University of Wisconsin-Madison

Course Syllabus

Spring 2025 Asian 308/History 308/Relig St 308

Introduction to Buddhism

The Buddha in different life stages and the Bodhisattvas

Courtesy of คณะสงฆ์จีนนิกาย 泰國佛教華宗

4 credits, Level: Intermediate,

Breadth: Humanities or Social Science, L&S Credit

Requisites: Sophomore standing

Course attributes: 50% Graduate Coursework Requirement

Learning Coaches and Your Thinking Partners

Lecturer: Napakadol "Ik" Kittisenee (He/Him)
5114 Humanities Building (See Course Poster)
Office Hours: W 1:00 pm. – 3:00 pm. (in-person)
or in-person/online meeting by appointment
kittisenee@wisc.edu

Teaching Assistant (TA): Natalie Belew (She/Her)
4271 Humanities Building
Office Hours: T 10:00 am. – 12:00 pm. (in-person)
or in-person/online meeting by appointment
nbelew@wisc.edu

Time and Place

Lectures: TR 4:00 PM - 5:15 PM 1111 Humanities Building

Discussion Sections:

Section **301** R 8:50 AM - 9:40 AM 2631 Humanities Building

Section **302** R 9:55 AM - 10:45 AM 2631 Humanities Building

Section **303** R 12:05 PM - 12:55 PM 2631 Humanities Building

Section **304** R 1:20 PM - 2:10 PM 2241 Humanities Building

Communication

Lecture's Content and Other Course Assignments: Contact **Ik** kittisenee@wisc.edu

Attendance, Absence, and Weekly Discussion Posts: Contact **Natalie** nbelew@wisc.edu

Golden Rule for Communication Both of us are graduate students. As we join this course, we learn from you as much as you learn from us. We see ourselves as your learning coaches and thinking partners. Thus, please do not hesitate to "communicate" if you encounter any difficulties or challenges in attending lectures or discussion sections. Lectures related matters should be directed to Ik while the discussion section related matters should be directed to Natalie. This is to make clear about the division of labor. Do keep in mind that we are here to help you grow both academically and professionally, and also ultimately to nurture you to become a compassionate and thoughtful person. The level of respect you offer to Ik should be equal to how you treat your TA.

Since mindfulness, compassion, and interbeing—I am because you are—are the key issues we learn from Buddhism in this course, the communication between the learning coaches and students as well as among the students themselves should be aligned with the ethical ideas we learn. We all thereby strive to practice communication with care, respect, and wisdom.

I aim to reply to your emails within 24 hours on weekdays. Do not expect a response after 5pm or during the weekends. If you have not received a response from me in two business days, please send a follow-up. I cannot guarantee a response in the 12 hours before an assignment is due, so please plan ahead. If your concern is complicated or not time-sensitive, coming to office hours or scheduling an appointment is ideal.

Canvas Site:

https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/438295

Course Description

This course introduces Global Buddhism, showing how this rich and complex religious tradition has travelled across time and geographical spaces. Starting from the Axial Age when many traditions around the Globe like Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, and Jainism shared common ethical enquiries to make sense of their existential crisis, the course further explores Buddhism in the wake of Mercantilism, Colonialism, Second World War, Cold War, Globalization, and in contemporary fast-paced global and ecological disruptions. Alongside this historical survey of Global Buddhism, this course offers the understanding of the key Buddhist ethical ideas and practices to cast Buddhism not only as a religious philosophy but also as a lived and living tradition. Moreover, this course will shed light on the under-recognized history of Buddhism in the Heartland of America where UW-Madison has particularly played a vital role in the history of Global Buddhism. By so doing, this course will provide a visit to Memorial Library and

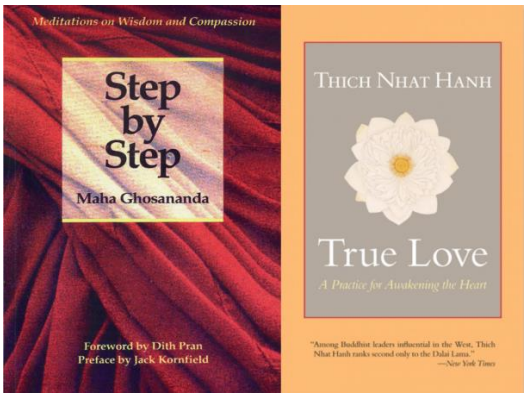
Chazen Art Museum to uncover the Hidden Gems of the rare Buddhist materials and collections in relation to the history of Global Buddhism.

