Introduction to Buddhism | REL2341 (Sec 002H), SPRING 2014

Prof. Mario Poceski (Religion Dept., University of Florida)

Class Time & Location
Mon, Wed & Fri, period 4 (10:40–11:30 am); FLI 105.

Office Hours & Contact Information
Mon 11:40–12:30 pm, Wed 1:00-1:50 pm, and by appointment, 132 Anderson Hall; (352) 273-2937; mpoceski@ufl.edu; www.clas.ufl.edu/users/mpoceski.

Teaching Assistant
Ms. Jennifer Lemche. Office hour: Tue 10:40-11:40, and by appointment, 119 Anderson Hall; tel: (352) 273-2926; email: jlemche@ufl.edu.

Course Description
The course is a historical survey of the beliefs, doctrines, and practices that have shaped the identity of Buddhism as a pan-Asian religion that transcends ethnic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. The course covers the historical development of Buddhism in South Asia, 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 will also explore the spread of Buddhism outside of India, including China and the Western world.

Course Format and Prerequisites
This is primarily a lecture course, but students are encouraged and expected to engage in class discussions and critical analysis of the course materials, especially during the Friday discussion sessions. There are no formal prerequisites and no knowledge of Asian languages is required.

Requirements
• Class attendance, participation, and reading of the assigned materials.
• Three exams (totaling 100 points).

Textbooks
• Lopez, Donald, ed. Buddhist Scriptures (Penguin Classics, 2004). {Recommended}

Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes
• In addition to facilitating student learning about its main topic, the course will also introduce key themes and concepts in Buddhist studies.
• There will be some coverage of relevant theories and methods used in religious studies, as well as focus on key historical trajectories and relevant socio-religious contexts.
• By reading, reflecting upon, and discussing a broad range of materials, students will 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.
• Students will be exposed to principal values, norms, socioeconomic predicaments, and artistic representations that are characteristic of select Asian countries.
- The course will facilitate 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.

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### Lecture Topics and Course Schedule  
(Tentative and subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JAN W1</th>
<th>Indian Contexts and the Buddha’s Life</th>
<th>Harvey 1–31; Lopez 105–28</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W2</td>
<td>Early Buddhist Communities</td>
<td>Harvey 88–108; Lopez 223–29</td>
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<tr>
<td>W3</td>
<td>Karma and Rebirth</td>
<td>Harvey 32–49; Lopez 3–18, 24–33</td>
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<td>W4</td>
<td>Four Noble Truths</td>
<td>Harvey 50–87</td>
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<td>FEB W5</td>
<td>Exam 1 (2/3, Mon)</td>
<td>video: Footprint of the Buddha</td>
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<tr>
<td>W6</td>
<td>Mahāyāna and the Bodhisattva Ideal</td>
<td>Harvey 108–161; Lopez 172–84, 388–93</td>
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<td>W7</td>
<td>Buddhahood and Tantra</td>
<td>Harvey 161–93, 347–61; Lopez 478–87, 495–503</td>
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<td>W8</td>
<td>Buddhism in China and Japan</td>
<td>Harvey 210–24, 226–35; Lopez 19–23, 370–74</td>
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<td>MAR W9</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>W10</td>
<td>Popular Beliefs and Devotional Practices</td>
<td>Harvey 237–63; Lopez 60–68, 394–401</td>
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<td>W11</td>
<td>Exam 2 (3/17, Mon)</td>
<td>video: Land of the Disappearing Buddha</td>
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<td>W12</td>
<td>Monastic and Lay Paradigms</td>
<td>Harvey 264–317; Lopez 269–84</td>
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<td>APR W13</td>
<td>Buddhist Meditation</td>
<td>Harvey 318–47, 361–75; Lopez 343–49, 361–69</td>
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<td>W14</td>
<td>Buddhism in Modern Asia</td>
<td>Harvey 376–418; Lopez 306–17, 531–39</td>
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<td>W15</td>
<td>Buddhism in the West</td>
<td>Harvey 419–58; Lopez 540–48</td>
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<td>W16</td>
<td>video: Becoming the Buddha in LA</td>
<td>Exam 3 (4/23, Wed)</td>
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### Online e-Learning System

- The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF’s e-Learning system [lss.at.ufl.edu].
- Students should not write to the instructor by using the email feature in e-Learning; instead, they should send written communications directly on the email address given above.

