Theravāda Buddhism: Fall 2006
RELIGIOUS STUDIES 312

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-11:00
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Course Description
A course that examines the prominent texts, doctrines and practices of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. We will survey the historical development of the tradition in India with attention to major schools of interpretation and practice. Theravāda social philosophy and ethics are examined, as are the distinctive forms of meditation, popular narratives, and the patterns of accommodation with non-Buddhist religions. Village Buddhism and new forms of Theravāda tradition in urban contexts will be studied. The final and largest phase of the course in 2006 will focus upon modernity and examines distinctive traditions and practices of Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand.

Course Design
I. Four short papers, four pages maximum, to be written on assigned themes. Each will have separate guidelines.
   1. Analysis of Milindapañha Dialogues (due 9/19)
   2. Belief and Practice (10/31)
   3. Analysis of two jātaka stories
      a. Working paper ready for class: (due 10/11)
      b. Paper Due: 10/16
   4. Final Paper: Modernity or Open Topic (12/)
      (25% of the evaluation will be based upon the oral summary during the last seminar meeting; topic to be agreed upon with instructor)

II. Final Exam
III. Participation

Course Grading
Four papers...[10/10/15/20] .......55
Final Exam........................ 35
Informed Class Participation.......10

100 pts
Required Textbooks
Readings on ERE-s [Password: RELS 312]

Recommended Reading

**TOPIC ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1. 8/31: Introduction to the Course: Film: "Footprint of the Buddha"
   Required Reading
   *Theravāda Buddhism*, 1-31

2. 9/5: Orientalism and the Study of "the East"
   Required Reading
   Edward Said, “Orientalism.” [EREs]
   *Theravāda Buddhism*, 32-59

**TOPIC TWO: LIFE OF THE BUDDHA**

3. 9/7: The Life of the Shākyamuni, the Buddha I
   Required Reading
   *Buddhism in Translations*, Chapter 1
   Walpola Rahula *What the Buddha Taught*, xv-xvi

4. 9/12: The Life of the Shākyamuni, the Buddha II
   Required Reading
   *Theravāda Buddhism*, 60-78
TOPIC THREE: BASIC DOCTRINES

5. 9/14: Early Dhamma I
Required Reading
What the Buddha Taught, Chapter 4,5,6
Buddhism in Translations, Chapter 2, 3, 297-352

6. 9/19: Early Dhamma II
Required Reading
The Dhammapada
Theravāda Buddhism, 78-86
"Buddhist Texts from a Feminist Perspective" [ERE-s]

7. 9/21: Student-led Discussion: Issues in the Milindapañha

9/22, Noon: Paper I Due 😊

TOPIC FOUR: THE SANGHA and MONASTICISM

8. 9/26: Monastic Community: The Early History of the Sangha
Required Reading
Theravāda Buddhism, 87-117

9. 9/28: Sangha as Refuge: Reading the Vinaya
Required Reading
Buddhism in Translations, Chapter 5

10. 10/3: The Life of the Theravada Monk
Required Reading
M. Wijayaratna, Buddhist Monastic Life
TOPIC FIVE:

TRADITIONS OF MEDITATION

11. 10/5: Vipassanā Meditation (I): Theory
   Required Reading
   Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* 7-84; 117-191
   *Buddhism in Translations*, 280-296; 353-391

   **10/11, Noon:** Paper II Due 📜

12. 10/12: Vipassanā Meditation (II): Practice
   Required Reading
   *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, 85-116
   *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapter 7
   Recommended Reading
   Joseph Goldstein, *The Path of Insight*

TOPIC SIX:

ASHOKA and the EXPANSION OF BUDDHISM

13. 10/17: Asoka and the Edicts
   Required Reading
   Nikam and McKeon trans *The Edicts of Ashoka*
   *Theravāda Buddhism*, 81-86; 118-136

14. 10/19: Asoka as Paradigm: Theravāda Buddhism and Statecraft
   Required Reading
   Donald Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*, 63-94
   Frank Reynolds, "The Two Wheels of Dhamma" [ERE-s]

15. 10/24: Student-led discussion: Stories and the Popularization of Buddhism
   Required Reading
   Caroline Rhys-Davids *Stories of the Buddha* [Assigned Jatakas]
   *Theravāda Buddhism*, 72-81

   **10/25, Noon:** Paper III Due 📜
TOPIC SEVEN: TRADITIONS IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

16. 10/26: Buddhism in Sri Lanka: History and Central Practices
Required Reading
Theravāda Buddhism, 137-171 and What the Buddha Taught, Chapter 8
Martin Southwold, “The Concept of Nirvana in Village Buddhism” [ERES]

17. 10/31: Modernity in Sri Lanka: “Protestant Buddhism” & Buddhist Nationalism
Required Reading
Theravāda Buddhism, 172-197
H.L. Seneviratne, “Dharmapala and the Definition of the Monk’s Mission” [ERES]

18. 11/2: Sri Lankan Theravāda Practices: Relics and Bodhi Pūjā
Required Reading
Theravāda Buddhism, 198-210
Kevin Trainor, “When is a Theft Not a Theft? Relic Theft and the Cult of the
Gombrich and Obeyesekere, “The Bodhi Puja” [ERES]

19. 11/7: Buddhism & the Spirit World: Sri Lankan Deities, Demons & Healing
Required Reading
Theravāda Buddhism, 67-132; 133-162; 163-199
G. Obeyesekere "The Ritual Drama of the Sanni Demons" [ERES]

20. 11/9: Burma: History of Buddhism; Buddhism and the Spirits
Required Reading
Donald Swearer, The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia, 82-91; 96-100; 107-161

21. 11/14: Modernization of Burma’s Tradition; Thailand: History and
Traditional Practices
Required Reading
E. Sarkisyanz, “Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Socialism” [ERES]
Donald Swearer, The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia, 5-61; 86-91; 102-105;

22. 11/16: Village Buddhism in Thailand
Required Reading
Nicola Tannenbaum, Who Can Compete Against the World? Power-protection
and Buddhism in Shan Worldview
23. 11/21: No Class... for work on term papers [AAR]

**TOPIC EIGHT:**
**CASE STUDIES of THERAVĀDA TRADITION**

24. 11/28: Student Presentation of Final Papers

25. 11/30: Student Presentation of Final Papers

26. 12/5: Final Discussion: Theravada Buddhism as a Global Religion

EXAM PERIOD: Take-Home Final Examination