

Introduction to Buddhism



Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem:

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha—is a ubiquitous practice which crosses the diverse times and places that constitute the Buddhist world.

Buddhist Theories and Practices for Living

Tuesdays and Thursdays • 4:00PM to 5:15PM • [Grainger Hall](#) 2120

Instructor: Tyler A. Lehrer (*he/him*), PhD Candidate, History, UW–Madison, tlehrer@wisc.edu

TA: Mateusz (“Matt”) Ferens (*he/him*), PhD Candidate, Art History, UW–Madison, ferens@wisc.edu

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Requisites: Sophomore Standing

Designations & Attributes: **Breadth:** Either Humanities or Social Science; **Level:** Intermediate; **L&S Credit:** Counts as L&S Credit; **Grad 50%:** Counts Toward 50% Grad. Coursework Req.

An Overview: This course introduces and surveys Buddhism across Asia and beyond, beginning in what is now India at the time of the Buddha, all the way to the 1960s in Southeast Asia and the U.S. during the Vietnam War, and into the present day. 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 Saṅgha, communities and individuals who call themselves Buddhist. We will examine and discuss interpretations of the Triple Gem through a variety of primary sources such as the Buddha’s teachings, stories about influential nuns and monks, Zen poetry, and even Buddhist art in the Chazen Museum.

Our Approach: Our course uses a “history of religions” approach, which means that we will examine actual Buddhist communities and people: looking at 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; and their forms and genres of expression. Historians of religion want to do more than study how people in the past have lived. We want to try and experience the world through their eyes and learn how they understood what it means to be human.

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 historical and cultural moments: early Buddhism in ancient India, the flow of Indian Mahāyāna 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, Theravāda Buddhism in nineteenth and early twentieth century Thailand, the Euro-American Beat generation’s encounter with Buddhism in the 1950s, Socially Engaged Buddhism in 1960s-70s Southeast Asia, and global Buddhism in the contemporary world. Our sources include the Buddha’s teachings, spiritual accounts composed by the first Buddhist women, biographies of a devout 3rd century BCE Buddhist king, devotional and ritual biographies of the Buddha from Sri Lanka and Thailand, and beloved folk stories from China. We will follow along on lonely mountain paths and hear

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



The first part of the course examines the life and figure of the Buddha through Buddhist eyes.

autumn cricket cries in the writings of the 18th century Zen poet-monk Ryōkan, and watch Zen teachers attempt to translate zazen meditation for 1950s and ‘60s Americans. We will also read and discuss Buddhist chants, prayers, ritual texts, sermons, memoirs, meditation instructions, tattoos, and poetry.

Course Themes: Contemporary Americans sometimes *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 and contemporary moments, especially when and where Buddhist communities have developed new interpretations and technologies of knowledge production;
- central ideas related to Buddhist understandings of the “Triple Gem,” which will help us not only to see how Buddhists think and act in their efforts to construct meaningful and happy lives, but also how different people in different places received and reworked those 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 operates in different peoples’ experiences and cultures as an attempt to find and/or construct meaningful and happy lives.



In the second part of the course, we'll study the Dharma both philosophically and experientially, in Buddhist writings and by trying out meditation practices with experienced teachers. “Dharma” refers to the teachings of the Buddhas and to the nature of reality: what is real, what is right.

Learning Outcomes: What you gain from this course depends in part on your level of effort. Students who are engaged in the course and regularly prepared for class can expect to:

- Learn and practice “seeing through Buddhist eyes,” a central aim of the history of religions approach, and the primary methodology we will 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 evident in Buddhist history and cultures.
- Become literate in basic Buddhist concepts. Use this awareness to become a more religiously and culturally informed 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” Buddhism and Buddhists.
- Practice and deepen your facility with critical and analytical reading, thinking, and writing through your study of Buddhist ideas and practices.
- Apply our analytical method of studying religion toward understanding your own (and other) religious traditions.



The third part of the course examines the saṅgha, a term that refers to the monks, nuns and other practitioners who identify as “Buddhist.”

- Learn to be comfortable with the unfamiliar! Gain confidence in your ability to process, interpret and use new concepts and vocabularies. While the initial learning curve in this course may be steep for some 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. There are no prerequisites or expectations that you have previously studied Buddhism or the history of Asian religions, but you should enter the course with an openness to reading and analyzing a variety of Buddhist sources that might initially seem unfamiliar or hard to comprehend. Most students who are engaged in the course begin to feel comfortable using Buddhist concepts (i.e., “*tri-ratana*,” “*kalpa*” and “*dukkha*”) by mid-semester.

This course involves **2.5 hours per week** of lecture classes (which include discussion and experiential learning activities), and a **50-minute** weekly discussion section. In addition to these hours of structured time, the class carries the expectation that you will engage with the readings, films, and other weekly assignments for an average of 2 hours for every hour of structured class time each week. In other words, in addition to 3.5 hours of weekly structured class time, plan to allot an **average of 8 hours per week** for reading, writing, and preparing for discussions. Altogether, the total time expectation for this class is an **average of 12 hours per week**. You can expect many weeks to be

somewhat lighter than this, while other weeks with substantive assignments will take up a bit more time.

