Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies 2018-2019
ELECTIVES / INTER-FACULTY ELECTIVES
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

**BSTC2002 Life and Buddhism**

Course No.: BSTC2002  
Lecturer: Professor Guang Xing  
Email: guangxin@hku.hk  
Office: C0405, Jockey Club Tower  
Time for lecture: Tuesday 4:30 pm to 6:20 pm  
Venue: Rayson Huang Theatre

**Course Description: (6 credits)**
This course guides students to explore the thought, values and practices of Buddhism through a detailed analysis and examination of its fundamentals of philosophical theories and principles. Buddhist teachings entirely focus on the analysis of human life and offer a unique way to solve life’s problems and achieve happiness. Just as the Buddha said, he taught one thing: suffering and its cessation. In this course, the basic Buddhist teachings of dependent arising, the relationship of mind and body, human behaviours and their consequences, the human condition and its causes, the concept of happiness, etc. will be investigated on the basis of the earliest Buddhist literatures namely the Pali Nikayas and Chinese Agamas. Assessment: 100% coursework.

**Objectives:**
Even without any prior knowledge of Buddhism, students will be benefited from learning the fundamental theories and practices of Buddhism. Students are expected to obtain a basic understanding of Buddhist philosophy of life, values and attitudes towards life and the Buddhist ways to achieve happiness in life.

**Assessments:**
Students are required to read the relevant papers before coming to the lecture so that they can participate in our lively discussion. The final examination is based on one essay, one presentation and lecture participation.

1. 60 % short essay with 2,500-3,000 words (excluding bibliography, deadline for submission is midnight 3rd December)
2. 25 % group presentation
3. 15 % class participation

PLEASE submit your essay through email.
Course Learning Outcome:
Students will:
1. Describe and explain the role of morality and wisdom in the Buddhist way of life, (Assessment 1, 2, 3)
2. Use the relevant information to critically reflect how to live a meaningful and better life, 
   (Assessment 1, 2, 3)
3. Apply the knowledge and understanding to critically examine the problems in life, (Assessment 1, 2, 3)
4. Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of one’s behavior to others and the society one live in. 
   (Assessment 1, 2, 3).

Criteria for marking essay:

1. Good and correct understanding of the Buddhist teachings given in the lectures,
2. Clear, logical and rational presentation and discussion of your ideas and thoughts,
3. Show that you have read at least five relevant papers in your essay either in your footnotes or 
   endnotes and list them at the end. These five papers can be found from the readings in Moodles or 
   from the reference list at the end of each lecture. Internet sources may not be acceptable as most of 
   them are not academic. So please visit the recommended internet websites in our reading list 
   below for materials and academic papers.

Before you send me your final essay, you need to send it to turnitin for plagiarism check which is a 
university requirement. Then you attach the one page report showing similarities at the beginning of 
your essay.

Here is the Faculty Grade Expectations.  

Course Outline (tentative):

Lecture 01 (Sep. 4)
Topic: The Buddhist attitude toward life
Discussion Topics: Buddhist attitude towards life
Reading: Chapters 1 in Rahula’s What the Buddha Taught.

Lecture 02 (Sep. 11)
Topic: The historical Buddha: a personality analysis
Discussion Topics: The Buddha’s life
Reading: Chapter 1: “The Buddha: The Story of the Awakened One” in Gethin’s The Foundations of 
Buddhism. Chapter 2 “Buddha” in Introducing Buddhism. Piyadassi Thera’s The Buddha: His Life and 
Teaching.
Lecture 03 (Sep. 18)
**Topic: Buddhist analysis of Human life:**
Discussion Topics: five aggregates, four nutriments, three characteristics of individual existence.

Mid-Autumn Festival Holiday Sep. 25

Lecture 04 (Oct. 2)
**Topic: Life without a permanent soul: Buddhist teaching of non-self**
Discussion Topics: theory of dependent origination, non-soul theory.

Lecture 05 (Oct. 9)
**Topic: Buddhist analysis of human behaviours and their consequences:**
Discussion Topics: karma and rebirth

Reading Week Oct 15-20

Lecture 06 (Oct. 23)
**Topic: Buddhist analysis of human predicament**
Discussion Topics: twelve factors of dependent origination,
Reading: Karunadasa, Y. “The problem of suffering: The Buddhist diagnosis of the Human predicament”. Chapter I: “The Human Condition” in *In the Buddha’s Words*. Chapter 3 “Four Truths: The Disease, the Cause, the Cure and the Medicine” in Gethin’s *The Foundations of Buddhism*.

