette and the norms of polite behavior that might govern their use. Please read this policy carefully. We understand that for many of you it is extremely difficult to take notes without using a laptop, and we want you to get the most out of this class. Any use of personal devices that enhances learning is a good thing — though some recent studies suggest that writing notes by hand can in fact improve your retention, comprehension and even grades over taking notes on your laptop. [Susan Dynarski, "Laptops are Great. But Not During a Lecture or a Meeting"]. Whether or not this is true for you, inappropriate uses of electronic devices can hurt learning for nearby students. If you intend to use a laptop or tablet and are unable to sit for 75 minutes without checking Facebook, messaging your friends, tweeting, watching movies or football games, reading the news, doing other homework, or on-line shopping, please sit in the back row. That way, your
activities will not distract other students (and trust us, years of experience has shown that these activities are in fact highly distracting to those who want to learn). If you have a laptop open and are not sitting in the back row, we assume that you are mindfully engaged in the lecture or discussion. Otherwise we may quietly ask you to shut down your laptop or move to the back row. As far as we are concerned, there is absolutely no reason we can imagine why you should ever be looking at your phone during lecture or discussion. If we see you looking at your phone (which is highly distracting to the instructor, who can see you texting from the front of the classroom) please consider this as fair warning: we will not hesitate to interrupt the entire class to ask you to put your phone away. [Cartoon by Peter Arkle, New York Times, Nov. 22 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?_r=0 accessed 1/7/18].

TEXTS & SOFTWARE. Required course books and software:

*Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen*, Shunryu Suzuki

*One Robe, One Bowl: the Zen Poetry of Ryokan*, John Stevens, trans.

Your course readings will be posted as PDFs on your course Canvas site. We encourage you to print out the primary source readings posted on Canvas, mark them up and bring the notated texts to class. If you don’t want to print them, you can download them and annotate them with an editing or note-taking app (such as Adobe Reader or Good Reader) but you still need to bring them to class. In our experience, paper texts work best for discussion sections but we’ll let you make that call.

You will also need to purchase and download the following secondary source textbook from the url provided below:

*Buddhism – the eBook, 4th edition*, Damien Keown and Charles Prebish

Instructions for purchasing and downloading the on-line textbook can be found at: [http://www.jbeonlinebooks.org/eBooks/buddhism/](http://www.jbeonlinebooks.org/eBooks/buddhism/)

If you prefer to buy or rent a printed version of this text (but without some of the helpful links and supplementary material) a close version by the same authors is: *Introducing Buddhism, 2nd edition* by Charles S. Prebish and Damien Keown. The text is almost identical but the pagination is slightly different. Most students decide to use the e-version of the text (which is somewhat less expensive and includes links to more resources).

You can earn EXTRA CREDIT by attending course-related lectures, events or optional field trips and submit a one-page (12 point font typed) report of the event within one week of the date you attended. Events will be announced in class. Each event report will be worth 1 point.

Alternatively, you can earn 1 point of extra credit by designing and submitting a learning exercise or activity that effectively teaches a Buddhist concept or idea that we are examining, preferably through active learning techniques.

You may earn up to 4 points of extra credit in this class.
Please remember to bring your readings to discussion section, either in paper or electronic form. This is a requirement for active participation and it will adversely impact your participation grade if you consistently come to class without your reading materials. You’ll need them for discussions.

Finally, you will need to set up an account on the free software site https://siftr.org for this class. We will be using Siftr several times during the semester for assignments. As part of these assignments, you will need to take photos and upload them to designated Siftr sites that we’ll be using in class. We hear this works best with a smart phone but if you don’t have one or can’t borrow one, talk to us and we’ll help work out a solution.

SPECIAL NEEDS. We are happy to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please notify your TA as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester of any special accommodations needed. Please don’t hesitate to remind us prior to exams and due dates about your accommodations.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES. Please notify your TA in advance if you need to miss class or reschedule assignments due to participation in religious holidays.

