

BROWN UNIVERSITY COURSE SYLLABUS

Religious Studies 0500: Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation

Topic for 2007: Contemplation and Ethics

Semester I, 2007-2008

Wednesday. 3:00 PM (Seminar)
MWF 9 AM (Laboratory) in the Ashamu Studio

Instructor: H. D. Roth

Office: 1. EAS: Room 101, 341 Brook Street; 2. RS: Room 305, Steiger House, 59 George Street

Office Hours: Monday, 10:45 -12:15 PM in EAS (until further notice)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the theory and practice of Buddhist meditation and its relevance for Buddhist ethics in historical and modern contexts. It is divided into two very large geographical units in which we deal with: 1. The foundations of Buddhist meditation in South Asia as preserved in the Theravada Buddhist canon, its Mahayana developments, and their relationship to Buddhist ethical thought; 2. The Mahayana philosophical developments South Asia and their relationship to the development of East Asian Buddhist Meditation and ethical thought. We will focus on Ch'an and Zen Buddhism in China, Japan, and the West. In each unit we read primary texts in translation that deal with various aspects of meditative and ethical practices in each of the traditions. In the Meditation Lab, we try out a variety of concentration techniques used in the meditative traditions we are studying in the weekly seminar. For example, when we study Theravada Buddhism we will try their practices of sitting while counting breaths, or paying attention to the feeling of the breath on the nose, or following the rise and fall of the belly while breathing. While studying Ch'an and Zen, we might try the practice of "just sitting" while paying complete attention to everything that arises and passes away within our consciousness or we might try concentrating on a problem (*koan*) like Hakuin's famous "What is the sound of One Hand Clapping?"

COURSE PEDAGOGY

This is the seventh version of a course on Buddhist Meditation that I initially developed under an American Council of Learned Societies Contemplative Practice Fellowship, one hundred and twenty of which have been awarded to American college and university teachers during the past seven years. The course combines the traditional "third-person" learning of a weekly two and one-half hour seminar with the novel "first-person" learning of a Meditation Laboratory.

The point of the Meditation Laboratory is not to convert anyone to Buddhism: I *never* require that you believe in anything, Buddhist or otherwise. All I ask is that you approach the experience with an open mind and simply observe what is happening while you are meditating.

The modern Western academy is dominated by what we might call "third-person" learning. We observe, analyze, record, discuss a whole variety of subjects at a distance, as something "out there," as if they were solely objects and our own subjectivity that is viewing them doesn't exist. Certainly there are exceptions to this: in Public Speaking, in Studio Art, Theatre, and sometimes in Music, Environmental Studies and other disciplines, students combine academic study with direct first-hand experience of what they are studying. But in general in the Humanities we tend to value "third-person" learning at the expense of all other forms. Despite this, I have found that when students are called upon, for example, to reflect on what a *haiku* poem means to them, that they derive a deeper understanding of it. And when students are challenged to apply Confucian ethical

theories to problems in their own lives, they gain a much greater appreciation of what it means to be truly humane from a Confucian perspective.

This Buddhist Meditation course is an example of what we call “critical first-person learning.” I say “critical” because in many forms of first-person learning in the contexts of religion, one must suspend critical judgment and believe in the various truths of the tradition. There is an important place for this form of “committed” first-person learning in our private lives, but we should be careful to not require that kind of commitment in a secular university. By contrast, in the “critical first-person learning” about Buddhist meditation we do in this course, the need to believe is removed. We will read and analyze a variety of texts on Buddhist meditation (“third-person learning”); we will observe how our minds and bodies work while trying out a variety of simple meditation techniques derived from these texts (“first-person learning”); and we will critically discuss these texts in light of our experiences in the meditation laboratory. You will also be asked to keep a note-card journal on which you will record brief comments or observations at the end of every lab session.

The Meditations Labs are an important element in this dual aspect pedagogy, However if, for health reasons there is a student who is *unable* to participate in the Meditation Laboratory, I will be happy to make arrangements for doing alternate work of equivalent value.

PRE-REQUISITE

Prior coursework on Buddhism at Brown.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Regular attendance at seminar and meditation lab

Recording brief comments in a journal at the end of every lab session

At least two seminar presentations based on the readings

One 5-7 page take home exam on the South Asian part of the course. **Due on November 5**

One 12-15 page final research paper on a topic to be decided upon with the professor. **Due on December 17..**

RESERVED READINGS

All of the following required and recommended books will be on reserve in the Rockefeller Library.