Lecture 07 (Oct. 30)
**Topic: Buddhist concepts of happiness:**
Discussion Topics: *nirvana* -- nibbana parama sukha

Lecture 08 (Nov. 6)
**Topic: Buddhist ways to achieve happiness:** (I)
Discussion Topics: the noble eightfold path
Path” in Gethin’s *The Foundations of Buddhism*.

**Lecture 09 (Nov. 13)**  
**Topic: Buddhist ways to achieve happiness: (II)**  
Discussion Topics: Buddhist meditation.  

**Lecture 10 (Nov. 20)**  
**Topic: Buddhist moral teaching.**  
Discussion Topics: criteria for judging good and bad,  

**Lecture 11 (Nov. 27)**  
**Topic: Buddhist attitude to death:**  
Discussion Topics: Death, abortion and organ donation.  

**Group Presentation: Date and venue will be announced soon.**

**Rules about Group Presentation (Group Project)**  
1. A group should consist of at least **FIVE to TEN** students working together as a team for a single project on a chosen topic. The minimum number of members in a group is **FIVE** as there many students in this class.  
2. Each member has **THREE minutes** for presentation and please make sure that each of all the members have THREE minutes. The members can have role play and speak interchangeably, or just speak for three minutes and finish. The group should decide what to do, NOT the individual member.  
3. A list of topics for group presentation can be found in the syllabus which is the same as the essay topics.  
4. Each of the group members will be assessed individually; please write your NAME on the top of the right side of the slides so that we can see it during your presentation. However, the time will be counted on group basis NOT on the basis of individual members. Therefore if one member speaks more than three minutes than another member will have less than three minutes to present his or her ideas. Hence, it is NOT fair for the member and it will effect the member’s assessment. So group members should not excel their assigned time of three minutes.  
5. There will be a time keeper who will ring the bell three times towards the end of the group presentation. The first ring (one ring only) is when THREE minutes are left and the second (two rings) is when ONE minute is left and the last ring (three or more rings) is at the end.  
6. The assessment for presentation: (1) right understanding of the Buddhist teaching, (2) good and coherent presentation of the teaching, (3) time management, no more no less, three minutes only for each member, (4) team work, cooperation between the members of the group, (5) good PPT with
Students are NOT required to present at all the sessions as you have many exams and group presentations for other courses. However, you are required to come TEN Minutes before your scheduled presentation session in order to prepare.

**Suggested Essay topics**

1. Discuss how this course has changed or improved your life. (Reflective Essay about the course)
2. Discuss Buddhist attitude towards life?
3. Discuss the Buddha as a teacher in light of his personality.
4. What is the Buddhist analysis of human life?
5. Discuss the moral responsibility in light of the concept of no-soul or Anatta.
6. No soul or Anatta is a characteristic of Buddhism as a religion. Discuss.
7. Is the Buddhist concept of karma a determinism?
8. Is Buddhist concept of karma an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?
9. “Buddhism is pessimistic.” Discuss in the light of Buddhist Teaching of suffering.
10. Why Buddhism starts with Dukkha or suffering? Discuss.
11. Discuss the Buddhist concept of Happiness.
13. Why the noble eightfold path is described as transcending the two extremes of austerities and sensual indulgence?
14. Discuss the Buddhist concept of Nirvana.
15. Discuss the Buddhist way of life in light of the noble eightfold path.
16. How the Buddhist meditation related to a better life?
17. Discuss the importance of mindfulness in our life.
18. Discuss the Buddhist attitude towards death. (Please do not include attitude towards physical body and funeral ceremony)
19. Discuss the importance of five precepts in our life.
20. Buddhism is rational. Discuss.
21. Is Buddhism a religion or a philosophy? Discuss.

You may choose your own essay topics provided it relates to our course. Please write a title page with the following information: (1) the course title, (2) topic of the essay, (3) your name and dates, (4) your email address. Please use Essay Format to write your essay and use Chicago Citation Style which can be found in Moodle.

