

# Introduction to Buddhism | REL2341, FALL 2023

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## ***Class Time***

MWF, period 7, 1:55 pm – 2:45 pm, Matherly (MAT) 0018

## ***Office Hours***

Wed, 11:30 – 1:50 pm, in 132 Anderson Hall, and by appointment. Appointments need to be made at least one day in advance.

## ***Contact Information***

Email: [zhangy3@ufl.edu](mailto:zhangy3@ufl.edu); or through Canvas message.

## ***Course Description***

The course is a broad survey of the essential beliefs, doctrines, and practices that, over the centuries, have fashioned the identity of Buddhism as a pan-Asian religion that transcends ethnic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. The course covers the historical development of the major Buddhist traditions, including the formulation of key doctrinal tenets and religious practices, the growth of the monastic order, and the formation of new religious ideals and doctrines by the Mahāyāna tradition. We also explore the spread and transformation of Buddhism outside of India, including China and the Western world, before and during the modern period.

## ***Prerequisites***

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

## ***Course Format***

This is an in-person course, combining lectures and class discussions. Students are expected to engage in critical analysis of the course materials.

## ***Requirements***

- Reading of the assigned materials (listed in parenthesis, after each lecture topic, in the schedule) and the study guides for each lecture.

- Class attendance and participation (15% of final grade): Listening carefully to the lectures, taking notes, and participating in class discussions.
- Written assignment: one paper, 1200 words (25%)
  - Optional & extra credits: proposal (300 words), any time before 11/12
  - Required: Polished draft, due 11/19, 5 pm (10%)
  - Required: Finalized paper, due 11/30, 5 pm (15 %)
- Three exams (60%); see schedule below for dates. Before each exam, there will be discussion, review, and Q&A sessions.

## *Course Schedule*

### August

Week 1 | 8/23: **Introduction** (Harvey, 1–7)

Week 2 | 8/28: **Indian Contexts and the Buddha's Life** (Harvey, 8–31)

### September

Week 3 | 9/4: **Early Buddhist Traditions** (Harvey, 88–108) | no class on Mon (Labor Day)

Week 4 | 9/11: **Karma and Rebirth** (Harvey, 32–49)

Week 5 | 9/18: **Four Noble Truths** (Harvey, 50–87)

Week 6 | 9/25: **Review (Mon) & Exam 1 (Wed, 9/27)** | **Film** discussion (Fri): The Buddha (PBS, USA, 2010)

### October

Week 7 | 10/2: **Mahāyāna and the Bodhisattva Ideal** (Harvey, 108–161) | no class on Fri (homecoming)

Week 8 | 10/9: **Buddhahood and Tantra** (Harvey, 161–93, 347–61)

Week 9 | 10/16: **Chinese & Japanese Traditions** (Poceski, “Buddhism in Ch. History”; Harvey, 226–35)

Week 10 | 10/23: **Reading Scripture together (Mon): *The Lotus Sutra*** | **Review (Wed) & Exam 2 (Fri, 10/27)**

### November

Week 11 | 10/30: **Monastic Ideals and Lay Practices** (Harvey, 264–317)

Week 12 | 11/6: **Buddhist Meditation** (Harvey, 318–47, 361–75)

Week 13 | 11/13: **Buddhism in Europe and America** (Harvey, 419–58) | **draft due (11/19, 5 pm)**

Week 14 | 11/20: **Discussion (Mon)** | no class on Wed and Fri (Thanksgiving week)

Week 15 | 11/27: **Reserved for Presentations & Discussions** (no reading, work on your paper);  
| no class on Fri (Veterans Day) | **paper due (11/30, 5 pm)**

## December

Week 16 | 12/4: **Review (Mon) & Exam 3 (Wed, 12/6)**

### *Textbook (required)*

- Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices* (Cambridge UP, 2012; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed).

### *Other Required Readings*

- Poceski, Mario. "Buddhism in Chinese History." Mario Poceski, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014: 40–62.

The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF's e-Learning system, using Canvas.

### *Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes*

- In addition to facilitating student learning about its main topic, the course introduces key themes and concepts in Buddhist studies.
- Students are exposed to principal values, norms, socioeconomic predicaments, and artistic representations that are characteristic of select Asian countries.
- There is coverage of relevant theories and methods used in religious studies, as well as focus on key historical trajectories and relevant socio-religious contexts.
- The course facilitates students' enhanced understanding and appreciation of Asian cultures and societies, which can serve as constructive conceptual framework for reflecting on their own social mores and cultural norms.
- By reading, 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.