READING LIST

The Foundations of Buddhism by Rupert Gethin
Oxford University Press, 1998 **ISBN-13:** 978-0192892232

Sattipatthana: The Direct Path to Realization by Analyo (Author)
Windhorse Publications (UK) (March 2004)
ISBN-13: 978-1899579549

Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions) (Paperback)
by Damien Keown
Oxford University Press, 2005. **ISBN-13:** 978-0192804570

A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Paperback)

by Santideva . translated by Alan Wallace and Vesna Wallace
Snow Lion, 1997. **ISBN-13:** 978-1559390613

Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations (Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices Series) (Paperback)

by Paul Williams. Routledge; 1989. **ISBN-13:** 978-0415025379

There Is No Suffering: A Commentary on the Heart Sutra

by Sheng Yen
North Atlantic Books: 2002 **ISBN-13:** 978-1556433856

Zen Training: Methods and Philosophy by Katsuki Sekida.

Shambhala : 2005 **ISBN-13:** 978-1590302835

The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi by I-Hsüan, Burton Watson (Translator)

Columbia University Press: 1999 **ISBN-13:** 978-0231114851

An Introduction to Zen Training by Sôgen Omori

Tuttle Publishing; 2002 **ISBN-13:** 978-0804832472

The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics by Robert Aitken

North Point Press: 1982 **ISBN-13:** 978-0865471580

RECOMMENDED

Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin (Paperback)

by Norman Waddell
Shambhala; 1994 **ISBN-13:** 978-0877739722

The Koan : Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism. Steven Heine (Editor), Dale S. Wright

(Editor), Oxford University Press: 2000 **ISBN-13:** 978-0195117493

Two Zen Classics by Katsuki Sekida

Shambhala: 2005 **ISBN-13:** 978-1590302828

Zen Buddhism: A History, India & China

by Heinrich Dumoulin
Wisdom: 2005 **ISBN-13:** 978-0941532891

Zen Buddhism, Volume 2: A History (Japan) by Heinrich Dumoulin

Wisdom: 2005; **ISBN-13:** 978-0941532907

COURSE OUTLINE

9/05: Introduction to the Course

I. FOUNDATIONS OF SOUTH ASIAN BUDDHIST ANALYTICAL MEDITATION

9/12: The Origins and Development of Buddhist Meditation

Readings: Gethin, pp. 1-111; 133-201; Shinzen Young, “How Meditation Works”

9/19: The Basic Work of Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation: *The Foundations of Mindfulness I: Breath and Body*

Readings: Analayo, *Mahāsatipattana Sutta*, pp. 1-155

9/26: The Basic Work of Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation: *The Foundations of Mindfulness II: Thoughts and Feelings*

Readings: Analayo, *Mahāsatipattana Sutta*, 156-277

II. MEDITATION AND ETHICS IN SOUTH ASIAN BUDDHISM

10/03: Buddhist Ethics

Readings: Keown (entire book)

10/10. The Origins and Development of the Mahayana and the Bodhisattva's Ethical Path

Readings Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism* pp. 1-93; Wallaces, *Bodhisattva Way of Life* by Santideva pp. 1-76

10/17. Mahayana Metaphysics, Meditation and the Bodhisattva's Path

Readings : Williams *Mahayana Buddhism*, pp. 96-159; 185-213; Wallaces *Bodhisattva Way of Life* by Santideva, pp. 77-144

III. FOUNDATIONS OF EAST ASIAN BUDDHIST SYNTHETIC MEDITATION

10/24. Principles and Practices of Chan and Zen Meditation

NB: Introduction to Zen Meditation Retreat, 10/23, 5-10 PM with Roshi Joan Halifax of the Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, NM

Readings: Sekida, 29-127, 193-237; Dumoulin I, pp. 27-62 pp. 85-154 [rec];

10/31 Halloween Recess (not an official Brown holiday!): No class; Work on Take-Home Exam, due: 11/05

11/07. Crazy Ethics: The Southern Ch'an Iconoclasm of Lin-chi

Readings: Watson; Dumoulin I, pp. 155-210 [rec]

11/14.: Kôan Meditation and Japanese Rinzai Zen

Readings: Heine and Wright, 3-74; 244-315 (Introduction; articles by Griffith Foulk, John McRae, Michel Mohr, and Victor Hori); Sekida, *Two Zen Classics* (selections); Dumoulin I, pp. 243-64; II, 5-49, [rec]

11/28: Meditation in the Context of Rinzai Zen

Readings: Omori; Dumoulin II, 151-220 [rec]

Meditation and Ethics in East Asian Mahayana Buddhism

12/05. The Ethics of Emptiness: A Modern Chan Commentary on the *Heart Sutra*

Readings: Sheng Yen, *There is No Suffering*

12/12. The Ethics of Mind: A Modern Zen Commentary

Readings: Aitken, *Opening the Mind of Clover*