

Prof. Mario Poceski (Religion) & Prof. Ying Xiao (Lang, Lit, and Cultures)

Class Time & Location

Mon, Wed, & Fri, period 8 (3:00-3:50 pm); AND 134

Prof. Poceski's Office Hours & Contact Information

Fri 1:30-3:00 pm, and by appointment, 132 Anderson Hall;
mpoceski@ufl.edu; people.clas.ufl.edu/mpoceski/.

Prof. Xiao's Office Hours & Contact Information

Mon 8:30-10 am, Wed 4-5 pm, and by appointment, 306 Pugh Hall; (352) 392-6539;
yx241@ufl.edu; <http://languages.ufl.edu/people/faculty-alpha/ying-xiao/>



Course Description

The course explores key intersections between Buddhism and film. In addition to critically examining the ways contemporary movies portray Buddhists and their religion, students will also have opportunities to learn about how specific films can be analyzed by means of conceptual lenses and esthetic sensibilities derived from Buddhism. The course adopts a global perspective, incorporating pictures, themes, and concerns that unfold on three continents: Asia, Europe, and North America. It also provide opportunities for reflection on a host of contemporary issues, such as cross-cultural representation, gender inequity, political repression, search for value and meaning, and construction of personal and communal identities.

Course Format and Prerequisites

This is primarily a discussion course, centered around the films and the readings. Students are expected to watch the films, participate in class discussions, and engage in critical analysis of the course materials. There are no formal prerequisites and no knowledge of Asian languages is required.

Requirements

- Reading of assigned materials and viewing of films (both before class).
- Class attendance and participation (10%).
- Two exams (40%).
- Presentation projects (15%).
- Paper abstract and bibliography (5%), due 3/30 (10 am).
- Final Paper (30%), due 4/27 (10 am).

Viewing the films

As this is a 3-credit class, there will be no separate screening sessions, and class time will be dedicated to discussions, presentations, and related activities. Students will be responsible for viewing the films outside the classroom, on their own, as part of their course assignments. The films will be available at the library. Students can also make use of various digital streaming media services, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu.

Textbooks

- Gocsik, Karen, Richard Barsam, & Dave Monahan. *Writing about Movies*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013.
- Green, Ronald. *Buddhism Goes to the Movies: Introduction to Buddhist Thought and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Suh, Sharon A. *Silver Screen Buddha: Buddhism in Asian and Western Film*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

Other Readings

- Whalen-Bridge, John, "What Is a 'Buddhist Film?'" *Contemporary Buddhism* 15.1 (May 2014): 44-80.
- Renger, Almut-Barbara, "Buddhism and Film—Inter-Relation and Interpenetration: Reflections on an Emerging Research Field." *Contemporary Buddhism* 15.1 (May 2014): 1-27.
- Poceski, Mario. "Buddhism: The Beginnings." Jacob Neusner, ed. *Introduction to World Religions: Communities and Cultures*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010: 181–96.
- Hladikova, K. "Shangri-la Deconstructed: Representations of Tibet in the PRC and Pema Tseden's Films." *Archiv Orientalni* 84/2 (2016): 349-80.
- Lo, Kwai-Cheung. "Buddha Found and Lost in the Chinese Nation of 'Diversity in Unity': Pema Tseden's Films as a Buddhist Mode of Reflexivity." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 10/2 (2016): 150-165.
- Greene, Naomi. *From Fu Manchu to Kung Fu Panda: Images of China in American Film*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014: 151-180.
- Yang, Che-ming. "Buddhism as Orientalism on American Cultural Landscape: The Cinematic Orientalization of Tibetan (Tantric) Buddhism." *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 01 (2010).

