

Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy

REL 1##
Spring 2019

M 5–8 in Meredith 201 with Prof. Kalmanson

Office: Medbury 101
Email: kalmanson@gmail.com
Office hours: M 11:30-4:30*

**Office hours are subject to cancellation without notice.
Please make an appointment to ensure availability.*

Required texts:

■ Kasulis, *Engaging Japanese Philosophy: A Short History*, University of Hawai'i Press.

■ Wong Mou-Lam, ed., *Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Huineng*, Shambhala Publications.

In this class, we will investigate three questions important to Buddhist philosophy: What is the right understanding of the human condition? Is liberation from human suffering possible? What can we do to attain liberation? Unique perspectives on these questions developed between Tang-dynasty China and Kamakura-period Japan. After learning about these perspectives in historical context, we will explore their relevance to current issues of social justice, human suffering, and human flourishing.

*My teachings are like a raft—
they are for crossing over, not for keeping.*

—Gautama Buddha

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

All class policies are designed to enhance your learning experience in this course. You are expected to engage the class material with active interest, thoughtful attention, and critical reflectiveness. If you are having trouble engaging in this course, you should meet with me.

What is philosophy?

Traditionally, core topic areas are logic, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics.

What is Buddhist philosophy?

Without invoking the categories of philosophy as traditionally conceived in the West, we can say that the following are important topic areas:

—the study of practice (especially, theorizing about how practice leads to certain transformations, or about the conditions for efficacy in practice)

—the study of the language (especially, its limitations)

—the study of the mind (especially, the role of the mind in constructing

experience, or the relation of mind to reality)

—the study of causality (i.e., karma)

—the study of compassion and wisdom (e.g., moral reasoning)

Following from this, our course goals include:

— Understanding philosophical concerns central to Buddhism, on their own terms, in historical, cultural, and religious context.

— Thinking critically about the relevance of Buddhist philosophy to issues today.

— Gaining a broader understanding what philosophy means, both historically and in the present.

Grades

Quizzes	42%
Participation	38%
Final project	20%

Reading Quizzes Weekly reading quizzes are due in Blackboard on Mondays *before the start of class*. The quizzes close at class time and late quizzes cannot be submitted. You will take a total of 14 this semester, worth 42% of your grade (3 points each).

Participation Your participation will be assessed through a participation journal. Topics and due dates for specific entries will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. Entries are worth 1 to 4 points each, for a total of 38% of your final grade. Note, if you are absent, you should proactively ask a classmate what you missed and complete the participation assignment *on time*. Like the quizzes, late assignments cannot be submitted.

Final project Through quizzes and participation, you will earn up to 80% of your course grade. You can complete as much (or as little) of the final project as you wish, to obtain a higher score. See the Course Grading Rubric for details.

Attendance

Your presence is valued and your absence is noted. In a class that meets once per week, attendance is crucial. Missing class may hinder your ability to receive full credit for quizzes and participation. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what we covered and to stay informed about upcoming assignments. **If your absenteeism becomes a persistent problem, then I reserve the right to lower your grade at my discretion.** You will be apprised of absenteeism issues via feedback on the participation journal.

Preparation Policies

You are responsible for **attending all class sessions** and **coming to class prepared**, having read (or watched) the assigned material, taken time to reflect on it, completed assigned study questions (if any), and in general having gathered your thoughts for class discussion.

You are responsible for being an active, not a passive, reader. This means paying attention to what you are reading, looking up vocabulary that you don't know, and taking notes as you read, especially when you have questions.

You are asked to invest *your* time in this class—not because I am making you, or because I am giving you a grade, but because you are here in college to do valuable and meaningful things.

Participation Policies

Together, we foster a culture of openness and understanding in the classroom. It is our responsibility, together, to make sure that everyone feels comfortable speaking in class, raising questions, and having conversations.

