

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Discipline: Religious Studies

Fall 2008

RELB 245Z: Zen

Lower Division

Faculty Name: Paul Groner

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of the development and history of the thought, practices, goals, and institutions of Zen Buddhism as it has evolved in India, China, Japan, and America. Among the topics discussed are meditation, enlightenment, the role of Zen in the arts, life in a Zen monastery, and the rhetoric used in Zen. The course focuses on following these topics as the Buddhist tradition responds to various traditions. Developments in other forms of Buddhism are also considered and contrasted with Zen.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to give the student a sense of how a religious tradition changes as it responds to the demands of the social, political, economic, and doctrinal changes. It demonstrates the ways in which the rhetoric employed by religious teachers changes over time, even in regards to the most basic concepts in a religious tradition. Although the course will not respond to each port of call, by tracing changes in Buddhism as it traveled from India to China, Japan, and America, I hope that it will be relevant as we travel to those countries.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE. Students are given an overview of the course. The main themes are discussed and how we will approach them is elucidated.

1. LIFE OF THE BUDDHA: The use of biography as a teaching device, an analysis of the biography of the Buddha and how it has changed over time. The use of the biography as: 1) a model that practitioners follow; or 2) a description of a person we cannot hope to emulate who becomes an object of worship.

John S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, second edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002), pp. 9-18, 34-38*

Gethin, *Foundations*, pp. 1-34

- 3-4. EARLY BUDDHIST DOCTRINE: The Buddha's teaching as a soteriological, rather than a metaphysical system. The four noble truths. The truth of suffering. Does Buddhism promote depression and nihilism. The truth of no-soul. Buddhism's critique of our identity.

Gethin, *Foundations*, pp. 35-74, 133-162.

Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), pp. 31-45*

- 5-6. EARLY BUDDHIST CONCEPTIONS OF THE PATH AND GOAL: What is the basis of Buddhist morality? How is Buddhist meditation performed? What are the expected results? What is nirvana? How is it described?

Gethin, *Foundations*, pp. 74-132, 163-201.

Edward Conze, *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 92-102*

Watch "Footprint of the Buddha"

- 7-8. INDIAN MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

Gethin, *Foundations*, pp. 224-252.

Donald Lopez (ed.), *Buddhism in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 92-106 ("Tathagatagarbha sutra"), 525-531 (Chinese Life of Nagarjuna)*

9. FIRST EXAM

10. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIGENOUS CHINESE TRADITIONS: TAOISM AND CONFUCIANISM: The basic teachings of indigenous Chinese religions are introduced. Specific emphasis is given to teachings that influenced Buddhism, including familial lineages, debates on the nature of human beings, the Dao (Way), non-action, and the questionable reliability of words.

W.T. DeBary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press) 1: 17-35*

Stephen Teiser, "Introduction," in Donald Lopez, ed., *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 25-32*

Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 177-191*

11. THE TRANSMISSION OF BUDDHISM TO CHINA and BODHIDHARMA, THE FIRST FIVE CH'AN PATRIARCHS: How was Buddhism interpreted by the Chinese at first? What effect did this have on Buddhist teachings and the conceptualization of the goal?

Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment*, pp. 14-41

J.C. Cleary, *Zen Dawn: Early Texts from Tun Huang* (Boston: Shambhala, 1991), pp. 25-31, 47-65*

- 12-13. HUI-NENG-NENG AND SHEN-HUI, FOUNDERS OF ZEN: SUDDEN OR GRADUAL ENLIGHTENMENT: How did political considerations affect Zen history? What sorts of rhetoric were used to make claims to authenticity? What do terms like sudden and gradual enlightenment mean?

Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment*, pp. 42-52

Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, pp. 125-163 (copy)*

"The Quietist Controversy," from Conze, ed., *Buddhist Scriptures*, pp. 214-217 (copy)*

Several passages from Shen-hsiu and Shen-hui on meditation and sudden enlightenment*

14. "SHOCK CHAN" AND THE RECORDS OF THE MASTERS

John McRae, *Seeing Through Zen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 74-100.

Burton Watson, *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi* (Columbia University Press, 1999), selections.

15. KŌANS AND MODERN ZEN PRACTICE: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ZEN: How were the seemingly spontaneous and radical dialogues that we looked at in the previous section integrated into a system of practice that supported institutions? How are these practices used in contemporary Rinzai Zen practice? Are *koans* (literally 'public cases' but sometimes called 'Zen riddles') merely contradictory nonsensical statements or do they reflect a means to gain a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings?

Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment*, pp.65-76.

T. Griffith Foulk, "The Form and Function of Koan Literature," in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 15-45.