Approaches

The question that arises from presenting Global Buddhism is how to represent Buddhist experiences and practices which vary across the globe. In this scenario, the major and/or dominant traditions have always been prioritized; smaller traditions have often been set aside. This is a point where we can make a difference. In this course, I honor smaller Buddhist traditions as equally important as the mainstream ones, and I incorporate those traditions as an integral part of getting access to the foundational understanding of Global Buddhism.

Love is another approach/theme to Introduction to Buddhism in this semester. We currently are in the midst of natural calamity, significant climate change, wars, violence, partitions, dispossessions, economic crisis, on-going pandemics as well as everyday social injustices and structural violence. We are committed to employ love, compassion, and wisdom in co-existing and building this learning community as reflected on the course readers: the two major works on Buddhist peace activism which stem from individual change and practice.

Course Readers



Ghosananda, Maha. *Step by Step: Meditations on Wisdom and Compassion*. Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1992.

(available as a hardcopy at Memorial Library and as a digital copy on Canvas, with granted permission by Parallax Press)

Nhất Hạnh, Thích. *True Love: A Practice for Awakening the Heart*. Boston: Shambhala, 2004.

(available as hardcopy at Memorial Library and as a digital copy on UW library website)

Learning Outcomes

∞ Students gain a basic understanding of Buddhist ethical ideas and lived practices.

∞ Students understand the nexus of global connection and historical forces in shaping and reshaping Buddhist histories.

∞ Students are able to think critically, creatively, and mindfully about the influences of Buddhism on popular cultures and media, and also to see Buddhism in relation to the contemporary phenomena.

∞ Learning coaches and thinking partners are able to engage with students in a meaningful study environment.

Workload

Karma in Buddhism means action and that can be translated into your participation and engagement with this course. Regular attendance both in lectures and discussion sections are required to ensure you can catch up with the course's rich and complicated content. Weekly lectures take 2.5 hours. (75 minutes each lecture) while discussion takes 50 minutes. In addition to regular attendance and participation, you are expected to spend approximately 8 – 8.5 hours on reading/listening/watching weekly materials and posting your responses on Canvas Discussion board.

Learning Assessment (100%)

15% Attendance and Participation in Lectures

Attendance and participation in lectures are required to ensure that you can follow the complicated lessons. You may have up to two absences from the lecture over the course of the semester. **Please email Natalie Belew (nbelew@wisc.edu) in advance** if you do plan to use one of those absences. In the case you fail to contact Natalie ahead of time or miss beyond the two absences, you will be asked to write a 500-word reflection on the assigned readings in connection to the lecture. It is also your responsibility to connect with another student for the notes in order to complete your reflection assignment and not risk falling behind.

15% Attendance and Participation in Discussion Sections

Attendance and participation in Discussion Sections are required to ensure that you can follow the complicated lessons. You may have up to two absences from the discussion section over the course of the semester. **Please email Natalie Belew (nbelew@wisc.edu) in advance** if you do plan to use one of those absences. In the case you fail to contact Natalie ahead of time or miss beyond the two absences, you will be asked to write a 500-word reflection on the assigned readings in connection to the lecture. It is also your responsibility to connect with another student for the notes in order to complete your reflection assignment and not risk falling behind.

10% Canvas Discussion Posts (**Due by Monday Noon of the following week**)

You are required to post on TWO discussion threads a week. The due is by Monday Noon of the following week. The threads will be closed for comments afterwards. Most of the Discussion threads will be related to the lectures. This allows you to engage in class conversation beyond our lecture hall.

15% Journey to the West Reflective Essay (**Due on Canvas by 11:59 pm of March 18, 2025**)

This reflective essay asks you to critically and creatively analyze two films: *The Monkey King 2* and *Xuanzang*, and also makes a dialogue with at least one of the Buddhist primary sources we read in class. The length of this reflective essay is 5 – 6 pages (Font: Times New Roman 12 pts, double-spaced). This assignment will appear as an academic writing with the intro, body, and conclusion, also with appropriate amounts of quotes and references (Chicago style, 16th edition). This essay should be well-organized with a clear thesis statement at the opening statement and showing the topic sentence in each paragraph. The detailed rubrics of this assignment will be posted on Canvas.

15% Hidden Gems at UW Op-Ed Writing (**Due on Canvas by 11:59 pm of April 20, 2025**)

This assignment allows you to express your appreciation of the Hidden Gems of Buddhist collections at UW both at Memorial Library and Chazen Art Museum. The style of this writing is an Op-Ed piece as you can see in the academic newsletters or the policy news. The language of this writing should appear persuasive. The length of this writing is 3 – 5 pages (Font: Times New Roman 12 pts, double-spaced). You may consult how to write an Op-Ed piece from this link: https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new_seglin_how_to_write_an_oped_1_25_17_7.pdf
The detailed rubrics of this assignment will be posted on Canvas.