Honors and graduate students will complete additional assignments and take on a “community building” role (see below).

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

Assignments and Grading: Grading in this class emphasizes the Buddhist mindfulness (Pāli: *sati*; Sanskrit: *smṛti*) practices of consistently “being present” and “being engaged” to help prevent you from losing motivation and falling behind. We think that learning these practices will help you in your other classes and activities, too. Cumulatively, 50% of your grade will depend on consistent attendance, participation, and weekly assignments, in other words, “being present” and “being engaged.”

We recognize that students take this class for different reasons, and that you come with diverse academic and personal backgrounds, skills, and majors. To help you do your best in this class, you get to choose the format of your Final Project from two different options. Both options will measure your cumulative learning in the course, and will be worth 20% of your grade. Full details and instructions about assignments and grading will be provided in lecture and on [Canvas](#) as we go along. **Here is an overview of what you can expect and how it will be graded. There are 5 components to your overall grade:**

1. Attendance & Participation (20%):

Your attendance and participation grades include an evaluation of your attendance, participation, and preparation for discussion sections (10%), as well as your attendance and engagement in lecture classes (10%). We will use [Top Hat](#) to record attendance in lecture. You are required to bring assigned reading materials (paper or digital copies) to lectures and your discussion sections each week since we will be referring to specific quotes from the readings. Being “present and engaged” also means that you will need to do more than just show up. We will provide you with plenty of opportunities for different kinds of active engagement, including asking questions, participating in large and small group discussions, responding to surveys, communicating group conclusions and questions, working on collaborative and creative projects, and taking part in brief in-class writing exercises.



Our course includes both an experiential encounter with Buddhist artwork in the Chazen Museum, and guest speakers and meditation instructors representing diverse Buddhist perspectives.

You are allowed to miss one discussion section and one lecture class without impacting your grade,¹ but please, save it for a week you are sick or have other urgent personal obligations. Except in cases of illness, emergency, or other justifiable situations (such as planned absences for religious holidays, family matters, or job/graduate school interviews), you cannot make up missed classes. For planned absences, please consult the instructor and TA **in advance**. Making up missed classes for planned absences may involve additional assignments or meetings. ***If you have COVID symptoms, please stay home. We will work with you on alternative arrangements so you can stay caught up.***¹

2. **10 (out of 13) Weekly Primary Source Analyses (20%):** Your weekly short writeup will consist of a 100 to 150-word analysis of a quote you pick from the primary source readings (or films, when applicable) each week, responding to questions provided in [Canvas](#). All Primary Source Analyses must be submitted each week (except on the weeks you elect to opt out) by **Wednesday at 11:59PM, prior to your discussion section meetings**. Late analysis assignments will not be accepted, and missing analysis assignments cannot be made up since they are intended to help you prepare for discussions, as well as help you stay up to date with course materials. **For full credit, you are required to submit 10 (out of 13) Primary Source Analyses.** You may opt out of three Primary Source Analysis assignments throughout the semester without impacting your grade, but you are still expected to do the reading.

3. **10 (out of 14) Weekly Discussion Posts (10%):** Post a thoughtful short response, explanation, analysis, or question related to the prompt posted in [Canvas](#) each week, and respond to **at least one** other student's post on the discussion board. Posts should be approximately 100 to 150 words. These prompts are intended to help us closely examine key concepts, questions, problems, or difficult terms we encounter together. **For full credit,**



Our course draws toward a close with a consideration of saṅgha among Socially Engaged Buddhists during the Vietnam War. We'll read Thich Nhat Hanh's letter to Martin Luther King, Jr. about the 1963 self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc, a venerated Vietnamese monk

- you will need to submit 10 (out of 14) posts.** You may opt out of four Discussion Posts without impacting your grade. Posts and at least one response to another student are due each week by **11:59PM on the following Sunday** (except during weeks that you are opting out).
4. **Two Short Analysis Projects (30%; 15% each):** These assignments (approximately 5 paragraphs each, i.e., 450 to 500 words), plus accompanying illustrations and photos, ask you to bring all of your skills together into a close reading and critical analysis that bears on certain primary

¹ We want everyone to stay **safe** and **well**. If you are feeling physically or mentally un-well, if you may have been exposed to COVID, or if unexpected circumstances prohibit your attendance, please reach out ASAP to work on an alternate plan. Refer to [Canvas](#) and communications with the instructor for lecture livestreaming options.

sources—both written and visual—that we encounter this semester. One of these assignments will be shared on a [Padlet.com post](#). We will use the Padlet app/website to create a digitally mapped gallery of posts to share with the entire class.

- 5. Final Project — a choice of a 4 to 5-page analysis essay (approximately 1000 to 1250 words), or a 3 to 4-minute video PowerPoint lecture (20%):** You can choose whichever final assignment format that you prefer: either a take-home essay or a video PowerPoint lecture responding to a selection of prompts based on our primary sources. Both projects will be cumulative, and ask you to draw on at least three readings (or films) from across the semester and employ the analytical skills we learn in class.