LATE WORK AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT.
Late work will normally be accepted only by prior arrangement or documented emergency situations. Any student not making prior arrangement will automatically be given a failing grade on the missed assignment. Failure to submit one or more of the course exams or major papers may result in a failing grade for the course.
That said, we understand that things sometimes come up (for many different reasons) that can impede your academic progress; please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you are falling behind or having trouble making it to class (for whatever reason). We'll try to help you figure it out. **We are committed to doing everything we can to help you succeed in this class.**

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism and sexual harassment, will not be tolerated. If instances of academic misconduct are detected, action will be taken in accordance with university policies.

**BLENDED COURSE FORMAT.** This course is taught in what we refer to as a “lightly blended” format, meaning that about half of the course content is taught or administered either through in-person/in-class active learning or experiential learning activities, digital media or online assignments (including course exams). Other class periods will be devoted to “traditional” lectures and/or discussion and Q&A. We use this approach because we believe the “blend” of different pedagogical approaches works best for teaching Buddhism. Sometimes you need to puzzle things out on your own and sometimes you are better off hearing from a specialist on the topic. Most important of all, you need to “talk” and “write” your way to understanding Buddhist concepts. Your small group discussion section, led by a TA, will meet every week except Week 8 (midterm exam & essay) and Week 9 (spring break). The course content is organized around teaching you how to read, view and analyze primary source materials. A secondary source textbook provides additional necessary and useful information but is not usually the main focus of what we’ll discuss in class since the material it presents is concise and self-evident. The textbook is another course resource for helping you read and analyze primary sources. Since the course revolves so centrally around reading and analyzing weekly primary sources, you will need to commit to keeping up with reading in order to get the most out of this class.

**INSTRUCTORS.** Professor Anne Hansen, Department of History & Religious Studies Program  
email: arhansen@wisc.edu  
office: 5114 Humanities Bldg.  
office hours: Mondays 2-3 and Friday afternoons by appointment. Sign up for office hours with Anne Hansen via this link: [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0C44AEAA2CA46-anne3](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0C44AEAA2CA46-anne3)

Teaching Assistant Tyler A. Lehrer, PhD Candidate, Department of History  
email: tlehrer@wisc.edu  
office: 4274 Humanities Bldg.  
office hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:00 PM and Thursdays 1-2 PM

**DISCUSSIONS.**  
Disc 301 Th 8:50-9:40 AM Humanities 2115  
Disc 304 Th 9:55-10:45 AM Humanities 2115  
Disc 307 Th 11:00-11:50 AM Humanities 2101  
Disc 308 Th 2:25 -3:15 PM Humanities 2131
INTRODUCTION TO THE TRIPLE GEM

WEEK 1 Jan 23 INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

Lecture: Why Study Buddhism? The Triple Gem in the Buddhist World

Reading assignment:


• Read through the entire syllabus and mark up your calendars with assignment due dates. Bring your questions about assignments to class.

• Read through the Canvas site and notice that some assignments and instructions only appear on Canvas. We will be adding content throughout the semester - please check your Canvas site often for updates.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS WILL BEGIN MEETING THIS WEEK!

WEEK 2 Jan 28/30 BACKGROUND TO BUDDHISM

Lectures: The Ritual Act of Taking Refuge/Film: “The Buddha”

There is no in-class lecture on Wednesday Jan. 30. Instead, you will watch a film on your own time (link provided on your course site) and complete a brief assignment in preparation for lecture class on Monday Feb. 4. Please follow the instructions on your course site.

Reading assignment:

• “Aradana and Saranasila: Invitation, Refuges and Precepts,” excerpted from a Thai chanting manual
• “Saranattayam” [The Three Refuges], trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli, pp. 101-104 in *Buddhist Scriptures*, ed., Donald S. Lopez


**Reading & primary source analysis suggestions:** How does this brief excerpt from the *Saranattayam* explain the 3 Gems? What images are used? Can you identify a “formula” for the relationship between Buddha, Dharma and Sangha? What is the imagery trying to convey about taking refuge in the Triple Gem?

Critical thinking hints. Remember, your task in preparing for discussion section is not to focus on your own reactions to the text (i.e., “Buddhism is so fascinating” or “growing up Lutheran has made me…”) but to concentrate on and critically analyze how Buddhist sources understand and convey these concepts (i.e., “According to the text, “Buddha” means…” or “Taking refuge seems to have three inter-related meanings, depending on…”).