### Attendance and Learning

- Attendance is expected of all students, starting with the first day of classes. Students who have problems with class attendance or punctuality should think twice before enrolling in this course. (For more on the university’s attendance policies, see the Undergraduate Catalog).
- Students are advised to take extensive notes in class, and to use them prudently in their preparation for the exams.
- The exams will primarily be based on the lectures. The information given in the lectures takes precedence over all other sources, including the assigned readings.

### Grading

- The final grade will be based on each student’s individual performance and his/her fulfillment of the course requirements, as stipulated in the syllabus.
- The same course rules and expectations apply equally to all students—no student is entitled to special consideration or unique treatment. Other extraneous or irrelevant factors, including student’s
personal desires or expectations about grades, will not be taken into account. Students should also
not expect retroactive changes or other dubious forms of grade modification.

- Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously. There will be no
opportunities to do additional work for extra credit or better grade.
- No incomplete grades will be given, except in very exceptional circumstances, in which case the
students should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.
- Final grades will be computed on this scale: A = 100–94%; A- = 93.9–90%; B+ = 89.9–87%; B = 86.9–
83%; B- = 82.9–80%; C+ = 79.9–77%; C = 76.9–73%; C- = 72.9–70%; D+ = 69.9–67%; D = 66.9–63%; D- =
62.9–60%; E = 59.9% or less.

**Exams**

- No make-up exams will be given, except in documented instances of illness or other emergency, in
which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam, if feasible, or as soon as
possible.
- If any student has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a
religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor in person and make suitable arrangements one
week before the examination. Failure to act in accord with these instructions will lead to a failing
grade.

**Classroom Conduct**

- All students are required to come to class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are very
disruptive.
- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful, and abstain from disruptive behavior in the
classroom that adversely affects others and is contrary to the pursuit of knowledge. Examples of such
behavior include talking with someone, displaying active disinterest in the class (e.g. sleeping or
inappropriate computer use), or putting down others. Phones should also be turned off during class.
Offending students will be asked to leave.
- It is hoped that there will be lively debates and informed discussions. While there is room for
individual opinions and disagreements, they have to be expressed in ways that are appropriate for
an academic setting.

**Office Hours and Communication**

- Students are encouraged to come to office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with
the course materials. The instructor will also be glad to discuss all relevant topics that, due to time
constrains, 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 and in person, 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**

- 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 seating, testing, or other class requirements should consult the instructor in person 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 exams must be made at least one week in advance.

**Other Notices**

- Registration in the course implies that each student enters a contractual agreement with the instructor, whereas he/she is accountable for fulfilling all course requirements and adhering to the course policies.
- Students are responsible for knowing and following all schedules and instructions contained in this syllabus, as well as any other instructions given in class (remember, attendance is not optional).

“There is nowhere where the wisdom of the Buddha does not reach. Why? There is not a single sentient being that is not fully possessed of the wisdom of the Buddha. It is only due to their false thinking, fallacies, and attachments that beings fail to realize this. If they could only abandon their false thoughts, then the all-encompassing wisdom, the spontaneous wisdom, and the unobstructed wisdom will clearly manifest themselves.”

— Huayan Scripture 華嚴經

“The Way needs no cultivation, just let go of defilement. What is defilement? When with a mind of birth and death one acts in a contrived manner, then everything is defilement. If one wants to know the Way directly: Ordinary Mind is the Way! What is the meaning of Ordinary Mind? [It is mind] that is devoid of activity, [notions of] right or wrong, grasping or rejecting, terminable or permanent, worldly or holy.... whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, responding to situations and dealing with people as they come: everything is the Way.”

— Record of Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788)