10% Oral Exit Exam (**Week 15 or earlier by appointment**)

This Oral Exit Exam ensures that everyone has a chance to meet me one-on-one for a 10-minute conversation before you leave this course. It is a chance to meaningfully check your understanding of the course. During the exam, I may ask you a contemplative question regarding how you understand the course readers: Maha Ghosananda's *Step by Step* and Thich Nhat Hanh's *True Love*. You are absolutely welcome to bring with you these two books if that would boost your confidence when answering the question. An example of the question is, *How can True Love be obtained Step by Step?* Do not freak out about this exam as it is essentially a casual conversation. As long as you finish reading these two books, your good karma will yield an impressive result.

20% Final Project (**Due on Canvas by 11:59 pm of May 8, 2025**)

As you notice, the other assignments are about academic or semi-academic writings. The final project provides you an opportunity to come up with a creative expression. You may select any particular story or theme about the Introduction to Buddhism for the final project. Stories about

people, places, objects, monuments, rituals, and memories are particularly welcome. The following are the options for your final project.

-Photographic Essay (original, 20 images with captions) plus a 1000-word summary of your project

-Vlog/Short film/Documentary/Anime (10 mins. length, professionally edited)

-A Collection of Poems (12 pages minimum) plus a 500-word summary of your overall ideas

-Magazine (20 pages minimum)

-Academic Essay (10 pages minimum, double-spaced, 12 pts font, Times New Roman, excluding bibliography-Chicago style, 16th edition)

Students should discuss the ideas of their final project with the instructor at least 4 weeks prior to the deadline.

The detailed rubrics of each category will be posted on Canvas.

Late Work Policy

The ultimate goal of higher education is to help students grow intellectually, mentally, and professionally. Good discipline is a part of this learning process. Late submission is subject to minus 1% per day. Submissions later than the 3rd day after the deadline will not be accepted.

A Statement of Generative AI

This course encourages the exercise of full capacity of human being towards self-reliance and liberation. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and applications (including, but not limited to, Copilot, DALL-E, and others) for course assignments and assessments does not support the learning objectives of this course and is prohibited. Using them in any way for this course is a violation of the course's expectations and will be addressed through UW–Madison's academic misconduct policy, specifically UWS 14.03(1)b (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise.

Additional Resources

1) The History Lab
- Assistance from History Department grad students in improving your history papers
- Website also provides many helpful writing guides on a range of topics related to writing history papers. https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.html
2) The Writing Center

- Workshops, writers' groups, and one-on-one assistance to improve writing. https://writing.wisc.edu/

3) McBurney Resource Center
   Help with necessary accommodations in testing, classroom, etc.
   https://mcburney.wisc.edu/

Extra Credits

100% Attendance and Participation in both lectures and discussion sections earn a top up of 1% at the end of the semester. On-time submission of all assignments also results in a round-up of 1% at the end of the course. There will be two separate missions to earn extra credits (0.5% each) during semester, so please stay tuned!

Grade Scale

A=93-100

AB=88-92

B=83-87

BC=78-82

C=70-77

D=60-69

F=<60

Senior Auditors

We welcome senior auditors in this class. Since this class is interactive in style and depends on engagement with assigned texts, you will get much more out of the class if you plan to read and discuss the course material. In past years, senior auditors have often found it enjoyable to form their own discussion section and meet outside of class to discuss readings and other course assignments.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Statement

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable

accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform the faculty instructor of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: McBurney Disability Resource Center)

Religious Observances

Please notify your TA (Natalie Belew: nbelew@wisc.edu) in advance if you need to miss class due to participation in religious holidays.

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

UW-Madison Land Acknowledgement

The University of Wisconsin–Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop (day-JOPE) since time immemorial. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin. This history of colonization informs our shared future of collaboration and innovation.

Today, UW–Madison respects the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with the eleven other First Nations of Wisconsin.

Academic Standards and Grading Policy

This class will adhere strictly to prevailing academic standards, UW regulations, and civil law regarding plagiarism, fair use of other people's intellectual property, and cheating on class assignments. Please ask if you have any questions about what constitutes fair use or proper

behavior. The basic rules are to do your own work, respect the work of others -- whether that of a classmate or a published author -- and do not attempt to take unfair advantage of your classmates as you complete the assignments for this class. Any suspected violations of academic standards will be promptly investigated. Confirmed offenses will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Office of Student Assistance and Support.