### *Grading*

- 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 if they miss an exam or assignment deadline.
- The same course rules and expectations apply equally to all students—no student is entitled to special consideration or unique treatment.
- Students should not expect retroactive changes or other forms of grade modification at the end of the semester. The time to be concerned about grades is during each week of instruction, and students are expected to be diligent and focused on their studies during the whole semester.
- 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.
- Other extraneous or irrelevant factors, including individual student's desires or expectations about grades, are not considered.

### *Attendance, Late or Missing Assignments*

- Students who do not submit assignments on time will not receive credit for them.
- Students who cannot join the class or take an exam on time for UF-authorized excuses must inform the course instructors of the reason for their impending absence in advance, and provide evidence verifying the reason.
- Student who has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor and make suitable arrangements before the examination. Failure to act in accordance with these instructions leads to a failing grade.
- No make-up exams or assignments are given apart from a contemporaneous emergency or serious illness immediately prior to the exam, in which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam (or, if not feasible, as soon as possible), with documented excuses. To put it in another way, students should not miss an exam or assignment without a valid, documented reason, or only inform the instructor after the event.

For further information about what constitutes acceptable absences or late assignments, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

### *Exams*

- The exams are to be taken online, via Canvas, on the dates listed in the syllabus schedule. Students must plan their schedules accordingly and ensure that they are able to take the exams on those days.

- The exams are closed-book exams.
- The exams are primarily based on the lectures, along with the readings. They are not cumulative (i.e., Exam 2 will only cover the materials studied after Exam 1).
- Exams primarily consist of multiple-choice and short Q&A; there might also be a single short essay (a few paragraphs, and not more than one per exam).

### *Written Assignment*

- Completion of the term paper consists of the following three procedures.
  - Optional & extra credits: proposal (300 words), any time before 11/12
  - Required: Polished draft, due 11/19, 5 pm (10%)
  - Required: Finalized paper, due 11/30, 5 pm (15 %)

Students should choose their own topic of interest. It is strongly recommended that students communicate with the instructor in advance for approval and suggestions. The paper should be no less than 1200 words, and its content should be reflective and critical, demonstrating high relevance to the course. Please remember that the instructor value quality more than quantity, and that students can have the instructor's support throughout the semester.

- The written assignment must be submitted in MS Word. Use standard font, such as Calibri 12, with 1.5 spacing and 1" margins.
- Do not forget to include paper title, course name, date, and page numbers.
- The written assignments must be submitted digitally, via Canvas, before the final deadline.
- Name the Word document you submit following this format: <yourname>-Buddhism-f23 term paper; for the name, surname comes first. For instance, a student named Peter Pan should name his file as: Pan, Peter-Buddhism-f23 term paper.
- No late submissions will be accepted. Students are encouraged to avoid procrastination and make early submissions, well before the deadline.
- Students are welcome to ask for feedback/advice about their paper draft, during office hours.

### *Extra Credit*

Extra credit can be earned in three ways.

- Students can submit a proposal for their term paper at any time before 11/12. It should be around 300 words. Students can have the instructor's feedback; if revision is necessary, continue working on it.
- Students can write a film review on one of the films listed in the syllabus. It should follow the standard format of a film review, and it should be no less than 300 words long. Please

be aware that a film review is not a summary of the plot. Its content should be reflective and critical, demonstrating high relevance to the course. The due day for submitting the film is Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am.

- On week 15, students can give a presentation to their classmates on any topics related to Buddhism. It can be of the same content as their term paper. The presentation should be around 10 minutes, including the Q&A session.

Please be aware that simply submitting additional work does not grant you the extra credit. Your submission will be assessed for content, critical thinking, and communication.

## *Films*

- ***The Cup*** (Khyentse Norbu, Bhutan, 1999); feature film.
- ***The Departure*** (by Lana Wilson, AMC Plus Documentaries, 2017)
- ***The Buddha*** (PBS, USA, 2010); documentary.

Available at YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc7\\_VyVXDLs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc7_VyVXDLs)

- ***The Nature of Reality: A Dialogue Between a Buddhist Scholar and a Theoretical Physicist***

Available at YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLbSIC0Pucw>

## *Office Hours and Communication*

- Students can 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*

- Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the [Student Honor Code](#), will be subject to other disciplinary measures. Students should know what constitutes plagiarism and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur, as for example, by using AI writing, or cutting and pasting quotations



from various digital texts and failing to put them in quotation marks with appropriate crediting of the source.

- 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 testing or other class requirements should consult the instructor directly 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.



設我得佛，十方無量不可思議諸佛、世界眾生之類，聞我名字，不得菩薩無生法忍、諸深總持者，不取正覺。

### 《佛說無量壽經》

*If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the immeasurable and inconceivable buddha lands of the ten directions who have heard my name should not gain the bodhisattva's insight into the non-arising of all dharmas and should not acquire various profound dhāraṇīs, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.*

*The Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life*



## *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 at 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.