BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

RELG 221 - spring 2014
Class location TBD
Monday & Wednesday, time TBD

Professor Elon Goldstein
Office: Department of Religious Studies, Rutledge 3rd floor
Office hours TBA
Email
Phone number

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

RELG 221: BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE
3 credits

Buddhist methods of meditation, asceticism, and similar disciplinary practices for personal and social transformation. Examination of classic Buddhist works from diverse cultures with attention to modern American practices.

Course Overview: In this course, we examine Buddhist methods for personal and social transformation: meditation, asceticism, and similar disciplinary practices. In English translation, we study classic works on Buddhist meditation from diverse cultures including India, Tibet, China, Japan, Thailand, and modern America. We also explore connections in contemporary America between Buddhist meditation and current developments in science, medicine, psychology, and other areas. Using approaches from psychology, ethics, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, we learn about why and how religions are concerned with methods to achieve self-discipline and special types of knowledge.

Prerequisites: None. This course is appropriate for those new to the study of Buddhism and religion. Students who have prior familiarity with the study of religion and/or Buddhism will be able to deepen their knowledge through this course.

II. GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goals
This course will acquaint students with classic works dealing with the theory and method of Buddhist meditation over the past 2,500 years. Students will become familiar with key Buddhist ideas and practices from different cultures of Asia as well as from modern America. Students will understand the importance and complexity of disciplinary regimens for the study of religion and human culture. Students will be able to utilize multiple approaches taken from sociology, anthropology, psychology, and other fields to shed light on Buddhist meditation and on disciplinary regimens more generally. Students will also gain an appreciation of the ongoing connections in contemporary America between Buddhist meditation and the fields of neurobiology, psychology, medicine, and psychotherapy.
Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

(1) distinguish among and describe key characteristics of major traditions of Buddhist meditation from both past and present such as attentional stability, insight, attitudinal training, visualization, and bodily disciplines.

(2) compare and contrast the ways in which Buddhists from varied traditions, cultures, and eras have utilized theories and practices of meditation in order to further their religious aims.

(3) give examples of the different types of knowledge that result from applying sociological, anthropological, and psychological approaches to the study of Buddhist meditation and spiritual disciplines.

(4) articulate the ways in which Buddhist meditation has affected contemporary work in neurobiology, medicine, psychology, and psychotherapy.

III. READINGS, FILMS, AND OTHER COURSE MATERIALS
Readings:
All readings are in English. Primary sources are presented in English translation.

• links to course readings on Blackboard include numerous articles and excerpts from primary sources

• The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India by Johannes Bronkhorst. Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1986.

Films (screenings to be held for the entire class at times TBA on the course website):
• Monks in the Lab

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

• 20% — short written responses to weekly readings, due on most weeks as indicated on the
course website. The responses will be based on writing prompts posted online. Responses are due at the start of the final class each week. A response should be roughly two-thirds of a page in length, double-spaced. These short reflections provide a valuable opportunity to think about the assigned readings prior to our last class discussion of each week. They will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Only responses submitted on-time will be accepted.

• 20% — midterm exam [week 7]

• 25% — 4-6 page interpretive essay. The essay is based on prior lectures and readings. Additional reading is not necessary. Students choose a topic from among a set of prompts that will be posted online. Alternatively, students may propose an original topic and have it approved by the instructor in writing at least one week before the due date. The essay will require a close engagement with one or more of our primary sources. It will be evaluated both for quality of thought and quality of expression. (for guidelines and expectations, see the course handout on writing an interpretive essay)

• 35% — comprehensive final exam with an emphasis on course material since the midterm.

• participation — participation forms an important part of the course. Meaningful contributions to class discussions and other in-class activities enhance everyone's learning experience. Consistent contributions can lift a student's final grade by as much as one full grade, e.g., from a B+ to an A-. Students should feel free to discuss the quality of their class participation with the instructor at any point during the semester.

Grading Scale
100-90 A; 89-87 B+; 86-80 B; 79-77 C+; 76-70 C; 69-67 D+; 66-60 D; 59 and below F

V. COURSE POLICIES

Attendance
Prompt and regular attendance is crucial for success in the course. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. We will follow the university's policy regarding attendance and the effect of unexcused absences on a student's course grade. If you are absent for an excusable reason, be sure to present the needed documentation to the instructor immediately upon your return (e.g., if you are absent for a legitimate medical reason, bring a doctor's note as soon as you come back to class). The University attendance policy specifies that students may miss up to 3 class meetings (10% of class time) without penalty. The 4th absence will result in a grade penalty of one letter grade. The 5th absence will result in a deduction of 2 letter grades.