**Primary source analysis:** upload prior to discussion section. Detailed instructions will be handed out (and posted on the course site) during week 1.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT IS TO BE REPEATED EVERY WEEK UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT 10 OUT OF 12 POSSIBLE WEEKLY PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSES.**

THE BUDDHA

WEEK 3 Feb 4/6 THE FIRST GEM: THE BUDDHA

**Lecture:** The Life of the Buddha – Cosmic Biography & Historical Buddha/The Early Buddhist Community

**Reading assignment:**


- *Jātaka* excerpts: “The Tigress,” pp. 5-9; “The Hare,” pp. 32-38; “The King of the Geese,” pp. 140-152. From *Once the Buddha was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra’s Jātakamālā* [garland of birth stories], Ārya Sura (translated by Peter Khoroche)
• Excerpts from the *Therigāthā* (read only the English translations on every other page):


• “The Precepts” (see buddhanet link on Canvas site)

• “The Buddhist Sangha,” pp. 60-76, in *Buddhism – eBook*, Keown & Prebish

**Reading suggestions:** *The Story of Gotama Buddha: Nidāna-kathā* ["Story of the Antecedents or Causes"] represents an early commentarial effort to piece together the life story of the Buddha from different scriptural passages and accounts. The “intermediate epoch” referred to in the text traces the life of Siddhartha Gotama from his birth in in Tusita heaven to his enlightenment. The *Jātaka* ["birth stories"] stories are concerned with previous lives of the Buddha, long before he was born as Prince Siddhartha Gautama who became enlightened. In these stories, the Buddha is referred to as a “bodhisatta” or “bodhisattva,” someone on the path to becoming an enlightened buddha. You’ll also be reading about the early community of followers ("sangha") of the Buddha in your textbook, such as the therī or bhikkhunī (ordained nuns) Patacara and Kisagotami.

How do the *Nidāna-kathā* and *Jātaka* stories present the life of the Buddha? What are the main concerns of these two ancient forms of buddha “biography”? What qualities of the Buddha are valued and emphasized in each? How are their concerns different from/the same as the contemporary biographies of the Buddha you encountered in your textbook last week and the film we watched about the life of the Buddha?

The *Therīgāthā* ["Stories of the Buddhist nuns"] records the words and lives of early *bhikkhuni* (fully ordained women or “nuns”) who joined the early sangha. We have given you two versions of the readings from the *Therīgāthā*, a recent translation of the scriptural verses by Charles Hallisey, and an older translation by Rhys Davids that gives the scriptural verses surrounded by commentarial stories. We’ll talk more about Buddhist understandings of "scripture" and "commentary" in class.

What insights can you gain into the lives of the early disciples through the stories and verses of Kisa-Gotami and Patachara? What drew them to the early sangha? What were their lives like before and after they became *bhikkhuni*? How did the sangha offer them refuge? Taken together, what do these stories of and from early Buddhists suggest about the Buddha’s influence and the impact of his teachings?

What are the moral concerns in these texts? What early Buddhist conceptions become evident, such as the definition of a “good life,” i.e., a worthwhile life and one that creates well-being for
oneself and others? What do the texts teach about how to find happiness? What do we learn about the problems of human suffering?

WEEK 4 Feb 11/13 RELICS OF THE BUDDHA

Lecture: The Mauryan Empire & the Life of Aśoka/“Aśoka”

There is no in-class lecture on Wednesday Feb 13. Instead, you’ll watch Santosh Sivan’s epic film “Aśoka.” This film is not historically accurate in all respects — it’s Bollywood after all. The plot line about Aśoka’s secret sojourn as “Pawan” and the love plot with the Kalinga Kaurwaki warrior-princess is largely fictional, although based on some scattered historical facts. In other ways, however, the film is trying to come to terms with some meaningful historical questions: Who was the ancient king Aśoka as a human being? Who is the man behind the inscriptions that you are reading this week? And who is the king who became the subject of so much myth and legend, as in the Sanskrit Aśokavadāna text you’ll read? Why has he remained so historically compelling both in and outside of India for centuries - what is it about his story that people identify with? How is it that a king renowned for his cruelty and vicious warfare could become one of the world’s most famous converts to Buddhism? The character of Aśoka is drawn from historical records, inscriptions and legends; the character of Kaurwaki draws on Orissa legends as well as the inscriptions, which mention a wife and queen of Aśoka named Karavaki. For Santosh Sivan’s comments on his rendering of Aśoka, see: https://www.rediff.com/movies/2001/oct/24sant.htm.

Reading assignment:


Reading suggestions: From your textbook assignment, please be sure you understand the basic chronology and geography of the Mauryan Empire, and how and why the dynasty was important to the historical development of Buddhism.

Asoka is one of the most renowned converts to Buddhism in the religion’s history. How is the conversion represented in the two different primary sources you are reading this week? What is most significant about Asoka according to each source? How does Asoka’s story and history help
us understand the influence of the figure of the Buddha even after his death? According to the texts, is “redemption” possible in early Buddhist understanding? On what terms?

WEEK 5 Feb 18/20 IMAGES OF THE BUDDHA

Lecture: Buddhist images & Practices of Devotion and Merit-making/Guided Activity on Buddhist Images at the Chazen Museum

There is no in-class lecture on Wednesday Feb 20. Instead, you will be doing an “image hunt” and guided learning activity on Buddhist images at the Chazen Museum of Art on your own time, to be completed before your discussion sections on Thursday and Friday. This activity works well with a discussion partner, so you might want to find someone to work with at the Chazen. It takes about 2 hours to complete. Please be sure to: 1) read instructions on your course site about rules for working on assignments at the Chazen, and 2) read and DOWNLOAD + PRINT your worksheet before you go to the Chazen. You will not be able to take your laptop into the galleries (only your paper worksheet and a pencil).

Here is info on museum hours: http://www.chazen.wisc.edu (closed on Mondays).

This activity takes the place of your lecture class. You will be reading and preparing your primary source analysis as usual, which is connected to the primary source Buddha Abhiseka that you are reading. Discussion section time will be split between the Buddha Abhiseka and your Buddha image sift assignments.

Reading/viewing assignment:

- Buddha Abhiseka [Consecrating the Buddha Image], pp. 50-58, translated by Donald K. Swearer. From: Buddhism in Practice, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr.
- “Buddhism in Southeast Asia,” pp. 144-157 in Buddhism – eBook, Keown & Prebish
- Buddhist images in the Chazen Museum. Please plan to spend about 2 hours in the Chazen Museum this week, viewing Buddhist images and answering questions on the worksheet provided (you can find instructions and questions on your course site).

DISCUSSION SECTIONS WILL MEET IN THE CHAZEN MUSEUM THIS WEEK! PLEASE LISTEN FOR IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING YOUR ASSIGNMENTS AND MEETINGS IN THE CHAZEN THIS WEEK!
Reading suggestions: In your textbook assignment – take note of the geography, history and characteristics of Theravada Buddhism.

Your other readings this week include both primary and secondary (ethnographic) sources about image consecration in Thailand. They include a description and translation of a Theravada (Thai) ritual involving images of the Buddha called *Buddha Abhiseka* (“Buddha image consecration”). Note that the consecration ritual ceremony itself contains a ritual biography of the Buddha. What are the other aspects of the ritual necessary for consecrating the image? How do they correspond to events in the biography of the Buddha? According to the *Buddha Abhiska*, how is the image of the Buddha meant to be viewed by ritual practitioners? How do the image and ritual story interact? I.e., does the image somehow convey or contain the story, or is it distinct from the biography? Can an image function as a kind of visual “biography” — or does it have other aims and functions than telling the life of the Buddha? What does this text help us understand about the importance of the figure of the Buddha in Buddhist practices in 20th century Thailand?