Extra Credit: You may earn extra credit in this class by turning in or posting additional numbers of weekly assignments in the categories above. For example, turning in more than the required number of Primary Source Analyses and Weekly Discussion posts and responses (**up to one extra each**), or attending every discussion section will earn you extra credit. Additionally, you might visit a local Buddhist temple/practice community, or attend a lecture/talk and submit a short writeup for extra credit.

Honors Credit and Graduate Students: Please identify yourself to the instructor after class or in office hours. Graduate students and students taking the course for Honors credit will write two short (2 to 3-page) close readings of images or ideas in our primary sources, or produce two short (2 minute) videos that explain those images and concepts. Assignments and topics will be chosen in coordination with the instructor. All of these papers or videos will be uploaded to Canvas to share with other students in the class, so they should be written/produced with an eye toward serving as explanatory material.

In addition, grad and honors students will choose one “community-building” role in the course: either reading and responding to additional Weekly Discussion Posts, or working on close reading and writing skills with another student in the class who would like extra help. Alternatively, you may elect to research and write a short (5 page) paper connected with your major or disciplinary interests. For example, previous topics have included the neuroscience of meditation practice; Buddhist



Our explorations of the third gem, the saṅgha, will also center the history and experiences of Buddhist nuns (*bhikkhuni*).

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 or American film; or an exploratory essay on a specialized topic in Buddhist scriptures or sources, such as the treatment of queer Buddhists in medical texts, or Indian Buddhist cosmology in 19th century Burmese manuscript paintings. The topic and format of the paper must be coordinated with the instructor during the first three weeks of the semester. Plan to attend office hours at least twice during the semester to plan your projects, paper topics, and progress. The instructor will grade these assignments.

Medical School Humanities Papers: Students who are using this course to meet the requirements for a Humanities writing intensive course appropriate for a medical school admissions dossier should plan to attend office hours more than once. Your final assignment will consist of a 10 to 15-page research paper **in lieu of the final project**, including the requirement that you submit a first draft version of the paper at least three weeks prior to the final due date. Even though this is your final assignment, it is essential that you meet with the instructor within the first three weeks of class (or sooner!) to get started on your paper. Writing a successful research paper of this scope requires a good deal of organization and coordination, so we need to get started as soon as possible. Plan to meet with the instructor several times during the semester to review your progress.

Required Texts and Software:

1. *One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryōkan*, trans. John Stevens (Boston: Weatherhill / Shambhala Publications, 2006)
2. Charles Prebish & Damien Keown, *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th ed. (2010)
[Purchase and download here](#) [Or access it free through UW Libraries here](#)

Reach out to the instructor if you have any difficulty locating, accessing, or purchasing these texts. *One Robe, One Bowl* will also be “on reserve” for two hours at a time in [College Library](#).

3. We will use [Top Hat](#) to help record attendance and participation in lecture:
 Install Top Hat from the app store, access via Canvas, or with our Course/Join Code: **822622**
Be sure to log in to Top Hat with your UW–Madison Net ID!
4. We will use [Padlet.com](#) for one of the Short Analysis Projects. Further instructions in Week 5.
5. **All other course readings, materials, and films are posted on or linked through the [course Canvas](#).** We encourage you to print the primary source readings and mark them up. If you don’t want to print them, you can download them and annotate with an editing or note taking app, but you still need to bring them to lectures and discussion sections, either in paper or electronic form. It will adversely impact your participation grade if you do not consistently have access to your reading materials. You’ll need them to reference exact quotes in your discussion sections.

Abilities, Diversity, and Inclusion: We warmly welcome all identities, abilities, backgrounds, and learning needs in this course. We want to do whatever possible to help you succeed and thrive. Please notify your TA and the instructor as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester about any alternative accommodations needed. Please do not hesitate to remind us prior to due dates about your needs or accommodations. We will use whichever name and/or pronouns you do. Especially considering the continued COVID-19 pandemic, we will be flexible and responsive to changing personal, medical, and local circumstances.

Religious Observances: Please notify your TA and the instructor in advance if you need to miss class or reschedule assignments due to participation in religious holidays.

“Leaving behind
 desire, anger, and ignorance,
 discarding them all,
 having pulled out craving
 down to the root,
 I have become cool,
 I am free.”
 —*Therīgāthā*

Late Work and Academic Misconduct: Late work will normally be accepted only by prior arrangement, or in case of an emergency or urgent personal situation. Any student not making prior arrangements will be given a failing grade on any missed assignments. Failure to submit the Final Project may result in a significant grade penalty for the course.

That said, we understand that things sometimes come up which 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 and can work with you on alternate accommodations or plans to help you stay engaged. **We are committed to doing everything we can to help you succeed!**

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. If instances of academic misconduct are detected, action will be taken in accordance with University policies and State of Wisconsin statutes.²

Finally, this course is subject to numerous and frequently updated University policies related to data transparency and dissemination, students' rights and responsibilities, accommodations, disability, academic integrity, diversity, and various important other matters. We encourage you to [familiarize yourself with them here](#).