Required Films

- *Departures* (Okuribito, Yojiro Takita, Japan, 2008)
- *Enlightenment Guaranteed* (Doris Dörrie, Germany, 2000)
- *I heart Huckabees* (David O. Russell, USA, 2004)
- *Kundun* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1997)
- *Little Buddha* (Bernardo Bertolucci, U.K./France, 1993)
- *Lost Horizon* (Frank Capra, U.S., 1937)
- *The Buddha* (PBS, USA, 2010)
- *The Cup* (Khyentse Norbu, Bhutan, 1999)
- *The Silent Holy Stones* (Pema Tseden, China, 2006)
- *Windhorse* (Paul Wagner, USA, 1998)
- *Xuanzang* (Huo Jianqi, China, 2016)

Optional Films

- *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring* (Ki-duk Kim, Korea, 2003)
 - *Zen Noir* (Marc Rosenbush, USA, 2004)
 - *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* (Tian Xiaopeng, China, 2015, animation film)
 - *Soul Searching* (Pema Tseden, China, 2009)
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Lecture Topics and Course Schedule

Jan	W 1	Introduction reading: Suh 1-28; Green xiii-xvii
	W 2	Watching, Interpreting, and Writing about Film film: <i>Little Buddha</i> ; reading: Gocsik 181-256, Whalen-Bridge article
	W 3	Buddhist Teachings and Traditions film: <i>The Buddha</i> ; reading: Poceski article, Renger article
	W 4	Global Flows and Cross-cultural Interpretations film: <i>Lost Horizon</i> ; reading: Suh 29-57, Green 1-12
Feb	W 5	Quest for self-understanding film: <i>Enlightenment Guaranteed</i> ; reading: Green 13-29
	W 6	Muffled Tibetan voices from the Hinterlands film: <i>The Silent Holy Stones</i> ; reading: Hladikova article, Lo article
	W 7	Death and the Mystery of Life film: <i>Departures</i> ; reading: Suh 119-136, Green 94-105
	W 8	Discussion and Exam 1
Mar	W 9	Spring Break
	W 10	Philosophical Reflections on the Nature of Reality film: <i>I heart Huckabees</i> ; reading: Green 30-55
	W 11	The Politics of Oppression and Gender film: <i>Windhorse</i> ; reading: Suh 77-118, Green 106-117
	W 12	Tibetan Buddhism goes to Hollywood film: <i>Kundun</i> ; reading: Naomi Green article, Yang Che-ming article
Apr	W 13	Behind-the-scenes look at Monastic Life and Ideals film: <i>The Cup</i> ; reading: Green 82-93, Gocsik 3-85
	W 14	Cultural Memory and Reconstitution of the Past film: <i>Xuanzang</i> ; reading: Suh 183-192, Gocsik 89-177
	W 15	Exam 2 and Student Presentations
	W 16	Discussion of Final Papers



Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- The course expands and deepens student knowledge about its two main topics: Buddhism and film. Students will learn about key Buddhist beliefs, doctrines, and practices, as formulated by several major Buddhist traditions. They will also explore how vital elements of the religion, and the people who profess them, are adapted and represented on the silver screen.
- The course introduces key themes and theoretical concepts in Buddhist and film studies.
- Students learn about the ongoing globalization of specific religions, especially Buddhism, and the social and cultural ramifications that accompany such complex and multilayered processes.

- Students are exposed to the values, norms, socioeconomic predicaments, and artistic representations of select countries in Asia (Japan, China, and Bhutan), Europe (Germany), and the Americas (USA).
- By reading, viewing, reflecting upon, and discussing a broad range of materials, students receive training in critical thinking and effective analysis, as well as develop communication skills that will enable them to intelligently discuss key issues from a multiplicity of perspectives.
- The course facilitates the students' understanding of religious diversity and enhanced appreciation of foreign cultures and societies, which can serve as constructive conceptual framework for reflecting on their own social mores and cultural norms.

Online e-Learning System & email Communication

- The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF's e-Learning system [lss.at.ufl.edu], using Canvas.
- Students should send all written communications to the instructors directly, using the email addresses given above.

Grading

- The final grade will be based on each student's individual performance and his/her fulfillment of the course requirements, as stipulated in the syllabus.
- The same course rules and expectations apply equally to all students—no student is entitled to special consideration or unique treatment. Other extraneous or irrelevant factors, including student's personal desires or expectations about grades, will not be taken into account. Students should also not expect retroactive changes or other forms of grade modification.
- Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously. There will be no opportunities to do additional work for extra credit or better grade.
- No incomplete grades will be given, except in very exceptional circumstances, in which case the students should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.

