BSFC 2017

Buddhism and Economics (6 Credits)
2016-2017 (Second Semester)

Instructor: Dr. Ernest C.H. NG
Email: chihinng@hku.hk
Office: To be confirmed
Office Hours: To be confirmed

**Time & Venue**
Time: 3:30 pm - 5:20 pm (Every Friday)
Venue: CPD LG.18, Centennial Campus

**Course Description**

Living in a market economy where short-term profit and economic growth appear to be the ultimate goal, can the Buddhist teachings bridge the divide between our spiritual and material needs and reconcile the tension between doing good and doing well? In this course we will introduce some core Buddhist teachings and explore ways of achieving sustainability in individuals, society and the environment through the cultivation of morality and well-being. The efficacy of Buddhist perspectives on decision-making and their practical implications to our daily life will be discussed. Prior knowledge of Buddhism and Economics may be useful but it is not required for this course.

Prerequisites: none

**Course Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students are expected to develop the ability to:
1. Describe and explain some core Buddhist teachings and their relation to economic growth and sustainability (Assessment 1, 2, 3);
2. Demonstrate a critical awareness of the impact of our choices for the well-being of our society and natural environment (Assessment 1, 2);
3. Relate and apply relevant Buddhist teachings to the challenges and opportunities in managing economic growth and critically reflect on how sustainable decisions could be made at the individual, societal and environmental levels (Assessment 1, 2).
**Course Assessment:**

100% coursework with the following breakdown:

1. **30%** one short essay with 1,500 words (Due 12th March 2017)
2. **50%** one long essay with 2,500 words (Due 21st May 2017)
3. **20%** class participation

**Short and long essays:**

Your short essay (1,500 words) and long essay (2,500 words) topics should be selected from one of the discussion topics in this course. Please write a title page with the following information: (1) the course title, (2) topic of the essay, (3) your name, student ID, and date of submission, (4) your email address.

All written assignments are to be submitted by uploading through the Turnitin link available in Moodle prior to 23:59 of the due date. Late and incomplete submissions will be subjected to mark deduction. Files must be named as “LASTNAME First name”.

**Evaluation Criteria for Essays:**

1. **Good and correct understanding** of the main topics covered in the lectures;
2. **Clear, logical and rational** structure and discussion of your ideas and thoughts. The essays should have an introduction, a main body with headings or sections, a conclusion / summary, and bibliography. Essays should be within the word limit assigned;
3. **Style of scholarly writing:** proper use of citations and quotations is expected. All contributions of other writers should be noted through accurate quotations (judiciously selected and sparingly used). The final submission should be carefully edited for accurate spelling and competent usage of English punctuation, syntax and grammar;
4. **Understanding of sources and arguments:** demonstrate that you are familiar with the reading assigned during the course and reflect on some of the main issues discussed in the lectures. The bibliography should include at least four relevant papers for the short essay and six relevant papers for the long essay. All references ought to be incorporated and properly cited in the main text or footnotes of the essay (not just listed in the bibliography). Internet websites, lecture notes, magazines and non-academic publications do not count towards the minimum sources. You may utilize any of the assigned readings for this course towards the bibliography of your short and long written assignments.

While both the short and long essay should focus on demonstrating your understanding of the discussion topic, the long essay should also demonstrate your reflective views on how your knowledge could be made relevant and applied into daily life.

**Class participation:**

You are expected to attend lectures each week. All assigned readings should be studied prior to attending each weekly lecture.

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1 Citation Conventions: If necessary, and for the purpose of providing additional information (not citations), use footnotes, not endnotes. All references to sources should be in the text ‘author/year’ including page number(s) where appropriate. Depending on the sentence construction, the citation will appear as Smith (1997) or (Smith 1997), or if relevant, (Smith 1997:274). Bibliographical entries at the end of your essays should be alphabetically arranged and with full information as follows: Author’s name. Year of Publication. Title of Source. Publishing Place: Name of Publisher.
Faculty grade expectations:

OUTLINE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNED READINGS:
(All assigned readings are made available to students on Moodle.)

Lecture 1 (20th Jan). Introduction to the Course

We will discuss the key objectives and framework of this course. Using the Four Noble Truths as a decision-making and problem-solving framework, we will offer a preview of this course: (1) identifying some of the challenges with market economy; (2) exploring some of the reasons and driving forces behind these challenges and dissatisfactions; (3) suggesting potential solutions from Buddhist Economics; and (4) discussing ways of integrating Buddhist Economics into the framework of market economy.

