An Introduction to

Buddhism

Professor Todd T. Lewis
SMITH 425  Office Hours: M/W 2-3 and by appointment
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Course Description:
A study of the Buddhist tradition, emphasizing its origin and development in India as well as its historical evolution in Asia. Beginning with the legend of the Buddha and the formation of the monastic community, the course surveys doctrinal developments including the Theravâda, Mahâyâna, and Vajrayâna paths. Attention will also be devoted to meditation, ethics, lay practices, and modernization.

Course Design and Guidelines:
This course is planned as introductory and exploratory, conducted in a manner integrating lectures with regular discussions. It emphasizes readings in the sacred scriptures, historical analysis, and anthropological studies of the living tradition.

All students are encouraged to participate actively in the coursework, share in the discussion, ask questions to help make unclear topics understood, and to make use of the office hours. Lectures will supplement the required readings, not replace them.

Reading assignments must be completed before the designated class and analyzed carefully. There are also recommended readings for many classes. Please consult me if you are interested in exploring other pertinent subjects.

The map of Asia and the papers must be in on time to receive full credit. Separate guidelines for each will be distributed.

Grading:
1. Map Assignment………………….10
2. Mid-Term Examination I……….…. 20
3. Buddhist Art Encounter Paper....... ...15
4. Poster Assignment ........................ 15
5. Final Examination………………. … 40

100 points

In addition, a menu of “Creative Tasks” will be made available in Nov to earn extra course credit.

Required Textbooks:  (All ordered from the Holy Cross bookstore.)

Course ERES [Password = RELS206 ]

Bring your *Experience of Buddhism* and other texts to class, if you have a question to raise about that day’s assignment.

### Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

1. **1/22: First Class: Syllabi Distributed and Course Overview**  
   What do we mean by “Religious Tradition?”

2. **1/24: Exorcising Ethnocentrism: Orientalism and the Study of Buddhism**  
   Required Reading:  
   John Dunne, “Passing Over” [ERES]; *The Buddhist Religions*, 1-20

   **Topic 1: Foundations**

3.  **1/29: The Life of the Buddha: Context in Ancient India; Narrative of his Life**  
   Required Reading:  
   *The Experience of Buddhism*, 1-26; 42-50; *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide*, 10-21; 22-45

4. **1/31: Buddha as Refuge and Paradigm**  
   Required Reading:  
   *The Buddhist Religions*, 20-42; 67-72

5. **2/5: Early Dharma: “Basic Buddhism”**  
   Required Reading:  
   *The Experience of Buddhism*, 97-138; *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide*, 58-79

6. **2/7: The Dhammapada: Discussion**  
   Required Reading:  
   T. Byrom, *The Dhammapada*

7. **2/12: The Sangha**  
   Required Reading:  
   *The Buddhist Religions*, 45-58; 72-74; *The Experience of Buddhism*, 56-90

   **Topic 2:**  
   **Historical Overview**
HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

8. 2/14: The Three Refuges in Early Buddhist India (500 BCE-200 BCE)

Required Reading:
The Buddhist Religions, 53-67; The Experience of Buddhism, 91-96
Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 6-9

9. 2/19: The Three Refuges in Early Buddhist India (200 BCE-200 CE)

Required Reading:
The Buddhist Religions, 75-84; The Experience of Buddhism, 228-233

10. 2/21: Buddhism's Asian Diaspora; Themes in the Historical Study of Buddhism

Required Reading:
The Buddhist Religions 82-86; 143-146; 172-180; 219-220; 234-239-245; 268-273
The Experience of Buddhism, 145-146; 221-225; 256-259; 290-292; 311-318; 335-342
Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 176-195

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Topic 3:
Buddhism in Practice

11. 2/26: Karma and Merit-Making and Ethics; Popular Narratives

Required Reading:
C. Kabilsingh, “Buddhist Texts from a Feminist Perspective” [ERE-s]
Todd T. Lewis, Popular Buddhist Texts from Nepal, Preface; Chapters 3,7