Teaching Team, Office Hours, and Discussion Sections:

Instructor:

Tyler A. Lehrer (*he/him*): Ph.D. Candidate, History, UW–Madison, tlehrer@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00PM–3:00PM (and by appointment), [Mosse Humanities](#) 5114

Teaching Assistants:

Mateusz (“Matt”) Ferens (*he/him*): Ph.D. Candidate, Art History, UW–Madison, ferens@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30PM–3:30PM; Fridays, 12:30PM–1:30PM, [Mosse Humanities](#) 4274

- Schedule a meeting at <https://calendly.com/ferens>

John Tobin (*he/him*): Ph.D. Student, History, UW–Madison, jptobin@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:00PM–4:00PM (and by appointment), [Mosse Humanities](#) 4274

Discussion Sections:

Section 301:	Fridays	8:50AM–9:40AM	John	Mosse Humanities 2631
Section 302:	Fridays	9:55AM–10:45AM	John	Mosse Humanities 2121
Section 303:	Fridays	11:00AM–11:50AM	John	Mosse Humanities 2631
Section 304:	Fridays	12:05PM–12:55PM	John	Mosse Humanities 2631
Section 305:	Thursdays	5:40PM–6:30PM	Matt	Grainger Hall 2185
Section 306:	Thursdays	6:45PM–7:35PM	Matt	Grainger Hall 2185
Section 307:	Fridays	9:55AM–10:45AM	Matt	Vilas Hall 4018
Section 308:	Fridays	11:00AM–11:50AM	Matt	Vilas Hall 4018

² **A note on ChatGPT:** Our policy in the course will be to *permit but discourage* you to use this technology in your assignments. If you choose to use it, we will require you to “cite” the tool as a source. In addition, you must substantively edit/rewrite any raw ChatGPT output and include **both** the raw output **and** your substantively improved writing in any assignments. Any raw and uncited ChatGPT text detected in student writing will be considered academic misconduct. These policies are subject to revision.

Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Readings³

Part 1: Introduction to the Triple Gem

Week 1 • Jan 24 and Jan 26 • Introduction to Course and History of Religions

Lectures: 1. Introduction to the Triple Gem: Why Study Buddhism? • 2. Historical Contexts

1. For Tuesday's lecture, think about a song that has been meaningful to you lately. Bring it to class; we will not only begin to build a [Spotify playlist together for the course](#), but we'll also use this to get to know one another, too! We will discuss the history of religions approach our course employs, as well as introduce the major components and weekly rhythms, and allow plenty of time for questions.
2. Thursday's lecture orients us in place and time in the premodern Indian subcontinent at around the time when Buddhism began to take root. In addition, we will explore the methodological benefits of not only "learning about," but also "learning from" Buddhism and Buddhists as we foreground Buddhist ways of organizing knowledge and practice.

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, "The Background to Buddhism," in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 2–24.

Due:

- Read the entire syllabus and **mark up your calendars with assignment due dates**. Bring your questions about the course, assignments, and logistics to class!
- Familiarize yourself with the organization of our [Canvas site](#). Notice that most assignments, readings, links, resources, lecture files (e.g. slides and videos), and instructions appear only on Canvas. **Everything you need is organized by week in the "modules" tab.**
- **Weekly Discussion Posts** begin this week: Submit to Canvas by **11:59PM the following Sunday** (i.e., this week, by Jan. 29th). Write a 100 to 150-word post responding to, explaining, or raising further questions posed by the weekly prompt which gets at Buddhist concepts, categories, ideas, and/or practices we are examining. In addition, post a 100 to 150-word response, follow-up, or question on at least one other student's post. See full instructions in Canvas. **For full credit, you must submit 10 (out of 14) Discussion Posts along with comments on at least one other student's post.** In other words, you can "opt out" of four weeks.

³ Our schedule may be altered slightly due to the evolving needs of the course (i.e., visiting speaker availability). Any alterations will be announced in class and on Canvas in advance of relevant due dates.

Week 2 • Jan 31 and Feb 2 • Background to Buddhism

Lectures: 1. Taking Refuge • 2. Film: “The Buddha”

1. Tuesday’s lecture introduces and contextualizes the central Buddhist ritual of taking refuge, one that not only organizes and guides our multiple explorations of Buddhist history, ideas, practices, and knowledge, but which also traverses and unites many of the diverse temporal and geographic spaces of the Buddhist world.
2. On Thursday, we will watch and discuss sections from the 2010 PBS documentary “The Buddha” in lecture in order to begin comparing different ways of learning about the Buddha and Buddhism. The entire documentary is also posted to Canvas.

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, “The Buddha,” in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 25–41.
- “Ārāḍhanā and Saraṇasīla: Invitation, Refuges and Precepts,” [excerpted and translated from a Thai chanting manual], 1–2.
- Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans., “The Three Jewels,” in *Buddhist Scriptures*, ed. Donald Lopez (New York: Penguin, 2004), 101–104.

