

# BUDDHIST MEDITATION | FALL 2017, REL4349/24C1

Prof. Mario Poceski (Religion Department, University of Florida)



## Class Times & Location

Tuesday, period 10, and Thursday, periods 10-11; AND 32

## Office Hours & Contact Information

Tue, 3:00–4:40 pm, and by appointment; 132 Anderson Hall; email: [mpoceski@ufl.edu](mailto:mpoceski@ufl.edu); webpage: [people.clas.ufl.edu/mpoceski/](http://people.clas.ufl.edu/mpoceski/)

## Course Description

The course explores the theories and practices of meditation developed by the major Buddhist traditions. The focus is on the Theravada school in South and Southeast Asia and on the meditative traditions of East Asian Buddhism. There is also coverage of other themes and traditions, including the contemporary practice of meditation in America.

## Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites, although students will benefit if they have taken *Asian Religions, Introduction to Buddhism*, or other course on Buddhism.

## Course Format

This is an advanced undergraduate seminar, organized around class discussions based on the assigned readings, which need to be done before class. Students are required to come to class prepared to engage in analysis and discussion of the relevant materials.

## Requirements

- Class attendance and participation (10% of the final grade; also see notes below).
- Two exams (50%).
- Book review (20%), due 11/2 (5 pm).
- Field research report (20%), due 12/6 (5 pm).

## Required Textbook

Zhiyi, and Dharmamitra. *The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation: The Essentials for Practicing Calming-and-Insight & Dhyāna Meditation*. Kalavinka Press, 2009.

## Required Readings

Poceski, Mario. "Buddhism: The Beginnings," Neusner, ed. *Introduction to World Religions: Communities and Cultures*. Abingdon Press, 2010: 181–96.

Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices*. Cambridge UP, 2012: 50–87.

Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 1998: 163–201.

Holder, John, ed. *Early Buddhist Discourses*. Hackett Publishing, 2006: 42–58.

- Crosby, Kate. *Theravada Buddhism: Continuity, Diversity, and Identity*. Wiley Blackwell, 2014: 138–73.
- Stevenson, Daniel. “Pure Land Buddhist Worship and Meditation in China.” Lopez, ed. *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton University Press, 1995: 359–79.
- Tanaka, Kenneth. “Mahayana Buddhist Visualization: The *Guan wuliang shoufo jing*.” Komjathy, ed. *Contemplative Literature: A Comparative Sourcebook on Meditation and Contemplative Prayer*. SUNY Press, 2015: 407–36.
- Poceski, Mario. “Conceptions and Attitudes towards Contemplative Practice within the Early Traditions of Chan Buddhism.” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 28 (2015): 67–116.
- Schlutter, Morten. “Kanhua Meditation in Chinese Zen.” Eifring, ed. *Asian Traditions of Meditation*. University of Hawaii Press, 2016: 165-84.
- Buswell, Robert. *The Zen Monastic Experience*. Princeton University Press, 1992: 161–202.
- McMahan, David L. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. Oxford University Press, 2008: 183–214.
- Wallace, Alan B. *Mind in the Balance: Meditation in Science, Buddhism, and Christianity*. Columbia University Press, 2009: 15–36.
- Fronsdal, Gil. “Insight Meditation in the United States.” Prebish and Tanaka, eds. *The Faces of Buddhism in America*. Univ. of California Press, 1998: 163–82.
- Poceski, Mario. “Mindfulness, Cultural Appropriation, and the Global Diffusion of Buddhist Contemplative Practices” Conference paper, 2017.



## Course Schedule

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|-----|------|---|
| Aug | W 1  | <b>Early Buddhist Traditions</b>   Poceski, “Buddhism: The Beginnings”  |
|     | W 2  | <b>The Buddhist Path</b>   Harvey, <i>An Introduction to Buddhism</i>   |
| Sep | W 3  | <b>Basic Paradigm: Calmness and Insight</b>   Gethin, <i>The Foundations of Buddhism</i>  |
|     | W 4  | <b>Theravada Meditation and Mindfulness Training</b>   Holder, <i>Early Buddhist Discourses</i> ; Crosby, <i>Theravada Buddhism</i> |
|     | W 5  | <b>Tiantai Systematization of Meditation (1)</b>   Zhiyi, <i>The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation</i> , 17-97                      |
|     | W 6  | <b>Tiantai Systematization of Meditation (2)</b>   Zhiyi, <i>The Essentials of Buddhist Meditation</i> , 103-67, 189-201            |
| Oct | W 7  | <b>Discussion</b> and <b>Exam 1</b>   |
|     | W 8  | <b>Pure Land Practices</b>   Stevenson, “Pure Land Buddhist Worship”; Tanaka, “Mahayana Buddhist Visualization”                     |
|     | W 9  | <b>Early Approaches to Chan Meditation</b>   Poceski, “Conceptions and Attitudes towards Contemplative Practice”                    |
|     | W 10 | <b>Practice of Chan/Zen</b>   Buswell, <i>The Zen Monastic Experience</i> ; Schlutter, “Kanhua Meditation”                          |
|     | W 11 | <b>Film: <i>Enlightenment Guaranteed</i></b>  |
| Nov | W 12 | <b>Meditation in a Modern World</b>   McMahan, <i>The Making of Buddhist Modernism</i> ; Wallace, <i>Mind in the Balance</i>        |
|     | W 13 | <b>Present-day Practice of Vipassana</b>   Fronsdal, “Insight Meditation”; Poceski, “Mindfulness, Cultural Appropriation”           |
|     | W 14 | <b>Discussion</b>   no class on Thu   |
|     | W 15 | <b>Exam 2</b> and <b>Student Presentations</b>  |



## Recommended Readings

Bernard, H. Russell. *Research Methods in Anthropology*. AltaMira Press, 2002: 322–64.

Buswell, Robert, ed. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Macmillan Reference, 2003.

Buswell, Robert E., and Donald S. Lopez. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton 2014.

## Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- In addition to facilitating student learning about its main topics, the course also introduces key themes and concepts in Buddhist studies.
- There is coverage of relevant theories and methods used in religious studies, as well as focus on relevant historical trajectories and socioreligious contexts.
- By reading, reflecting upon, and discussing a broad range of materials, as well as by conducting independent research, students receive training in critical thinking and effective analysis, as well as develop communication skills that enable them to intelligently discuss key issues from a multiplicity of perspectives.
- Students are exposed to principal values, norms, socioeconomic predicaments, and artistic representations characteristic of select Asian and Western countries.
- The course facilitates students' enhanced understanding and appreciation of diverse 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](https://lss.at.ufl.edu)], using Canvas.
- Students should send all written communications to the instructor directly, using the email address 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 considered. 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.
- Final grades will be computed according to the standard grading scheme in Canvas.

## Attendance and Participation

- **Attendance** is expected of 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. (For more on the university's attendance policies, see the Undergraduate Catalog).
- **Absences** from class will have adverse effect on the final grade. Students who miss nine (9) hours of instruction (unexcused)—comparable to missing three weeks of classes—will automatically receive a failing grade.
- Coming late, leaving early, being inattentive, and other forms of disruptive behavior can be counted as unexcused absences.
- Students with exceptional **participation** performance may be awarded up to 3 bonus points (3% of the final grade). This bonus is entirely based on the instructor's 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 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 Assignments

- The book **review** must be on a book that focuses on Buddhist meditation. Students can select the book they want to review, but their choice must be approved by the instructor at least two weeks before the due date. Failure to do that can lead to a reduced grade. For examples of academic book reviews, see <http://florida.academia.edu/MarioPoceski>.
- The research **report** should be based on field research that involves [participant observation](#), undertaken at a Buddhist group or institution in Florida.
- For undergraduate students, both the report and the review should be 1,500 words, inclusive of notes and citations. Graduate papers should be 50% longer.
- The written assignments 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 name, date, and page numbers.
- The written assignments 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 should do that in person during the office hours.

## 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 instructor 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).