Expectations for Classroom Behavior
We are all here to learn. Please come to class prepared and on-time. Always be respectful of everyone in class. Any disrespectful or disruptive behavior may result in dismissal from class and/or an academic penalty.

Academic Integrity
Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and
should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else’s work, will result in a 0 for the work, possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.

**Accommodating Disabilities**
Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.

**VI. COURSE OUTLINE**

Week 1 (week of January 13, 2014):
The Study of Meditation as a Gateway to the Study of Religion
• course readings on Blackboard (articles from Forman, Gimello, Katz, etc. on whether mystical experience is always constructed or whether non-ordinary meditative experience can be unmediated by conceptual structures; excerpts from Buddhist tradition on the same issue by Kamalashila [eighth century] and the XIVth Dalai Lama [20th century])

Week 2 (week of January 20, 2014):
Theories about Spiritual Discipline, Asceticism, and the Voluntary Subjugation of the Self
• course readings on Blackboard (articles and essays by Foucault on technologies of the self; Asad on regimes of discipline in monasticism; Schofer on voluntary self-subjugation; Yearley on the ascetic grounds of goodness)

Week 3 (week of January 27, 2014):
Meditation in Early Buddhism: Controversies over the Roles of Concentration and Insight
• *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India* by Johannes Bronkhorst

Week 4 (week of February 3, 2014):
Early Buddhist Meditation in Greater Depth: Complexities regarding Concentration and Insight
• *Sattipathana* by Bhikkhu Analayo

Week 5 (week of February 10, 2014):
The Four Foundations of Mindfulness and Breath Meditation: Theravada Buddhist traditions
• *Sattipathana* by Bhikkhu Analayo (continued)

Week 6 (week of February 17, 2014):
Basic Mahayana Buddhist Meditation: Attention and Realization of Śūnyatā (Insubstantiality)
• *The Bridge of Quiescence* by B. Alan Wallace [including a translation of Tsongkhapa’s *Short Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Awakening*]
Week 7 (week of February 24, 2014):
MIDTERM EXAM
The Basics of Indian and Tibetan Mahayana Meditation Continued: Experience Is Like a Dream
• The Bridge of Quiescence by B. Alan Wallace (continued)

Week 8 (week of March 3, 2014):
Heart Training: Changing One’s Attitudes through Concepts in Mahayana Meditation
• Training the Mind in the Great Way by Gendun Drup

Week of March 10: SPRING BREAK, no classes

Week 9 (week of March 17, 2014):
Visualization Practice in Chinese and Japanese Pure Land Traditions
• course readings on Blackboard (The Visualization Scripture; selections from Shandao [China] and Honen [Japan])

Week 10 (week of March 24, 2014):
Two Types of Chan (Zen) Meditation in China: Enigmatic Questions and Silent Illumination
• course readings on Blackboard (Buswell article on enigmatic questions [gongan/koan]; selections of Chinese gongans from The Blue Cliff Record; song of the Third Patriarch on silent illumination)

Week 11 (week of March 31, 2014):
Chinul’s Korean Integration of the Two Chinese Chan (Zen) Approaches to Meditation
• Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul’s Korean Way of Zen by Robert Buswell, Jr (selections)

Week 12 (week of April 7, 2014):
Dogen’s Japanese Zen Synthesis of Koans and Just Sitting (Shikantaza)
• Beyond Thinking by Zen Master Dogen (selections)

Week 13 (week of April 14, 2014):
Buddhist Meditation in Relation to Brain Studies and Medicine in Modern America
• course readings on Blackboard (excerpts from articles and chapters by Varela, Kabat-Zinn, Dunne, Benson, Ricard, etc. on the interface of Buddhist meditation, neuro-biology, and medical interventions)
• film screening, time TBA: Monks in the Lab

Week 14 (week of April 21, 2014):
Buddhist Meditation, Psychology, and Psychotherapy in Modern America
• course readings on Blackboard (excerpts from articles and chapters by Goleman, Ekman, Epstein, Siegel, Wilbur, etc. on the interface of Buddhist meditation, psychological models of wellness and illness, and psychotherapeutic practices)

Monday, April 28, 2014 Last Day of Classes

April 30-May 7, 2014 FINAL EXAMS (See University exam schedule for date of final exam.)