All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned readings and having reflected on topics for class discussion. Your participation will be assessed through a participation journal,

as indicated above. In addition, **I reserve the right to lower your course grade by one full letter grade, if your lack of participation in class becomes a persistent problem.**

Late Assignment Policies

Late reading quizzes and participation journal entries will not be accepted—these are always due on the days and times indicated above. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up and complete the assignments on time. **If you need to reschedule components of the final project, let me know. I will work with you to accommodate your schedule.**

Integrity Policies

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic zero. Students who plagiarize or otherwise violate Drake's policies on academic integrity may also, at my discretion, be referred to the College of Arts and Sciences for disciplinary action. Please review Drake's policies on integrity at <http://artsci.drake.edu/node/87>.

Technology Policies

Please do not use your computer in class, for any reason, unless specifically instructed to do so. Please turn off your cellphone in class—*do not, under any circumstances, take calls or send text messages while in the classroom.* **I reserve the right to lower your course grade by one full letter grade, if you persistently violate the technology policy.**

Email Policies

Send all correspondences to my gmail account. I do not check my email after 5 pm, so if you email me in the evening, I will likely not respond until the next morning.

Accommodations

I am committed to making it possible for each student in this class to achieve his or her learning goals, whatever these may be. Please share with me any information that will help me do this, including any circumstances for which you may need specific accommodations. We can arrange for a variety of accommodations through Michelle Laughlin, the Disability Services Coordinator here at Drake. You may reach her at 515-271-1835, or at michelle.laughlin@drake.edu.

The schedule below is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class, and it is your responsibility to keep up with assignments and deadlines.

	Date	Readings/assignments	Deadlines
Week 1		Introductions and course overview	
		Lecture: Intro to Gautama, Amitabha, basic teachings, and Buddhist cosmology	In-class reading: The Parable of the Raft RQ 1 (due after class)
Week 2		Reading: Diamond Sutra	RQ 2 (all RQ below are due before class)
		Discussion: Can we cross the river?	
Week 3		Reading: Huineng's Platform Sutra	RQ 3
		In-class reading: gongan In-class activity: poetry	Lecture: Zen ritual in the US and Japan today
Week 4		Reading: Gomez, "Purifying Gold: The Metaphor of Effort and Intuition in Buddhist Thought"	RQ 4
		In-class reading: Zongmi Discussion: the sudden-gradual debates	Lecture: more Buddhist rituals—mudras, mantras, mandalas, and merit
Week 5		Reading: Kukai (Kasulis)	RQ 5
		Lecture: Intro to J. L. Austen and "performativity"	
Week 6		Reading: Excerpts from Judith Butler	RQ 6
		In-class reading: ritual enactment and performance theory	Discussion: performativity, social power, and systems of suffering
Week 7		Reading: Dōgen (Kasulis)	RQ 7
		In-class reading: Dōgen, "Rules for Zazen" and "Instructions for the Tenzo"	
Week 8		Reading: Dōgen, Gakudō Yōjin-Shū, Genjokoan	RQ 8
		In class reading: Cook, "Sudden Enlightenment in Dōgen's Zen"	In-class activity: Dōgen's poem for Huineng
Week 9		Reading: Shinran (Kasulis)	RQ 9
		In-class reading: Dobbins, "Women, Sexuality, and Pure Land Buddhism"	Lecture: Pure Land communities in Japan and the US today
Week 10		Reading: Shinran, Tannishō	RQ 10
		In-class activity: Shinran's poem	
Week 11		Spring break	
Week 12		Reading: Jin Y. Park, "Wisdom, Compassion, and Zen Social Ethics"	RQ 11
		In-class reading and lecture: Intro to engaged Buddhism movements	
Week 13		Reading: James Mark Shields, "A Blueprint for Buddhist Revolution"	RQ 12
		In-class reading and lecture: Pure Land and social activism in East Asia today	
Week 14		Reading: Liberation theology	RQ 13
		In-class reading and lecture: Comparative methodologies	
Week 15		Reading: Womanist-Buddhist dialogue	RQ 14
		Discussion: What is "liberation" after all?	
Week 16		Finals week	