12. 2/28: Buddhism in Society: Stūpas, Early Rituals, and Festivals

Required Reading:
The Buddhist Religions, 72-74; The Experience of Buddhism, 48-52; 241-244
T. Lewis, “Contributions to the Study of Popular Buddhism [ERE-s]

Spring Break

13. 3/12: Forms of Meditation: THEORY

Required Reading:
The Buddhist Religions, 30-31; The Experience of Buddhism, 128-138; 217-237
Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 80-89; 186-195
“Four Objects of Mindfulness” and “Nouns” “Moment to Moment Mindfulness” [ERE-s]

14. 3/14: SPECIAL Vipashyanā/Vipassanā
   Susan O’Brien, Insight Meditation Society

15. 3/19: Topics in Early Buddhism; Review of Texts
16. 3/21: IN-CLASS Mid-Term Examination

Topic 4: 
Mahāyāna Philosophies

17. 3/26: Schism among Indian Schools; *Lotus Sūtra*: Cosmic Buddhahood, 
Celestial Bodhisattvas

Required Reading:
The Buddhist Religions, 84-102; 
The Experience of Buddhism, 147-151; 168-169; 188-197; 287-313; 
Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 132-149; 196-211

Easter Vacation

18. 4/2: Elite Mahāyāna Philosophies I: *Shunyatā* and Two-Truths Doctrine; 
Required Reading: 
The Buddhist Religion, 103-128; 99-116; The Experience of Buddhism, 151-174

19. 4/4: Elite Mahāyāna Philosophies II: Buddha Nature; Yogācāra School; 
The Practice of Visualization Meditation

Required Reading: 
The Buddhist Religion, 111-113; 190-196; The Experience of Buddhism, 178-187 
“Mahāyāna Meditation” [ERE-s]

20. 4/9: Human Bodhisattva Ideal: The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* ⭐⭐ Discussion 📖

Required Reading: 
Crosby and Skilton, The Bodhicaryāvatāra (all of translation; skim commentary)

Topic 5: 
Schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism

21. 4/11: Buddhism in Later China, Korea, and Japan; Tendai and Nichiren 
Required Reading: 
The Buddhist Religions, 180-215; 231-236; 240-249; 254-255; The Experience of Buddhism, 290-300; 
306-310; 320-325; Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 150-161

22. 4/16: Pure Land Buddhism 
Required Reading: 
The Buddhist Religions, 196-198; 252-257; 249-260; 117-139; 271-296 
The Experience of Buddhism, 197-205; 301-305; 300-302

23. 4/18: Chan and Zen 
Required Reading: 
The Buddhist Religions, 260-267; The Experience of Buddhism, 318-319; 326-331
24. 4/23: Vajrayāna Buddhism: Tantric Doctrines and Soteriologies [a]  
Vajrayāna Buddhism in Nepal [b] and Tibet [c]  
Required Reading:  
a. The Buddhist Religions, 128-137; 271-296; The Experience of Buddhism, 188-220; 251-286  
Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 162-173  
b. Todd T. Lewis, Popular Buddhist Texts from Nepal, Preface; Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6  
c. The Buddhist Religions, 268-291; The Experience of Buddhism, 256-289

Topic 6:  
Modernization and Change

25. 4/25 Traumas of Modernity: Colonialism & Westernization; Sri Lanka [b]  
Required Reading:  
The Buddhist Religions, 141-142; 215-218; 238-239; Experience of Buddhism, 253-255;  
[b] Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide, 212-235; The Buddhist Religions, 146-171  
The Experience of Buddhism, 222-227; 233-246; 225-226  
John Ross Carter, "There are Buddhists Living in Sri Lanka Today" [ERE-s]

26. 4/30: Buddhism Today: Class Presentations and Posters  
Immigrants, Beats, Engaged Buddhism, Global Networks, Internet

27. 5/2: The Future of Buddhism; Review  
Required Reading:  
The Buddhist Religion, 292-311  
Gary Snyder, “Buddhism and the Possibilities of Planetary Culture” [ERE-s]  
S. Sivaraksha, “Buddhism in a World of Change” [ERE-s]

Exam Period: Comprehensive Final