

# 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        |
| <i>Informed</i> Class Participation..... | <u>10</u> |
|  | 100 pts   |

## **Required Textbooks**

Walpola Rahula. *What the Buddha Taught*, NY: Publisher Resource, 1978.  
H.C. Warren, translator, *Buddhism in Translations*, NY: Macmillan, 1966.  
T. Byrom, translator, *The Dhammapada*, Boston: Shambhala Pocket, 1993  
N.A. Nikam & R. McKeon, eds. *The Edicts of Ashoka*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978.  
Caroline A.F. Rhys-Davids, translator, *Stories of the Buddha* NY: Dover, 1988.  
Mohan Wijayaratna. *Buddhist Monastic Life* Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987.  
Nyanaponika Thera. *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* NY: Weiser, 1984.  
Richard Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism: a Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.  
Donald Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.  
Nicola Tannenbaum, *Who Can Compete Against the World? Power-protection and Buddhism in Shan Worldview*. Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2001  
Sharon Salzburg, *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. Boston: Shambhala, 2002  
Readings on ERE-s [Password: RELS 312]

## **Recommended Reading**

Joseph Goldstein, *The Path of Insight*. Boston: Shambhala Pocket, 1995

### 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*  
Sharon Salzberg, *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*.

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" [ERE-s]

### 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 Buddha's Relics in Sri Lanka," *Numen* XXXIX, 1992, 1-26. [ERE-s]  
Gombrich and Obeyesekere, "The Bodhi Puja" [ERE-s]

### 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" [ERE-s]

### 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" [ERE-s]  
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