Schedule

Part 1: Buddhist Ethics and Practices

Week 1

Lecture 1 (Jan 21, 2025) Course Orientation

Lecture 2 (Jan 23, 2025) Languages of Buddhism

Week 2 "No Mud, No Lotus"

Lecture 3 (Jan 28, 2025) Axial Age and the Common Existential Question

Lecture 4 (Jan 30, 2025) Karma, Samsara, and Nonlinear Historical Thinking

Reading assignment:

• Excerpts from the Therīgāthā (read only the English translations on every other page): "Paṭācārā," pp. 55-59; "Kisā-Gotamī," pp. 88-91. From: *Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns (Therigatha)*, trans., C.A.F. Rhys Davids and K.R. Norman

• Excerpts from the Therīgāthā: "Patachara," pp. 66-67; "Kisagotami," pp. 110-115. From: *Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women*, translated by Charles Hallisey

• Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta, pp. 17-20, translated by Rewata Dhamma. From: *The First Discourse of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of Dhamma*

• "Conditioned Genesis, pp. 115-125, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, translated by Donald K. Swearer. From: *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa*, edited by Donald K. Swearer

Week 3 "Lives of the Buddhas"

Lecture 5 (Feb 4, 2025) Buddha and Buddha-nature

Lecture 6 (Feb 6, 2025) Many Vessels, One Destination

Reading Assignment:

• Guo Gu's *Glimpses of Buddhanature: Buddhist teacher-practitioners from across traditions share personal moments that gave them insight into the true nature of mind* (Lion's Roars)

• Chia, Jack Meng-That. "Neither Mahāyāna Nor Theravāda: Ashin Jinarakkhita and the Indonesian Buddhayāna Movement." *History of Religions* 58, no. 1 (August 2018): 24–63.

Week 4 "Taking Refuge in the Triple Gems"

Lecture 7 (Feb 11, 2025) The Power of Individual Transformation

Lecture 8 (Feb 13, 2025) On Critical Boredom: Samvega

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

• MN 86 PTS: M ii 97 *Angulimala Sutta: About Angulimala* translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Week 5 "Ascetics, Monastics, and Lay"

Lecture 9 (Feb 18, 2025) Buddhist Precepts and Ordination

Lecture 10 (Feb 20, 2025) Lay Life

Reading Assignment:

• Excerpts from *Forest Recollections*, Kamala Tiyavanich, ch. 3 "Facing Fear," pp. 79-105

Watching Assignment:

• Zen Buddhist nun Jeong Kwan's Korean temple food philosophy

Week 6 "Wisdom and Skillful Means"

Lecture 11 (Feb 25, 2025) Everyday Language and Dharma Language

Lecture 12 (Feb 27, 2025) On Bodhisattvas

Reading assignment:

• "Everyday Language and Dhamma Language," pp. 126-140, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, translated by Donald K. Swearer. From: *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa*, edited by Donald K. Swearer.

• "A Modern Sermon on Merit Making," pp. 399-401, Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, translated by Donald K. Swearer. From: *Buddhism in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

• Excerpts from *The Vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra Sutra* translated by Upasika Chihmann

Watching Assignment:

• *Journey to the West: Invitation to World Literature* (2010)

• *The Monkey King 2* (2016)

• *Xuanzang* (2016)

Week 7 "Buddhist Epistemes"

Lecture 13 (March 4, 2025) Several Types of Wisdom

Lecture 14 (March 6, 2025) Buddhist Magic and Higher Knowledge

Reading Assignment:

• Excerpts from *The Holy Teachings of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture*, trans. Robert A. F. Thurman:-

-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

Week 8 "Buddhist Cosmos"

Lecture 15 (March 11, 2025) Of Human and Non-human Worlds

Required Watching: Janet Gyatso's Being with Animals: Buddhist Resources

Lecture 16 (March 13, 2025) Interbeing

Film Screening: "A Cloud Never Dies" biographical documentary of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh narrated by Peter Coyote

Reading Assignment:

• "Please Call Me by My True Names," p. 72-73, "Interbeing" p. 150, and "Interrelationship," p. 154, Thich Nhat Hanh. From: *Call Me By My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh*.

Week 9 "Buddhist Ritual Life"

Lecture 17 (March 18, 2025) Buddhist Rites of Passage

~ No Class on March 20, 2025 ~ Students should work on the reading assignments of week 10.