Watch selections from "Amongst White Clouds"

17. SECOND EXAM

- 18-20. ZEN IN JAPAN: DOGEN AND THE SOTO SCHOOL: Dogen presents a different view of practice and enlightenment, collapsing practice and enlightenment into a single act; his tradition is sometimes called 'silent illumination.' His view of practice was so austere, however, that the school he founded evolved in ways that he never could have foreseen. We look at his biography, basic teachings and the subsequent development of his tradition.

Francis Cook, *How to Raise an Ox*, pp. 1-83, 95-150.

Watch selections from "Zen Buddhism: In Search of Self"

21. ZEN AESTHETICS

Burton Watson (trans.), *Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the T'ang Poet Han-shan*, selections*

Haga Koshiro, "The Wabi Aesthetic through the Ages," in Paul Varley and Kumakura Isao, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), pp. 195-230 (copy)*

Kraft, *Zen Tradition and Transition*, pp. 105-124.

.....22-23. ZEN IN AMERICA

Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake*. 3rd edition (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), pp. 225-272 (copy)*

Helen Tworokov, *Zen in America*, pp. 155-197 (copy)*

Watch "Enlightenment Guaranteed"

FIELD COMPONENT

Each student is required to complete three field trips; these may be either Faculty Directed or Independent, in Asian countries or in Hawaii. Students are encouraged to do at least two of these trips as faculty directed trips to get a sense of some of the ways we look at temples. An independent study may be developed as part of a regularly-offered SAS trip, or it may stand alone. If an Independent study is selected, then the student must meet with the instructor prior to arriving in the port-of-call to discuss his or her approach and objectives. All students are required to keep a journal of their field observations. There is no set number of pages required for each field trip, but students should be able to write around five pages for each trip. Detailed observations, interactions with people at the temples, and research will be rewarded with higher grades. Students should note that except for Japan, most Buddhist temples did not belong to the Chan or Zen school. Rather, meditation was simply a part of being Buddhist. Thus many of the temples mentioned below are not specifically Zen institutions.

Among the questions students may want to think about are:

1. Who paid for a temple and why did they commission it?
2. What is the main object of worship?
3. What do you observe being done in the main hall?
4. Why were some of the adjacent halls built? Can you get a sense of the entire monastery's layout?
5. Is there a difference between what you observe lay visitors doing and what you observe monks (and possibly nuns) doing?
6. What is the gender balance at the temple? Are men and women doing different things?
7. Why do people visit the temple?
8. What is sold at the temple?
9. Did you see any meditative practices being performed or a building devoted to meditation?

SUGGESTED PRACTICA:

CHINA: Putuoshan (IND)

JAPAN: Temples in Kamakura (FDP); Mount Hiei (FDP)

In addition, there may be tours of Nara or Kyoto that would include Buddhist temples. Among

the possible independent practica that you might consider are Buddhist Temples in China located in Suzhou, Ningbo (Ayuwangsi or Tiantongsi). Zen temples in Japan located in Nara (Manpukuji), Kyoto (Ryōanji, Daitokuji, Tōfukuji, Ginkakuji, Kinkakuji), or Kamakura (Engakuji, Kenchōji)
Buddhist temples in Hawaii (a list will be provided later).

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Two exams comprised of short essays and identification questions. Class participation consists of participation in class discussions; it will count approximately 15% of the grade.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Rupert Gethin
TITLE: The Foundations of Buddhism
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press
ISBN #: 0192892231
DATE/EDITION: 1998
COST: 29.95

AUTHOR: Heinrich Dumoulin
TITLE: Zen Enlightenment
PUBLISHER: Shambhala
ISBN #: 1590305299
DATE/EDITION: 2Rev Ed edition (2007)
COST: 16.95

AUTHOR: Francis Cook
TITLE: How To Raise an Ox
PUBLISHER: Wisdom Publications
ISBN #: 0861713176
DATE/EDITION: 2002
COST: 16.95

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

AUTHOR: Kenneth Kraft
TITLE: *Zen Tradition and Transition*
PUBLISHER: Grove Press
ISBN #:
DATE/EDITION:
COST:

AUTHOR: Rick Fields
TITLE: How the Swans Came to the Lake
PUBLISHER: Shambhala
ISBN #:
DATE/EDITION: 3 Rev Upd edition, 1996
COST:

AUTHOR: Phillip Yampolsky
TITLE: Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch
PUBLISHER: Columbia University Press
ISBN #:
DATE/EDITION:
COST:

AUTHOR: Steven Heine and Dale Wright (eds.)
TITLE: The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press
ISBN #:
DATE/EDITION:
COST: