

Buddhist Philosophy (REL3938, PHI3930, & RLG5338) | SPRING 2023

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



Class Time

Tuesday, period 4 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM), and Thursday, periods 4 & 5 (10:40 AM - 12:35 PM); AND 013.

Office Hours

Tue, 1:00-2:00 pm, & Thu, 9:30 to 10:30 am; (the first office hour is on 1/10, and the last one on 4/25). Also, there is the option of making an appointment, usually via Zoom. Appointments need to be made 24 hours in advance. The student has to set up a Zoom meeting at an agreed upon time and send a link to the instructor.

Contact & Information

email: mpoceski@ufl.edu; webpage: www.clas.ufl.edu/users/mpoceski/.

Course Description

The course is a survey of the main sources, concepts, and traditions of Buddhist philosophy. It focuses on the classical systems of Buddhist philosophy that developed in India, covering the early schools and the Mahāyāna movement. Additionally, it explores the growth and transformation of Buddhist philosophy outside of India, especially in China. While Buddhist philosophy tends to be shaped by soteriological concerns, centered about a quest for spiritual liberation and insight into reality, the course examines the creative ways in which major Buddhist thinkers addressed central philosophical concerns with metaphysical, hermeneutical, epistemological, and ethical implications.

Prerequisites

The class is open to students from all majors who are interested in learning about Buddhist philosophy. There are no formal prerequisites, and no knowledge of Asian languages is required.

Course Format

This is a combination of lecture and discussion course. Students are expected to engage in class discussions and critical analysis of the course materials.

Requirements

- Reading of the assigned materials.
- Class attendance and participation.
- Two exams (50% of final grade).
- Paper abstract and bibliography (5%), due 3/23 (5 pm).
- Reflection on mindfulness practice (graded paper, 15%), due 3/30 (5 pm).
- Research paper (25%), due 4/21 (5 pm).
- Class presentation (5%).

Graduate Students Requirements

Graduate students must fulfill the same basic requirements as those given above, with these differences:

- They will not take the two exams.
- The three main written assignments have to be twice as long. The deadlines are the same.
- They need to read, and then write content summaries and critical responses on the three recommended books listed below. The deadlines for these three assignments are the last Thursdays of each month (January, February, and March), at 5 pm.
- There are higher expectations regarding level of academic performance, including depth of critical analysis, clarity of presentation, and quality of writing.

Course Schedule (tentative and subject to change)

January

- W 1** (1/10) **Introduction** | Siderits, ch. 1; Garfield, intro
- W 2** (1/17) **Early teachings and epistemological frameworks** | Siderits, ch. 2; Garfield, ch. 15
- W 3** (1/24) **Notions of self and philosophy of mind** | Siderits, ch. 3; Garfield, ch. 23
- W 4** (1/31) **Buddhist ethics** | Siderits, ch. 4; Garfield, ch. 32

February

- W 5** (2/7) **Mahāyāna doctrines and ideals** | Siderits, ch. 7; Garfield, ch. 33
- W 6** (2/14) **Review** (Tue) & **Exam 1** (Thu)
- W 7** (2/21) **Yogacara explorations of perception and reality** | Siderits, ch. 8; Garfield, ch. 3
- W 8** (2/28) **Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness** | Siderits, ch. 9; Garfield, ch. 2

March

- W 9** (3/7) **Buddhist philosophy in China** | Poceski, “Buddhism in Chinese History” & “Buddhist Philosophy in China”
- W 10** **Spring Break**
- W 11** (3/21) **Mindfulness practice** (experiential learning)
- W 12** (3/28) **Tiantai conceptions of mind and truth** | Garfield, ch. 21 & 29

April

W 13 (4/4) Huayan and Zen philosophies | Garfield, ch. 6, 7, & 30

W 14 (4/11) Review (Tue) & Exam 2 (Thu)

W 15 (4/18) Student presentations

W 16 (4/25) Final discussion

Required textbooks

- Siderits, Mark. *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction*. Ashgate, 2007.
- Garfield, Jay L., and William Edelglass, eds. *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Other required readings

- Poceski, Mario. "Buddhism in Chinese History." Mario Poceski, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014: 40–62 (available online, in pdf).
- Poceski, Mario. "Buddhist Philosophy in China." Charles Taliaferro and Stew Goetz, eds. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion*. Blackwell, 2021: 1-11 (available online, in pdf).

Books for further study (recommended)

- Gethin, Rupert. *Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Williams, Paul, Alexander Wynne, and Anthony Tribe. *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. Routledge, 2012 (2nd ed.).
- Garfield, Jay L. *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- Acquiring general knowledge about the key ideas and main traditions of Buddhist philosophy.
- Introducing major themes and concepts in Buddhist studies.
- Expanding the students' intellectual vision and awareness to a wider field of philosophical discourse by exposure to non-Western traditions.
- Learning about select worldviews, values, and norms that characterize Asian civilizations, especially India and China.
- 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. They also develop writing and communication skills that enable them to intelligently discuss key issues from a multiplicity of perspectives.
- 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, using Canvas.
- Students should send all written communications to the instructor directly, using the email address given above.

Grading scale

- Ⓐ 100% to 93 %; Ⓐ- <93% to 90%; Ⓑ+ <90% to 87%; Ⓑ <87% to 83%;
Ⓑ- <83% to 80%; Ⓒ+ <80% to 77%; Ⓒ <77% to 73%; Ⓒ- <73% to 70%;
Ⓓ+ <70% to 67%; Ⓓ <67% to 63%; Ⓓ- <63% to 60%; Ⓔ <60.
- For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/Links to an external site.>

About grades

- The course is rigorous and is primarily meant for students who are passionate about learning and have keen interest in the subject matter. It may not be a good choice for students who are merely looking for a convenient or undemanding course, with a lenient instructor, in which it is easy to get a good grade.
- The final grades are solely based on each student's individual performance and his/her fulfillment of the course requirements, as stipulated in the syllabus.
- Students must follow all deadlines listed in the syllabus, and should not expect special treatment or leniency if they miss exam or assignment deadline.
- Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously, from the first day of classes. There are no opportunities to do additional work for an extra credit or a better grade.
- The final grade is based on the final tally of points accumulated during the semester by fulfilling all requirements, which is simply converted into a letter grade, following the preset grading scale.
- Students should assume that they start with 0 points, and then work hard on accumulating points in the manner described above.
- 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 individual student's desires and expectations about grades, or a sense of self-entitlement, are not considered.
- Students should not expect retroactive changes or other forms of grade modification at the end of the semester. The time to be concerned about learning and grades is during each week of instruction, and students are expected to be diligent and focused on their study during the whole semester.

- If students want good grades, they must work seriously to achieve them, from the first day of classes, instead of expecting unjustified grading leniency or social promotion. If they need extra help or academic advice, they should make good use of the office hours.
- No incomplete grades are given, except in very exceptional circumstances, in which case the student should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.

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 the course.
- Students are advised to come to each class prepared, stay actively engaged, and take notes. All of these are essential for success with the exams, written assignments, and the final grade.
- A student who is absent from class or any required class-related activity because of illness should contact their instructor, if feasible, as early as possible prior to the missed class or activity.
- Weekly attendance and participation are not directly factored in the main grade. But students with exceptional attendance and participation performance may be awarded up to 3 bonus points (3% of the final grade). This bonus is at the instructor's discretion and is based on an assessment of the student's record. Such assessment considers student's record of attendance (which must be exemplary), as well as the quantity and quality of the student's participation in classroom discussions.
- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Exams

- The exams are taken in-class, during regular class hours. They are proctored.
- The exams are primarily based on the materials presented in the class lectures/discussions, plus the readings. They are not cumulative (i.e., Exam 2 will cover the materials studied after Exam 1).
- Exams primarily consist of multiple-choice and short Q&A; there might also be a short essay (a few paragraphs).
- No make-up exams are 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 leads to a failing grade.

Description of written assignments

- The **reflection on the practice of mindfulness** (graded paper, based on experiential learning), should be around 500-600 words long. It should offer a succinct introduction to the practice of mindfulness, followed by the student's personal reflection on his/her experience with the practice done in class, and brief comments on its relevance to contemporary life.
- The **abstract** and **bibliography** must clearly articulate the topic for the final paper. It should contain (1) a provisional paper title, (2) a short—250 to 300 words—abstract of the paper, and (3) at least 5 titles of academic publications pertinent to the student's research topic, presented in a standard bibliographic format. Optionally, each bibliographic entry can be annotated, with a short (one or two sentences) summary of contents that indicates how it is relevant to the stated topic.
- The **final paper** should be around 2,000 words, inclusive of notes and citations. There should be a bibliography at the end of the final paper, but there is no need to include an abstract.
- All graduate papers should be double in length.

Instructions for the written assignments

- All written assignments are graded in a wholistic manner, considering all the major elements of good and effective academic writing: demonstrated mastery of the key concepts and ideas, clear articulation of the main argument(s), effective use of relevant evidence, overall quality of writing (including grammar and diction), logical and coherent structure, usage of appropriate academic style, and originality of ideas.
- 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 title and 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, well before each deadline.
- Students are welcome to ask for feedback/advice about their papers, during office hours.

Experiential learning

Experiential learning is an important element of learning that is closely integrated into the regular schedule of the course. There is a whole week dedicated to it, during which the students learn and gain firsthand experience in the practice of mindfulness. First, students receive background information about the practice and its place within the Buddhist contemplative traditions. Then, the main part: students engage in two guided sessions of mindfulness practice, given by the instructor. Additionally, they share their personal experiences and reflections on the practice. This is followed by their writing of a short paper, which contains personal reflections on the practice of mindfulness and its relevance to contemporary life.

Class presentation

- Each student needs to deliver in person a short class presentation on the final paper, towards the end of the course.
- The class presentation needs to be accompanied with a polished and informative PowerPoint presentation, which must be submitted via Canvas in advance, by the due deadline.

Classroom conduct

- All students are required to join the class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive and disrespectful.
- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful, abstaining from disruptive behavior 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 schedule office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with the course materials.
- The instructor is glad to assist students with their pursuit of knowledge and facilitate their success with the course.
- The instructor is also willing to discuss relevant academic 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, 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 additional note below.

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).

UF Policies

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx> , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in

preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.