Online Multimedia:
1. BDEP. 2015. Life of Buddha. In Buddha's Birthday Education Project. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9R-cqf6Pmk]

Lecture 2 (10th Feb). A Decision-making and Problem-solving Framework: The Four Noble Truths

We will elaborate on the Four Noble Truths as a decision-making and problem-solving framework applicable to our world of conditioned existence. We will go through the unique characteristics and contributions of this framework and consider how we could apply it to understand the realities of the market economy.

Required Readings:

Further Readings:

Lecture 3 (17th Feb). What is Wrong with Market Economy?

We will briefly introduce the market economy we live in and some important concepts of the market economy. We will identify and discuss some important challenges and shortcomings with market economy.
Required Readings:

Further Readings:

Lecture 4 (24th Feb). What are the Drivers behind these Shortcomings?

We will look into the drivers behind some of the challenges and shortcomings with the market economy. In particular, we will discuss how an economy driven and motivated by profit, consumption, and materialism affects our sense of well-being and moral choices.

Required Readings:

Further Readings:

Online Multimedia:
5. de Botton, Alain. 2016. The Dawn of Capitalism. In The School of Life. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh_hRS15n_8&index=15&list=PLwxNMB28XmpehfQOA4c0E7][3GJ[4qFEj]
Lecture 5 (3rd Mar). Buddhist Economics in Theory

We will discuss how Buddhist doctrines may address some of these challenges and shortcomings with the market economy and look into some of the approaches suggested by Buddhist Economics.

Required Readings:

Further Readings

Lecture 6 (10th Mar). Buddhist Ethics and the Theory of Moral Life

We will discuss moral discipline as an important component of Buddhist Economics. Furthermore, we will look into the theory of moral life in Buddhism and how it contributes to sustainable decision-making and well-being.

Required Readings:

Further Readings

Lecture 7 (17th Mar). The Doctrines of Dependent Arising and Selflessness

We will discuss in depth two key Buddhist teachings namely the doctrines of “Dependent Arising” and “Selflessness” and explore their significance for Buddhist Economics.

Required Readings:

**Further Readings:**

**Lecture 8 (24th Mar). Interconnectedness, Competition and Collaboration**

Building on the understanding of the doctrines of Dependent Arising and Selflessness, we will further explore how to relate the notion of interconnectedness, competition and collaboration in the market economy from a Buddhist perspective.

**Required Readings:**

**Further Readings:**

**Lecture 9 (31st Mar). Less is More or More is More?**

We will further our discussion from Buddhist Economic theory to practice. We will explore the concept of economic growth, the costs and benefits of economic growth and how Buddhist Economics could contribute to sustainable economic growth in practice.

**Required Readings:**
**Lecture 10 (7th Apr). Buddhist Economics in Practice**

We will examine economic growth and sustainability in practice by focusing on the implications of Buddhist Economics on individuals, society and the environment. The central question we will ask is whether there is a practical application of Buddhist teachings in market economy?

**Required Readings:**

**Further Readings:**

**Lecture 11 (21st Apr). Alternative Economic Growth Models**

We will review some innovative and alternative economic visions and models that may contribute to sustainable economic growth by applying the principles of Buddhist Economics.

**Required Readings:**

**Further Readings:**

**Online Multimedia:**
5. de Botton, Alain. 2016. How to Improve Capitalism. In *The School of Life*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOaJe68CbU&index=50&list=PLwxxNMb28XmpcnnfQOa4eO7j3Glj4qFEj](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOaJe68CbU&index=50&list=PLwxxNMb28XmpcnnfQOa4eO7j3Glj4qFEj)
Lecture 12 (28th Apr). Making Sustainable Decisions in Daily Life

We will look into the practical aspects of Buddhist Economics and investigate changes inspired by Buddhist Economics that we could introduce in our daily life. In particular, we will discuss the five precepts and other Buddhist trainings and look into how Buddhist Economics could be adopted and practiced in our daily life in the market economy.

Required Readings:

Further Readings:


REFERENCE WORKS AND INTERNET RESOURCES

1. Access to Insight. 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. [http://www.accesstoinsight.org]

2. Buddhist Digital Library and Museum. This site contains a good collection of academic articles some with full texts in both Chinese and English. It is a good resource for relevant academic articles for your study. [http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/]


4. Charles Muller, ed. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism. This is an internet based dictionary. If you know the Chinese Buddhist technical terms, but do not know how to translate it into English. [http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb/index.html] 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.