***Journey to the West Reflective Essay Due on Canvas**

by 11:59 pm of March 20, 2025*

Spring Break (March 22 – 30, 2025)

Week 10 "Liberation"

Lecture 18 (April 1, 2025) Gender and the Paths to Awakening

Lecture 19 (April 3, 2025) Nirvana

Reading Assignment:

• Excerpts from Forest Recollections, Kamala Tiyavanich, Ch. 5 "Battling Sexual Desire," pp. 127-142

• Sn 1.8 PTS: Sn 143-152 Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness translated from the Pali by The Amaravati Sangha

• Excerpts from Heart Sutra, New Translation by Plum Village

Remark: You should set up a scheduled consultation with Ik (kittisenee@wisc.edu) regarding your final project this week at the latest.

Part 2: Global Buddhism

Week 11 "Buddhism and Colonial Legacy"

Lecture 20 (April 8, 2025) The lecture today will be held inside the Memorial Library as we will make a visit to the rare Buddhist manuscript collections of UW, with an orientation by Larry Ashmun, the Southeast Asian and Buddhist collections bibliographer. Room: TBA

Lecture 21 (April 10, 2025) Buddhist Diplomacy

Week 12 "East Meets West"

Lecture 22 (April 15, 2025) The World's Parliament of Religions (Chicago, 1893) and The World Fellowship of Buddhists (Sri Lanka, 1950)

Lecture 23 (April 17, 2025) Hidden Buddhist Collections at Chazen Art Museum

Remark: The Discussion Sections this week (April 17, 2025) will be replaced by a visit to UW Chazen Art Museum at your regular class time. Please arrive at the museum lobby as early as you can so you can store your coats and backpacks in the designated cloakroom, as required by the museum's regulations for visitors. This is to ensure that we have sufficient time before the start of the museum tour.

Hidden Gems at UW Op-Ed Writing Due on Canvas

by 11:59 pm. of April 20, 2025

Week 13 "Buddhism in the Post-independence and the Cold War"

Lecture 24 (April 22, 2025) Invited Guest Lecture (Zoom): *Buddhist Humanitarianism and the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary Ending of Vietnam Wars* by Prof. Sara A. Swenson (Dartmouth College)

Lecture 25 (April 24, 2025) Invited Guest Lecture (Zoom): *Khmer Buddhism in Italy* by Prof. Sophea Seng (California State University, Long Beach)

Week 14 "Buddhism and Diasporas"

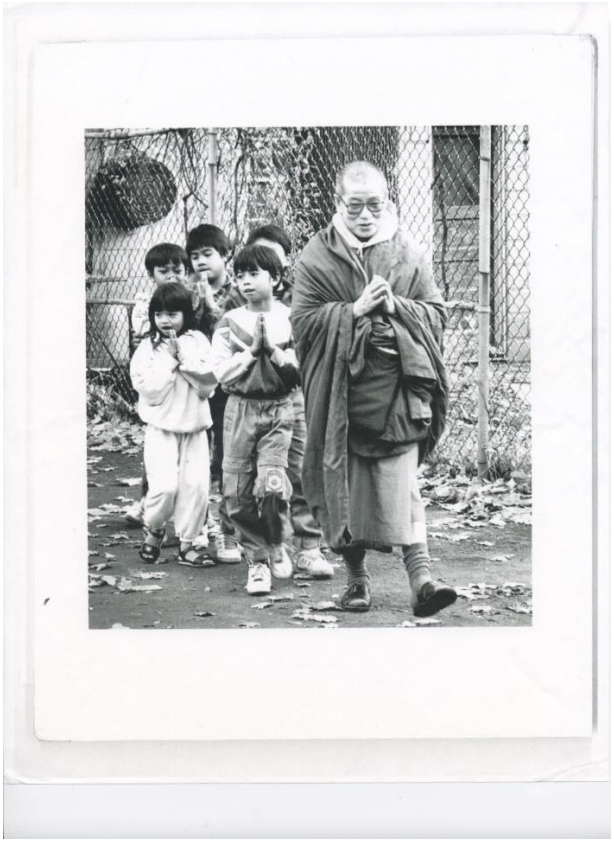
Lecture 26 (April 29, 2025) In-person Guest Lecture: *Thai Temples in Japan* by Prof. Mayumi Okabe (Chukyo University and Visiting Faculty at UW Anthropology Department)

Lecture 27 (May 1, 2025) **Final Debriefing**

Week 15 (Oral Exit Exam: May 6 and May 8, 2025)

Exam Venue: TBA

Final Project Due on Canvas by 11:59 pm. of May 9, 2025



Maha Ghosananda (1913 – 2007) leading a walking meditation

Courtesy of Amy Lee Sanford