I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Buddhist stories, poetry, novels, and films from various cultures and times examined for how they creatively convey their religious ideals. Study of great works of Buddhist writing, in English translation, analyzing their techniques and examining how Buddhists use film today for similar aims.

We read great Buddhist works from diverse cultures, including those of India, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and modern America. In the process, this course introduces a number of major traditions of Buddhism ranging from the religion’s origins in India to Buddhist Tantra in Tibet and Chan/Zen in East Asia.

Prerequisites: None. This course is appropriate for those new to the study of Buddhism and religion.

II. GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goals

This course will acquaint students with classic works of Buddhist literature over the past two thousand years from throughout Asia and modern America, as well as recent Buddhist films. Through classic literature, students will understand key features of different forms of Buddhism such as Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, and Zen. Students will also gain an appreciation of the interplay between Buddhist traditions and artistic traditions in the diverse cultures where Buddhism has taken root.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to

(1) distinguish among and describe key characteristics of major Buddhist traditions from both past and present such as Common Buddhism, Zen, and Tantric Buddhism.

(2) compare the ways in which Buddhists from varied traditions have utilized different types of culturally specific literature and film in order to further their ethical and religious aims.

(3) summarize and appraise the plots and themes of classic works in the history of Buddhist literature and film.
interpret and analyze the functions of specific artistic elements in seminal Buddhist stories, poetry, and films. Examples of artistic techniques include the use of aestheticized emotion, of nested stories, and of homologies among poetic structure, the natural world, and the human psyche.

III. READINGS, FILMS, AND OTHER COURSE MATERIALS

readings:
- Course readings on Blackboard including primary and secondary sources

films (screenings to be held for the entire class at times TBA on the course website):
- *Little Buddha* 1993 Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci
- *The Anniversary* 2003 Directed by Ham Tran (short film to be shown during class)
- *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* 2003 Directed by Kim Ki-duk
- *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* 1989 Directed by Yong-Kyun Bae
- *The Cup* 1999 Directed by Khyentse Norbu

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: The Life of the Buddha as a Religious Paradigm and Artistic Masterpiece
  • course readings on Blackboard (selections from Buddhacarita; Lalitavistara Sutra; Old Path, White Clouds)

Week 2: The Previous Lives of the Buddha – Jātaka Stories of the Bodhisattva
  • course readings on Blackboard (selections from Jātas, Āryaśūra’s Jātakamālā, Haribhata’s Jātakamālā, Vyāghrī Jātaka from Swvarṇ aprabhasottama Sūtra)

Week 3: Living in the World, Going Beyond the World: An Ethical Dilemma
  • The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara: A Buddhist Epic
  • film screening, time TBA: Little Buddha

Week 4: In the World But Not of the World: Dilemma Solved?
  • Joy for the World: A Buddhist Play

Week 5: Branch Stories and Causality in the Epic of a Buddhist Heroine
  • Manimekhalai: The Dancer with the Magic Bowl

Week 6: Poems and Stories of Great Disciples and Devotees
  • course readings on Blackboard (selections from Therigāthā, Pūrṇāvadāna, Aśokavadāna)

Week 7: MIDTERM EXAM; Turning to East Asian Buddhism
  • course readings on Blackboard (selections from Gaṇḍavyūha, Ko Un’s Little Pilgrim)
  • film screening during class: The Anniversary

Week 8: From Paradox to the Ordinary: Chinese Buddhist Masters/Poets
  • course readings on Blackboard (Chinese Buddhist Poetry from the Tang and Sung Dynasties; Chinese Chan encounter dialogues [gongan])
  • film screening, time TBA: Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?

Week 9: The Poetry of Koans in Japan: the Awakened Heartmind of Zen Master Dogen
  • course readings on Blackboard (selections from Zen Master Dogen)
  • film screening, time TBA: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring

Week 10: Zen, Nature, and the Art of Writing in Japan
  • Narrow Road to the Deep North

Week 11: Milarepa: A Tibetan Story of Sin and Redemption
  • The Life of Milarepa
  • film screening, time TBA: The Cup

Week 12: Tibetan Poems of Realization
  • The Life of Milarepa [continued]
  • course readings on Blackboard (Tibetan Buddhist poems of realization from Longchenpa to Thinley Norbu)
Week 13: Contemporary Buddhist Literature in America and Elsewhere
   • course readings on Blackboard (contemporary American, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tibetan Buddhist poetry)

Week 14: The Power of Buddhist Literature & Film in Today's World
   • course readings on Blackboard (essays by Charles Johnson, Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, and others about the intersections of Buddhist practice and writing)

FINAL EXAM