THE DхARMA

WEEK 6 Feb 25/27 THE SECOND GEM: THE DхARMA

Lecture: The Buddha’s Teachings – the Dхarma

Reading assignment:


Reading suggestions: This week you are reading the Buddha’s first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*. It lays out the 4 Noble Truths, including the Buddha’s teaching of *paticca-samuppāda* in the Third Noble Truth. In addition to carefully reading the sutta, plan to invest some time reading and possibly re-reading the essay “Conditioned Genesis” (we’ll read about and discuss its author, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, next week). “Conditioned Genesis” is Buddhadasa’s translation of “*paticca-samuppāda*,” a conception of the nature of reality as perceived by the Buddha during his enlightenment. How does Buddhadasa explain *paticca-samuppāda*? Can you express this idea in your own words?
TAKE-HOME ESSAY PROMPTS & INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON MARCH 1. MIDTERM STUDY GUIDES WILL BE POSTED ON MONDAY MARCH 4.

WEEK 7 Mar 4/6 RELATING THE DHARMA TO MODERN LIFE IN THAILAND

Lecture: Buddhadasa on the Dhamma/Buddhadasa on the Problems of Modern Life

Reading assignment:


Reading suggestions: What are Buddhadasa’s main themes in these essays/sermons?

How does he apply the Dhamma to ordinary peoples’ lives? According to Buddhadasa, how should Buddhists practice the Dhamma?

Based on your reading of Buddhadasa, how is the Dhamma relevant to understanding modern life and modern problems?

Are Buddhadasa’s teachings reinterpretations of the Dhamma? Is it legitimate to reinterpret the Dhamma, or religious teachings in general? Why or why not? Can you think of similar interpretive projects in other religious traditions?

WEEK 8 Mar 11/13 MIDTERM & TAKE-HOME ESSAYS

MARCH 11 ON-LINE MIDTERM EXAM DURING LECTURE CLASS TIME

MARCH 13 NO LECTURE - WRITING DAY

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS OR WEEKLY POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

TAKE-HOME ESSAYS DUE FRIDAY MARCH 15. SEE THE POSTED INSTRUCTIONS & PROMPTS FOR MORE DETAILS.
WEEK 9 Mar 18/20 SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10 Mar 25/27 THE DHARMA IN ACTION: MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Lecture: Buddhist Teachings on Meditation & Mindfulness/Meditation Class with Theravāda Buddhist teacher Jan Sheppard (Madison Insight Meditation Group http://madisonmeditation.org)

(an alternative assignment will be provided in case there is anyone who prefers not to participate in the meditation class – please see Prof. Hansen for the alternative assignment)

Reading assignment:


- Excerpts from Forest Recollections, Kamala Tiyavanich, ch. 3 “Facing Fear,” pp. 79-105; ch. 5 “Battling Sexual Desire,” pp. 127-142

- “Meditation,” pp. 120-138 in Buddhism – eBook, Keown & Prebish

Reading suggestions: According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (one of the most important Theravāda Buddhist scriptural texts on meditation), what is the aim of meditation practice? What does meditation help practitioners achieve? What does sati (mindfulness) do for practitioners, according to these text, and how can it be achieved? How is meditation important as a Buddhist ethical practice? How is meditation important to achieving an understanding of the Dharma?

The *Forest Recollections* readings about late 19th/early 20th century forest monks in Thailand are meant to help us reflect on how later Buddhists have interpreted and acted out early Buddhist teachings on meditation such as the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* as well as the monastic rules of conduct found in the *Vinaya*. What obstacles arise for serious meditators, such as those discussed by Kamala in her study of Thai forest monks? How do these monks deal with these impediments to their practice? What do their accounts tell us about the aims and meaning of meditation for Buddhists?

WEEK 11 Apr 1/3 THE TRIPLE GEM IN CHINA

Lecture: Buddhism on the Silk Road/“Visions of Dunhuang” - Experiential Activity in the Digital Dunhuang Caves
Monday’s lecture will introduce you to Buddhism along the Silk Road, ending up in China. There is **no in-class lecture on Wednesday April 3**. Instead, you will spend the equivalent of class time online, exploring Chinese visualizations of the Mahāyāna Buddhist scripture *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* in the Dunhuang Caves. On the e-Dunhuang site [www.e-dunhuang.com](http://www.e-dunhuang.com), you will locate images of Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī in their selected caves and hopefully make the intellectual leap from reading about “buddha fields” to understanding them from your own experience, using virtual reality. You’ll need to do the reading assignment and follow the instructions for the Visions of Dunhuang assignment, using Siftr, in advance of your discussion class. More detailed instructions for your cave explorations can be found on Canvas.

