Undergraduate Course offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2019-20

ELECTIVE COURSE
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

BSTC1004 Introduction to Buddhism (6 Credits) (Semester 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Dr. Pu Chengzhong</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Rm 4.03, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>4-5pm Thursday, or by appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pcz100@hku.hk">pcz100@hku.hk</a> (Abusive and improper language will be reported.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Schedule</td>
<td>Thursday -1:30pm-3:20pm</td>
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<td>Class Venue</td>
<td>KB223</td>
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Course Description

As one of the major world religions, Buddhism used to be an important common cultural heritage of Asian countries. It’s influences can be found in most Asian societies of pre-modern time and increasingly also in some western societies where elements of Buddhism have become popular in the public culture as well as professional sections such as the fields of psychotherapy, neuroscience and education. This course provides a brief introduction to such aspects of Buddhism as its historical traditions, texts, fundamental doctrines, basic ethical ideas, practices, and art.

Objectives:
1. To give a general introduction to historical and geographical dimensions of Buddhism.
2. To introduce cultures of the three living Buddhist traditions.
3. To introduce the general features of Buddhist literature
4. To highlight the fundamental teachings of Buddhist traditions.

Learning outcomes:

Generic skills
1. To engage with sources on Buddhism: primary and secondary.
2. To present ideas in both oral and written form.
3. To appreciate ancient Asian cultures and worldviews.

Course specific skills
1. To gain an overview of Buddhist traditions in past and present times.
2. To be able to recognise the main principles and characteristics of Buddhism.
3. To be able to make sense of important Buddhist activities in today’s world.

Required Reading:

Lecture Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Sep. 5, 2019</td>
<td>Introduction to the course; The Social and Religious Background for the Rise of Buddhism</td>
<td>Read: “Background to Buddhism”, pp. 1-9. All the page numbers appeared in this schedule are referring to the Required Reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct. 10, 2019</td>
<td>Early development of Indian Buddhism Read: “Early Council and Schools”, pp.78-88;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oct. 17, 2019</td>
<td>(Reading Week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nov. 7, 2019</td>
<td>Buddhism in Central Asia Read: “The North-west and Central Asia”, pp.88-89. + (Buddhist art in central Asia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov. 21, 2019</td>
<td>Buddhism in Korea, Japan [zen; pure land], Vietnam Read: “Buddhism in East Asia”, pp.172-183. + Vietnam</td>
<td>Deadline for Short Essay</td>
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**Assessment:** 100% coursework with the following breakdowns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Submission deadline / Quiz date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance discussion in class</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz (via the Moodle)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Oct. 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book report of 2,000-2200 words</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Assignment (a topic and its outline that can be used for final essay)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final essay of 2200-2800 words</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Nov. 28</td>
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General expectations of student performance at the various grades:


About Plagiarism:

Please be aware of plagiarism. For details, please refer to [http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism](http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism)

Guidelines for writing the report and the essay

1. Structure of the Book Report: the book and its author, identify the part of the book you will review (if not the whole book), provide your view/interpretation, and make a conclusion. Apart from using the Reading List for Book Report, you can also choose a Buddhist scripture (in English translation) to write on.

2. Choose one topic from the list below or from the “Discussion Questions” in the Required Reading. You are expected to ask the instructor’s approval if you would like to use books not in this list.

3. Structure of the Final Essay: 1) have a question as the thread of your discussion, a coherent thesis. 2) Why is it important to research? (Exposing the problematic and its sub-issues). 3) Explaining the topic in a bigger context. 4) Your views with supporting evidence and corroborations, using objective and balanced arguments (Required book, Lecture PPT class notes, and webpage (such as Wikipedia, etc...) cannot be used as evidence). 5) Other’s views and their shortcomings or contributions. 6) Answering your central question as a way of conclusion. If you following this, you should get a B+. To get an A, you should have skillful arguments and general exposition, in addition to resourcefulness, obvious knowledge of the topic, showing effort in research and carefully written. (Faculty grade expectations - [http://arts.hku.hk/file/upload/2485/grade_expectations.pdf](http://arts.hku.hk/file/upload/2485/grade_expectations.pdf))

4. Your essay should include proper referencing and citation. Only used peer-reviewed literature (journals and academic publications) as your reference. A bibliography of at least 5 items excluding textbooks used in this class is required. For the citation format, please use Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition (or 15th Edition). In-text citation should be ok but with page numbers. Your text must be double-spaced.

5. No plagiarism.

6. All your papers should be submitted through the ‘turn-it-in’ on the Moodle.

7. Late submission will be penalized with the following lowering of assignment grade: 1) within first 7 days after the deadline, one sub-grade will be deducted (e.g. A ⇒ A-); 2) from the 8th day after the deadline.

Suggested essay topics:

1. What do you think of Prince Siddhartha’s leaving his kingdom and abandoning his wife and son to become a wandering mendicant? Please explain.

2. Buddhist concept of karma and ethics.

3. Buddhist social engagement

4. Buddhism and cultural transmission.

5. Buddhism and Inter-faith dialogue.


7. In recent decades, there have been anti-religion wars started by Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens and Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins. Do you think their arguments against religions and faith applies to Buddhism? Why?


Reading List for Book Report


**Recommended Reading/watching**


**Online Sources:**


3. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*. Charles Muller (Tokyo Gakuen University), ed. It is not a product of critical scholarship but can serve the purposes of general use. Type "guest" (case-sensitive, no quotes) in the “name” area, leaving the password area blank. One can have 20 free search within 24 hours. Website address: [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/)


5. *Access to insight*. This website provides only the scriptures and their English translation of the Pali Canon. Website address: [www.accesstoinsight.org/](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/)


8. *Buddhist Digital Library and Museum*. Free access to scholarly resources on Buddhist Studies, some full texts in both Chinese and English are downloadable. Website address: [http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/](http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/)


(Last updated: July 23, 2019)