Due:

- **Discussion Sections** with your TAs begin this week.
- **Weekly Primary Source Analyses** begin this week: Submit to Canvas by **11:59PM on Wednesday**, prior to your discussion section (i.e., this week, by Feb. 1st). Your post should include one (or more) direct quote(s) from the text, followed by a 100 to 150-word response to the weekly prompt asking you to analyze the quote(s) you select. Note that the Primary Source Analysis must be completed each week prior to your discussion section (unless you are skipping that week). See additional instructions in Canvas. **For full credit, you must submit 10 (out of 13) analyses.**
 - 📌 **Critical thinking hints:** Remember, your task in writing these analyses and preparing for discussion section is not to emphasize on your own reactions to the text (i.e., “*Buddhism is so fascinating because...*” 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...*”).
- **Weekly Discussion Posts** continue throughout the semester.

Part 2: The Buddha, the First Gem

Week 3 • Feb 7 and Feb 9 • Who is the Buddha?

Lectures: 1. The Life of the Buddha: History & Cosmology • 2. Cosmic Buddhist Biography

1. In addition to lectures this week which situate the life and biography of the Buddha in a wider cosmological and ethical perspective, a portion of our class time on both Tuesday and Thursday will be devoted to two “close reading” skill-building exercises.
2. Building on our discussions about the Buddha, Thursday’s lecture centers learning about the Buddha and early Buddhism from sacred biographical literature.

Readings:

- N.A. Jayawickrama, trans., “The Intermediate Epoch,” in *The Story of Gotama Buddha: The Nidāna-Kathā of the Jātakaṭṭhakathā* (Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 2002), 63–101.
 - 📌 *The Nidāna-kathā* [“Story of the Antecedents or Causes”] represents an early commentarial effort to piece together the life story of the Buddha from different canonical sources and accounts. The “intermediate epoch” referred to in the text traces the life of Siddhartha Gotama from his birth in Tusita heaven to his enlightenment.
- Āryaśūra, “The Tigress,” “The Hare,” and “The King of the Geese,” in *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra’s Jātakamālā*, trans. Peter Khoroch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5–9, 32–38, and 140–152.
 - 📌 The *Jātaka* [“birth stories”] are concerned with the 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.

Due:

- **Weekly Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue throughout the semester.

Week 4 • Feb 14 and Feb 16 • The Buddha and Saṅgha in History and Literature

Lectures:

1. The Past and Present Order of *Bhikkhuni* • 2. Royalty in the Life of the Buddha and Buddhism

1. Tuesday's lecture will include a session on learning from Buddhist narratives. We will discuss the stories of the early community of nuns and monks as beloved sources of religious guidance and inspiration. We will consider how and why the stories of the early *bhikkhuni* (Buddhist nuns) reach across time. What makes certain texts powerful and persistent?
2. On Thursday, we'll consider the weighty ethical dilemmas involved in being a "Buddhist king" as we explore the growing Buddhist world just after the death of the Buddha.

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, "The Buddhist Sangha," and "The Mauryan Dynasty and Aśoka," in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 60–77, and 84–86.
 - 📌 Pay special attention to the basic chronology and geography of the **Mauryan Empire**, and how and why the dynasty became important to the historical development of Buddhism. **King Aśoka** (ca. 304–232 BCE) was one of the most renowned and politically important converts to Buddhism in its history.
- Charles Hallisey, trans., "Introduction," [and the poems by and/or about] "Mutta," "Patacara," "Kisagotami," and "Subha of the Jivakamba Grove," in *Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), vii–xxxiii, 11, 67–75, 111–115, and 183–195.
 - 📌 The *Therīgāthā* ["Stories of the Buddhist nuns"] records the words and lives of the *bhikkhuni* (fully ordained women, or "nuns") who joined the early saṅgha. **Read the Introduction and the English translations on odd-numbered pages.**
- John S. Strong, trans., "The Buddha's Smile," "Aśoka's Birth," "Aśoka's Accession," "Aśoka the Fierce," "Samudra and Aśoka's Conversion," and "The 84,000 Stūpas," in *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 201–221.
 - 📌 Our selections from the *Aśokāvadāna*, a biography of India's King Aśoka, begin by embedding his life story within a prophecy issued by the Buddha. We then learn about his childhood, rule, conversion to Buddhism, and his acts after converting.
- Ven. S. Dhammika, "The Five Precepts," *Good Question, Good Answer with Ven. S. Dhammika*, Buddha Dharma Education Association, <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/qanda04.htm>, [also linked through Canvas].

Due:

- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 5 • Feb 21 and Feb 23 • Seeing the Buddha in the World of Visual Art

Lectures: No synchronous lectures or discussion sections this week, see below

- This week, **instead of our usual lecture and discussion sections**, we will break the class into appx. ten groups for a scheduled activity in the [Chazen Museum of Art](#). Prior to your scheduled visit (which will take place during either a regular lecture or discussion time this week), plan to spend 2–3 hours there on your own (or with a friend from class) completing a worksheet assignment and subsequent [Padlet post](#).

Readings and Video:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, “Buddhism in Southeast Asia,” in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 144–162.
- Anne R. Hansen, “Buddhist Images and Practices of Looking,” video lecture [Canvas streaming].
 - 📌 Be sure to watch this short video lecture **prior to** your first self-guided visit to the Chazen Museum.
- K.I. Matias, “Terminology of Traditional Gestures,” [and various excerpts] in *Gestures of the Buddha* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1998), 17–41, and 52–137.
 - 📌 Refer to this for a helpful secondary resource and guide for completing your worksheet and Padlet post as part of the Short Analysis assignment.
- Donald K. Swearer, “Image Consecrations (Thailand): Creating and Disseminating the Sacred,” in *The Life of Buddhism*, ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 35–44.
- Donald K. Swearer, “Consecrating the Buddha [*Buddha Abhiṣeka*],” in *Buddhism in Practice: Abridged Edition*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 50–58.

Due:

- Short Analysis Assignment 1 (of 2) — Chazen Activity, Worksheet, Padlet Post, and Short Analysis:** lecture classes and discussion sections **will not meet** this week. Instead, you will:
 - Watch a short video lecture called “Buddhist Images & Practices of Looking;”
 - Take a self-guided tour in the Chazen Museum on your own time and, while there, complete a learning activity / worksheet on Buddhist art and objects;
 - Upload your [Padlet.com post](#), which must be submitted before your...
 - Scheduled group visit (a second visit with the instructor or a TA, along with other students).
 - 📌 Be sure to read the instructions on Canvas about the assignment and rules for working in the Chazen Museum.
 - 📌 **Read, download, and print** the worksheet from Canvas before you go to the Chazen for your first self-guided tour. You will not be able to take your laptop into the galleries (only your paper worksheet and a pencil).
 - 📌 Sign up for a group visit time on Canvas.
 - 📌 Your Chazen activity will form the basis for a [Padlet.com post](#), which is what you will submit for the first Short Analysis Assignment, **due by 11:59PM on the night before your scheduled group visit**. See full details on Canvas. Note that **the Padlet post must contain your name**. Also, be sure to “pin” your post to the relevant place on the map (e.g., Ayutthaya, Thailand or Gandhāra [present-day NW India/Pakistan/Afghanistan]).
- Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Part 3: The Dharma, the Second Gem

Week 6 • Feb 28 and Mar 2 • The Buddha's First Sermon & the Four Noble Truths

Lectures: 1. Meditation: Theory and Practice • 2. “No-Self” and the Four Noble Truths

1. As part of our Dharma unit, we will incorporate meditation into our weekly meetings, starting on Tuesday. We'll use the meditations to experientially learn about Buddhist understandings of the mind and conceptions of the nature of reality, as well as to practice our course aim of “being present” and “being engaged” despite the many challenges of the time period we are living through.
 - 📌 **You are not required to participate in meditation or mindfulness activities in lecture if you are not comfortable doing so.** Instead, use this time to gather your thoughts and relax. Or, like an anthropologist, you might quietly observe the room around you. What is happening here? What effect, if any, do these activities seem to have on the students around you?
2. On Thursday, we'll continue to talk through the meanings and implications of the Four Noble Truths. In particular, we'll try to wrap our minds around what it means to *not* have a “self” according to the Buddhist theory of *anattā* (Sanskrit: *anātman*).

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, “The Dharma,” in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 42–59.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., “The First Discourse [SN 56:11, *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*],” in *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 75–78.
 - 📌 The *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* was the Buddha's very first sermon after attaining enlightenment. It lays out the Four Noble Truths, including his teaching of *paṭicca-samuppāda* in the Third Noble Truth.
- Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa, “Conditioned Genesis,” in *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa*, ed. and trans. Donald K. Swearer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 115–125.
 - 📌 Plan to invest some time reading and possibly re-reading the essay “Conditioned Genesis” (we'll read more from and discuss its author, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, in two weeks). “Conditioned Genesis” is Buddhādāsa's translation of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, a description of the nature of reality as perceived by the Buddha during his enlightenment.

Due:

- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 7 • Mar 7 and Mar 9 • Dharma in Practice: Meditation and Mindfulness

Lectures: 1. Meditation in the Buddhist Tradition • 2. Special Guest (Meet via Zoom)

1. On Tuesday we'll learn a *mettā* (loving-kindness) meditation and do an activity on Buddhist understandings of *sati* (mindfulness) as we continue to explore foundational concepts and the development of ideas and practices related to Buddhist meditation, both in premodern India and later in 19th century Thailand.
2. On Thursday, we are extremely fortunate to host [Venerable Dr. Chandima Gangodawila](#), a senior Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhist monk, Buddhist studies scholar, and meditation teacher. Ven. Chandima will conduct a 75-minute meditation and Q&A session with us over Zoom. We will learn basic meditation techniques—based on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*—for relieving stress and increasing our attention and awareness in the present moment.

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, “Meditation,” in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 120–142.
 - Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., “*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: The Foundations of Mindfulness [MN 10],” in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 145–155.
 - Kamala Tiyanich, “Facing Fear,” and “Battling Sexual Desire,” in *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 79–105, and 127–142.
- 📌 These selections from *Forest Recollections* center the lives and experiences of some now-famous late 19th and early 20th-century forest-dwelling monks in Thailand. As you read, reflect on the ways that later Buddhists have interpreted and acted out early Buddhist teachings on meditation, such as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the monastic rules of conduct found in the *Vinaya*.