**Reading assignment:**

  - Chapter 1 “Purification of the Buddha-Field,” pp. 10-19. (Note that this section illustrates the visual aspects of the “Buddha-Field,” which directly relates to the composition of the caves at Dunhuang we will be viewing this week. This section introduces the ideas of multiple realities overlapping in the same space, and how they are accessible through (or access of which produces) the Dhamma-eye).
  - Chapter 2 “Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique,” pp. 20-23
  - Chapter 3 “The Disciples’ Reluctance to Visit Vimalakīrti,” pp. 24-27
  - Chapter 5 “The Consolation of the Invalid,” pp. 42-49
  - Ch’ān poems: “Seeing Off a Man of the Tao,” “Sent to a Hua Mountain Monk,” and “For a Buddhist Monk,” poems by Chia Tao, p. 49-51 from *Selected Poems of Chia Tao*, trans., Mike O’Connor

**Reading suggestions:** Discussion sections this week will be focused on *The Holy Teachings of Vimalakīrti*. In addition to your siftr assignment, you’ll be writing and submitting your usual primary source analysis.

What is a “Buddha field,” according to the text? What is the Dhamma-eye?

What are the fundamentals of Vimalakīrti’s Liberative Technique? How is it different from the teachings about enlightenment and liberation that we have studied so far?

How does the text present the sensory experience of seeing? How is that experience of seeing embodied in the caves?
THE THIRD GEM: THE SANGHA

WEEK 12 Apr 8/10 ZEN LIVES

Lecture: Ryokan’s Zen Poetry in Japan/Meditation and Learning Activity on Mujō and Mushin

We’ll discuss Ryokan’s life and poetry in class on Monday, especially in relation to the themes of mujō (impermanence, change) and mushin (a non-attached, non-dualistic state of mind). There is no in-person lecture class on Wednesday April 10. Instead, you will have an online and outside activity on Wednesday in place of lecture class. Channeling Ryokan, you will take a walk by the lake, head out to Picnic Point or cycle over to the UW Arboretum. Find a quiet, beautiful spot for a reflection exercise on nature and the nature of Zen insights on impermanence and emptiness. Before you go, download or print the activity worksheet. You’ll need your phone to take a photograph and post a Siftr assignment. Detailed instructions for this activity and your assignment are posted on Canvas.

Reading assignment:

- One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryokan, trans. John Stevens.
- “Japan,” pp. 175-177, and “Japanese Buddhist Schools,” pp. 177-183, in Buddhism – eBook, Keown & Prebish

Reading suggestions: How does Ryokan live? Drawing on his poems, how does his way of life convey his Buddhist perceptions? What is the aim of the Zen life conveyed in the poems? Is his life meant to be a prototype for others? How? How does his life help us to better understand the other two gems, the Buddha and the Dharma? What is a good life? What causes dukkha for humans? How to find happiness and freedom from dukkha? How and why does Ryokan find mujō in nature? What examples of this concept can you find in his poems? Can you find evidence in his poetry of non-dualism?

WEEK 13 Apr 15/17 AMERICAN ZEN

Lecture: Buddhist Migrations/The Beat Discovery of Buddhism

Reading assignment:

- “Sunflower Sutra,” Allen Ginsberg, pp. 89-91, 96-98. (See also: http://boppin.com/sunflower.html and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8A_tDB7t5eg in his own voice and/or this short film version http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzWai_QkYrk)

- “No Problem Party Poem,” Diane Di Prema, pp. 139-140, 151-153

- “Buddhism in the Western World,” pp. 205-217, in Buddhism – eBook, Keown & Prebish

Reading suggestions:

What is Zen and what are its aims? What repeated images does Suzuki use? Highlight or make notes on some of the key passages in the book that seemed to you to most clearly articulate Zen ideas. Try to formulate, in your own words, what Zen is and isn’t. Even though it can’t be conveyed in dualistic human language.

Look closely at the poems “Sunflower Sutra” and “No Problem Party Poem” by beat poets Allen Ginsberg and Diane Di Prema. What images appear in each of these poems? How are these images (or not) “Buddhist”? What are the main points of each poem? What do the poems have in common? How do their perspectives differ? How are Ginsberg and Di Prema transposing Zen Buddhist ideas for an American context? How might these works be described as Zen poetry? Beat poetry?

Could you do an “intertextual” analysis of one of the images in one of the poems by reading it in conversation with one of Suzuki’s sermons or in connection to one of Ryokan’s poems?

FINAL EXAM STUDY GUIDE & ESSAY PROMPTS WILL BE POSTED APRIL 17.

WEEK 14 Apr 22/24 THE BUDDHIST SANGHA IN THE CRUCIBLE OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Lecture: Buddhism in the Crucible of the Vietnam War/Socially Engaged Buddhism Goes Global

Reading assignment:


Reading suggestions: Please be forewarned that you may find the content of this week’s readings to be emotionally and intellectually difficult. Do your best to bring all of the Buddhist sources we have covered this semester to help you analyze the readings.

Your readings this week include excerpts from a famous 1967 anti-war book by Vietnamese monk and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, some of his poems from the same period that were banned by the governments of both the North and the South in Vietnam, and his letter to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc. An excerpt from Edward Miller’s book *Misalliance* on the Diem regime in southern Vietnam gives context on the political and religious background of Thich Quang Duc’s self-immolation in relation to the Buddhist Crisis of 1963 as well as the 1920s/30s Buddhist Revival in Vietnam. Other socially involved monks and nuns followed Thich Quang Duc, as you will read in two chapters from the compelling memoir *Learning True Love* by the Vietnamese nun Chan Khong.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s ideas developed in the historical context of the French-Indochinese War and the later Vietnamese-American conflict in Vietnam. How were his religious perspectives influenced by the experience of war and violence? How do his religious perspectives seem to shape his analysis of the conflict and violence in his country?

How do Chan Khong and Thich Nhat Hanh understand the self-immolations and attempt to explain these acts to non-Vietnamese? Can you relate them back to the *jataka* story, “The Hungry Tigress,” that we read at the beginning of the semester? How might the life story of the Buddha help to explain the acts of these monks and nuns?

**Final Assignment Selection in Discussion Sections This Week:** We need to know which final assignment option you are choosing in order to make plans for administering and grading exams and papers. We also want to ensure that no one falls through the cracks at the end of the semester. You will be asked to indicate your final assignment plan in discussion section this week (April 25-26). We expect you to make a firm commitment to one assignment or the other by this date. The comprehensive exam will be administered online in a two-hour format, papers will be submitted online and are due no later than the scheduled exam time.

**WEEK 15 Apr 29/May 1 CONCLUSIONS**

**Lecture:** Conclusions/ A Floating Monastery
There is **no in-class lecture on Wednesday May 1**. Instead, you will be watching the beautiful Korean Buddhist film “Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring, & Summer” on your own time, to be completed before your final discussion section this week. You can find a link to the film on your course site. You will be reflecting on the film in your discussion section as a way of wrapping up the course. Please note that the **prompts for your primary source analysis assignment on the film** are available on Canvas. This week is your last opportunity to submit a primary source assignment.

Monday’s lecture will offer some concluding reflections and activities. The last portion of the class will be devoted to collecting feedback on your experience of the course.

**Viewing/Reading assignment:**

- “Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring, & Summer”

- “Korea, historical sketch” pp. 171-173 and “Modern Developments in Korean Buddhism,” p. 175 in *Buddhism – eBook*, Keown & Prebish

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT (CHOOSE 1 OPTION)**

We need to know which final assignment option you are choosing by Week 14. This is important in order to ensure that no one falls through the cracks at the end of the semester! You will be asked to indicate your final assignment plan in discussion section on Week 14 (April 25-26). We expect you to make a firm commitment to one assignment choice or the other by this date. The comprehensive exam will be administered online at the assigned course exam time; papers will be submitted online and are due no later than the end of the scheduled exam period.

**ONLINE EXAM DATE/TIME:** 5:05-7:05 PM, SUNDAY MAY 5, 2019

**TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE DATE:** no later than 7:05 PM, SUNDAY MAY 5, 2019 (details for submitting your papers will be included with the essay instructions)