Attendance and Participation

- **Attendance** is **mandatory** for all students, starting with the first day of classes. Students who have problems with class attendance or punctuality should think twice before enrolling in this course.
- Active and informed participation in classroom discussions is expected from all students. In order to facilitate that, students are expected to read the assigned readings before coming to class.
- **Absences** from class will have adverse effect on the final grade.
- Students who miss nine (9) hours of instruction (unexcused) will automatically receive a **failing grade**.
- Coming late, leaving early, being inattentive, and other forms of disruptive behavior can be counted as unexcused absences. For more on the university's attendance policies, see the Undergraduate Catalog.
- Valid excuses for missed classes must be submitted *in writing* and in a timely manner, along with pertinent documentation (such as note from a doctor). Written excuses for planned absences—

participation in athletic meetings or religious observances, for example—must be submitted in advance.

- Student with an exceptional participation performance may be awarded up to 3 **bonus** points (3% of the final grade). This bonus is entirely based on the instructors' discretion, and the final assessment will take into account both the quantity and quality of individual student's participation in classroom discussions, as well as all other elements of coursework.

Exams

- No make-up exams will be given, except in documented instances of illness or other emergency, in which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam, if feasible, or as soon as possible.
- If any student has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor in person and make suitable arrangements one week before the examination. Failure to act in accord with these instructions will lead to a failing grade.

Written Assignment

- The final paper should be 3,000 words, inclusive of notes and citations. There should be a bibliography at the end of the paper.
- The written assignment must be submitted in MS **Word** and must follow standard academic format. Use standard font, such as Calibri 12, with 1.5 spacing and 1" margins. Do not forget to include paper title, course name, instructor names and titles, date, and page numbers.
- The written assignment must be **submitted digitally**, via e-Learning, before the final deadline.
- **No late submissions** will be accepted under any circumstances. Students are encouraged to avoid procrastination and make early submissions, at least a week before the final deadline.
- Students are welcome to bring early drafts of their papers and ask for feedback/advice, but they have to do that in person during the office hours.

Presentation Projects

- There are three presentation projects for this course.
- Students are asked to conduct an oral report to one of weekly readings in class. The same goes for one film. For each assignment, a brief written summary of the presentation is also due on the day of the oral report.
- The presentations should be 10-15 minutes each, summarizing the key points of the article/film and relating it to the class discussions, talks, or screenings. The date of the presentation would roughly correspond to the specific schedule when the reading/film is assigned to.
- Students will also do presentations on their research at the end of the course.

Classroom Conduct

- All students are required to come to class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive and disrespectful.

- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful, and abstain from disruptive behavior in the classroom that adversely affects others and is contrary to the pursuit of knowledge. Examples of such behavior include talking with someone, displaying active disinterest in the class (e.g. sleeping or inappropriate computer use), or putting down others. Phones should be turned off during class. Offending students will be asked to leave.

Office Hours and Communication

- Students are encouraged to come to office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with the course materials.
- The instructors will also be glad to discuss all relevant topics that, due to time constraints, are not covered in class in much detail.
- Any questions about the course requirements or any aspect of the coursework should be resolved by consulting the instructor directly and in person, preferably during office hours. Pleading ignorance or lack of common sense are not valid excuses for failures to fulfill requirements or abide by course policies.

Plagiarism and Cheating

- Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade and other serious penalties.
- For more information, see the “Academic Honesty—Student Guide” brochure (posted online by the Dean of Students Office).

Disability

- A student who has a documented disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements should consult the instructor in person at the beginning of the course so that appropriate arrangements may be made.
- The student is responsible for communicating his/her needs to the instructor, as early as possible. All arrangements for changes pertaining to the quizzes and the exams must be made at least one week in advance.

Other Notices

- Registration in the course implies that each student enters a contractual agreement with the instructor, whereas he/she is accountable for fulfilling all course requirements and adhering to the course policies.
- Students are responsible for knowing and following all schedules and instructions contained in this syllabus, as well as any other instructions given in class (remember, attendance is not optional).