Due:

- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 8 • Mar 21 and Mar 23 • Relating the Dharma to Modern Life: Two Voices

Lectures: 1. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu on Modern Life • 2. Thich Nhat Hanh and Interbeing

1. On Tuesday, after an introduction to the famous 20th-century Thai Buddhist philosopher-monk Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, we'll work with Buddhadāsa's poem "Don't Be Shamed by the Chickens" and try to apply his understanding of *paṭicca-samuppāda* to observing our own lives.
2. On Thursday, we'll have our first encounter with the Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (partially through excerpts of the beautiful film, *Walk With Me*). We will try to come up with ways to discuss Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of "inter-being," preferably without using discursive language!

Readings:

- Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa, "Everyday Language and Dhamma Language," in *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa*, ed. and trans. Donald K. Swearer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 126–140.
- Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa, Donald K. Swearer, trans., "A Modern Sermon on Merit Making," in *Buddhism in Practice: Abridged Edition*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 293–295.
- Thich Nhat Hanh, "Please Call Me by My True Names, "Interbeing," and "Interrelationship," in *Call Me by My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1999), 72–73, 150, and 154.

Due:

- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 9 • Mar 28 and Mar 30 • The Triple Gem Comes to China

Lectures: 1. Rise of the Mahāyāna • 2. Buddhism in China

1. This week's lectures will introduce the rise of a major new set of cosmological, ethical, and interpretive developments in Buddhist ideas and practices in the medieval period—Mahāyāna (“Great Vehicle”) Buddhism—in light of changing social and historical dynamics.
2. On Thursday we'll consider the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, an early core Mahāyāna Buddhist text that became especially popular in China. We'll also spend some time trying to understand what it means to “see through the Dharma-eye.”

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, “Mahāyāna,” and “China,” in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 100–119, and 164–171.
- Vimalakīrti, “Purification of the Buddha-Field,” “Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique,” “The Disciples’ Reluctance to Visit Vimalakīrti,” and “The Consolation of the Invalid,” in *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture [Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra]*, trans. Robert A.F. Thurman (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1976), 10–33, and 42–49.
 - 📌 The “Purification of the Buddha-Field” introduces the ideas of multiple realities overlapping in the same space, and how they are accessible through (or access of which produces) the “Dharma-eye.”

Due:

- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 10 • Apr 4 and Apr 6 • Buddhism on the Silk Road

Lectures: 1. Buddhism on the Silk Road • 2. Film Activity (*no lecture*)

1. On Tuesday, we will explore the silk roads and sea lanes of Buddhist expansion across Asia, and introduce the beloved “Journey to the West” collection of stories and figures you will encounter in the film Analysis Assignment.
2. On Thursday, instead of lecture, you’ll watch your choice of one of two film adaptations of “Xuanzang’s Journey to the West,” along with a short contextualizing documentary, which form the basis for your second Short Analysis Assignment.

Films:

- Annenberg Learner, *Journey to the West: Invitation to World Literature* (New York: Films Media Group, 2010, dist. 2016) [Canvas streaming]. —AND—
- 大唐玄奘 [*Xuanzang*], dir. Jianqi Huo (Beijing: China Film Group Corporation, and Mumbai: Eros International, 2016) [Canvas streaming]. —OR—
- 齐天大圣: 万妖之城 [*Monkey King and the City of Demons*], dir. Hesheng Xiang and Qiuliang Xiang (Beijing: Youku, 2018) [Canvas streaming].

Due:

- **Analysis Assignment 2 (of 2) — Journey to the West Film Assignment:** The second Short Analysis Assignment asks you to complete a 2.5 to 3-page paper responding to two questions drawing on either/both *Xuanzang* and/or *The Monkey King* in relation to the spread of Buddhism on the Silk Road, the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the cultural history, reception, and cinematic representation of this beloved story. **Due by 11:59PM on Saturday Apr. 8th.** See full details on Canvas.
- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Part 4: The Saṅgha, the Third Gem

Week 11 • Apr 11 and Apr 13 • Zen Lives

Lectures: 1. *Dhyana* to Ch'an and Zen • 2. Zen Poetry

1. On Tuesday, we turn our attention to the transnational history of more recent Mahāyāna schools in China and Japan, especially Ch'an/Zen. We'll consider Zen Buddhist poetry and do a meditation and learning activity on *mujō* (Japanese: impermanence, change) and *mushin* (a non-attached, non-dualistic state of mind), two prominent themes in the writings of the 18th century monk-poet Ryōkan. We will continue to talk through the meanings and implications of the Four Noble Truths, too.
2. On Thursday (weather permitting) we will conduct an individual meditation-nature-poetry activity which you will need to your Weekly Discussion Post (**this one is required for everyone**). Hopefully the weather will be beautiful this week, but even if it's not, we think you'll be able to capture enough of Ryōkan's zeitgeist to appreciate the day as it is. Channeling Ryōkan, we'll set out to find a quiet, beautiful spot for a reflection exercise on nature and the nature of Zen insights on impermanence and emptiness. You'll need your phone to take a photograph (or optionally, materials to make a drawing). Detailed instructions for this activity and your assignment are posted on Canvas.

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, "The Zen Tradition," "Chan," and "Japan," in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 141, 169–170, and 175–185.
- Chia Tao, "Seeing Off Shen-Miao, Buddhist Master," "Seeing Off a Man of the Tao," "Sent to a Hua Mountain Monk," and "For a Buddhist Monk," in *When I Find you Again, It Will be in Mountains: Selected Poems of Chia Tao*, trans. Mike O'Connor (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 48–51.
- Ryōkan, *One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryōkan*, trans. John Stevens (Boston: Weatherhill / Shambhala Publications, 2006).

Due:

- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.
-  **Discussion Posts are required for everyone** this week.

Week 12 • Apr 18 and Apr 20 • Contemporary Dynamics in the U.S. Saṅgha

Lectures: 1. Buddhism in the U.S. • 2. Special Guest (*Meet via Zoom*)

1. Tuesday's lecture will introduce us to early immigrant communities of Buddhists in the U.S. before considering the 1950s and 1960s "Beat" generation of American poets who were deeply influenced by Zen, and subsequently, Tibetan Buddhism. We'll read a few of their poems and learn about the complex history of mid-twentieth-century American Buddhism.
2. Thursday's lecture will feature a guest speaker, [Dr. Nalika Gajaweera](#), an anthropologist who investigates contemporary issues of race, gender, representation, and patriarchy in American Buddhism and in mindfulness meditation communities, as well as Buddhism and politics in modern Sri Lanka.

Readings and Video:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, "Buddhism in Tibet," and "Buddhism in the Western World," in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 186–216.
- Chenxing Han, "Diverse Practices and Flexible Beliefs Among Young Adult Asian American Buddhists," in *Journal of Global Buddhism* 18 (2017): 1–24.
- Gary Snyder, "Smokey the Bear Sutra," (1969), <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bear.htm>, [also linked through Canvas].
- Diane di Prima, "Buddhist New Year Song," (1990), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54974/buddhist-new-year-song/>, [also linked through Canvas].
- Nalika Gajaweera, "Creating Safe(r) Spaces for Mindfulness of Breath: Non-White Western Practitioners' Experiences of Race, Racism and Whiteness in American Mindfulness," *The Jivaka Project*, September 3, 2021, <http://www.jivaka.net/buddhism-and-breath/safer-spaces-for-mindfulness/>, [also linked through Canvas].

Due:

- **Final Project** selection this week: We need to know which final assignment option you plan to choose in order to make plans for grading. We also want to ensure that no one falls through the cracks at the end of the semester. **You should begin working on your Final Projects this week!**
 - 📌 The **Final Project** comprises *either* a 4 to 5-page analysis essay *or* a 3 to 4-minute video PowerPoint lecture responding to one of the listed prompts. See Canvas for full details.
- **Primary Source Analyses and Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 13 • Apr 25 and Apr 27 • The Socially-Engaged Saṅgha in the Vietnam War

Lectures: 1. Buddhism in the Crucible of the Vietnam War • 2. Special Guest (*Meet via Zoom*)

1. We will start to work through ideas about the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc and other Vietnamese monks and nuns together on Tuesday, with the help of Thich Nhat Hanh's letter to Martin Luther King, Jr.
 📌 Please be forewarned that you may find some of the content this week emotionally challenging to grapple with. **Please talk to us if you prefer to pursue an alternative assignment this week if you find the content troubling.**
2. On Thursday, we have our final guest lecturer, [Venerable Dr. Sister Minh Ngyuen](#), a Vietnamese Buddhist nun, refugee of the war, and UW-Madison PhD alumnus.

Readings:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, "Socially Engaged Buddhism," in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 217–234.
- Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Lotus in a Sea of Fire," "Enter the United States," "In Search of the Enemy of Man," "Remarks to His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, July 16, 1966," "Statement of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, June 1, 1966, Washington, D.C.," and "Statement of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh on the Vietnam National Day, November 1, 1966," in *Vietnam Lotus in a Sea of Fire* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 1–3, 63–72, and 106–115.
- Thich Nhat Hanh, "Recommendation," "Condemnation," "Contemplation," and "The Fire that Consumed my Brother," in *Call Me by My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1999), 18–19, 39, 48–51.

Due:

- You should be working on your **Final Project** this week.
- **Primary Source Analyses** and **Discussion Posts** continue.

Week 14 • May 2 and May 4 • A Floating Monastery**Lectures:** Conclusions

1. On Tuesday, we will discuss the gorgeous Korean Buddhist film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* in lecture. We think you will be surprised by the breadth and subtlety of the Buddhist images, ideas, practices, themes, and dynamics that you will be able to identify and analyze.
2. Thursday's lecture will offer some concluding reflections and activities. The last portion of the class will be devoted to collecting feedback on your experience in the course.

Readings and Film:

- Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, "Korea," in *Buddhism—The eBook: An Online Introduction*, 4th edition, 171–175.
- 봄 여름 가을 겨울 그리고 봄 [*Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*], dir. Kim Ki-duk (New York: Sony Pictures Classics, 2003) [Canvas Streaming].

Due:

- Your **Final Project** is due by **11:59PM on Tuesday May 9th**. See Canvas for full details.
- **Primary Source Analyses** and **Discussion Posts** end this week.