**Required Reading**


Further Reading


Gunaratna, V.F. *Buddhist Reflections on Death*. The Wheel Publication No. 102/103, 1982 Buddhist...


learning.


Reference and Internet Resources

1) Dictionaries

*Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, eds., Charles Muller. Free. This is an internet based dictionary similar to *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, by Soothill and Hodous, but has much more entries. If you know the Chinese Buddhist technical terms, but do not know how to translate it into English, please visit Muller’s DDB website address: http://www.acmuller.net/ddb/ Users can access the search function with the user ID of "guest" (case-sensitive, no quotes), leaving the password area blank allowing 20 searches in a 24 hour period. To search Sanskrit and other terms containing diacritics, type in the term in simple ascii.

A Dictionary Buddhism, eds., Damien Keown. This Dictionary needs subscription, so use it through HKU Electronic Recourses.


Oxford Reference Online Premium. This reference contains many encyclopaedia and dictionaries for all kinds of studies. It is good for beginners of Buddhism to look for basic information. This Dictionary needs subscription, so use it through HKU Electronic Recourses.

The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue. [compiled by] Lewis R. Lancaster in collaboration with Sung-bae Park. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. This is a catalogue of Mahayana Buddhist Sutras in Sanskrit together with Tibetan and Chinese translation. It also lists the translators and date of Chinese translation. If you know the title of a sutra in Chinese, but you don’t know how to translate it into Sanskrit, then you can find it in this catalogue. A Hardcopy can be found in HKU Library XR 016.294382 L2. The electronic version can be found at: http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/ Free. You can download the entire web version.

2) Encyclopaedia

Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, eds., Robert E. Buswell, Jr., Ed. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003. 982 pp. 2 vols. This encyclopedia describes the Buddhist world view, basic teachings and practices of Buddhism, as well as its different schools and sects. This Encyclopedia needs subscription, so use it through HKU Electronic Recourses.


Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. Free, it contains a large number of papers in Buddhist and Confucian studies. http://plato.stanford.edu/

The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. Free it contains a large number of papers in Buddhist and Confucian studies. http://www.iep.utm.edu/
3) Journals


**Journal of Philosophy of Life.** Published by Waseda University in Japan. The aim of this journal is to promote international dialogue on the philosophy of life. It features original, full-length papers as well as research reports and other relevant materials. Every paper in the journal is published in PDF format and is freely downloadable from this website, the repository of Waseda University, and/or the repository of Osaka Prefecture University (OPERA). This journal is a member of the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Philosophical Research Online (philpapers). [http://www.philosophyoflife.org/](http://www.philosophyoflife.org/)


**Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies.** This is the largest and best journal for Buddhist Studies. You can access and download papers older than five years, free. [https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/issue/archive](https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/issue/archive) HKU holdings: S 294.305 I6 A8

**Journal of Global Buddhism.** Free. This is a web based academic journal for free distribution. [http://www.globalbuddhism.org/dig.html](http://www.globalbuddhism.org/dig.html)


**Asia Major.** Academic Journal dedicated for the Asian study. All past papers are freely downloadable. [http://www.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~asiamajor/](http://www.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~asiamajor/)


**The Eastern Buddhist.** HKU Library. Published twice a year by the Eastern Buddhist Society in Kyoto. Japan, started from 1965. S 294.3 E13 B9

**Contemporary Buddhism.** HKU Library. Published twice a year, Richmond, England: Curzon, c2000-
4) Website Resources

Accessstoinsight. Free. This is a website entirely dedicated to the teaching of Theravada Buddhism including the Pali Canon, Theravada text archive and sources. Most of the Pali texts are translated into English for free distribution. Website address: www.accesstoinsight.org/

Buddhist Digital Library and Museum. Free. There is a good collection of academic articles some with full texts in both Chinese and English. It is a good place to relevant academic articles for your study. Website address: http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/DBLM/index.htm please go to database.

Buddhist Publication Society. Free. This is an organization in Sri Lanka devoted to the publication of Theravada Buddhist Books and some of them are for free distribution. So you can download them for your own use. The Wheel Publication Series and Bodhi Leaf Series are scholarly studies of Theravada Buddhism. Please follow the link and visit Online Library http://www.bps.lk/

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