Instructor: Dr. SIK Fa Ren  
Email: faren@hku.hk  
Office: Rm. 4.12, The Jockey Club Tower  
Time: 15:30 – 17:20, 2nd Semester (Every Friday)  
Meeting Venue: MWT2

**Course Description**:  
From the very early period and throughout the entire Buddhist history, the Buddhist traditions have adopted indigenous rituals and practices, and devised a great variety of their own rituals. This course provides an introduction to Buddhist ritual practice in Chinese Buddhism from the perspectives of their psychological, religious and spiritual significant.  
We will begin by exploring several theories and research methods of ritual adopted in anthropology and religious studies. Having studied the theoretical basis of ritual studies, students will further study the doctrinal, mythic and other dimensions of Buddhist practice, examine the structural patterns of various rituals, survey the different categories of ceremonies, and analyse the most important groups of rituals.  
Focus of study will be the effort of ritual experiences on individual enlightenment, effect of ritual, and the expression of participants’ understanding of Buddhist teaching. As a comparative approach to Buddhist rituals, the course will use related myths, texts, and video record of ritual. Rituals including the recitation of sutras (scriptures) and mantras, funeral ritual, ritual of liberation of living animals, and the ritual of saving all sentient beings from water and land (shuilu fahui) are examined in some detail. Fieldwork studies may also be conducted. Students therefore can personally witness how Hong Kong Buddhists perform these kinds of rituals.

**Objective**:  
In addition to becoming acquainted with the major categories of Chinese Buddhist rituals, students would know more about how Buddhists express their belief through actual practice. From this learning approach, students would gain both knowledge of Buddhist doctrines and practices simultaneously.

**Assessment ratio**:  
Teaching will be delivered online, students are required to go through the assigned readings before joining each e-lecture so that they can participate in class discussion and raise their own questions. Final assessment of this course is 100% coursework including class participation and one term paper.
Class participation comprises 1 piece of worksheet which entirely rely on input of students' individual effort. Worksheet submitted are expected to demonstrate students' informed participation, as well as comprehension and critical thinking on the related topics. Good fulfilment of this component is one of the keys leading to the success in this course.

In addition, students are required to write a term paper of about 2500 to 3000 words on one of topics discussed in lectures, or students may choose their own topics related to the course (in this case, make sure you discuss with the lecturer beforehand).

100% coursework, including:
70% a term paper (2,500-3,000 words)
30% class participation (1 piece worksheets)
*Guidelines for the coursework will be provided in due course.

Criteria for Marking the Term Paper:
1. Good and correct understanding of the Buddhist teaching given in the lectures;
2. Clear, logical and rational presentation of your ideas and thoughts;
3. Personal input with in-depth analysis;
4. Show that you have read at least three papers (powerpoints or notes of lectures are not counted) in your paper either in your footnotes or endnotes and list them at the end.

Grade Expectations in Faculty of Arts:
http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf

Academic Honesty:
Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. The University upholds the principle that plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and any student found plagiarizing is liable to disciplinary action in addition to failing the assessment concerned. Please read the following webpage on "plagiarism" for details:
http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism

Course schedule with bibliography:
Lecture One (20 Jan)
Topic: Course introduction

Lecture Two (3 Feb)
Topic: 1. What is ritual?
2. Power of Ritual
Readings:
*Harvey, Peter (1990), Chapter 8 of An Introduction to Buddhism (Cambridge University Press), pp.170-195.


**Lecture Three (10 Feb) Topic: Ritual Functions**

**Readings:**


**Lecture Four (17 Feb) Topic: Current studies of Buddhism and ritual**

**Readings:**


**Lecture Five (24 Feb) Topic: Theoretical basis of Buddhist ritual (1) — Buddhist Cosmology, Concepts of Karma and Rebirth**

**Readings:**

*Harvey, Peter (1990), Chapter 2 of *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Cambridge University Press), pp.32-46.


**Lecture Six (3 Mar): Topic: Theoretical basis of Buddhist ritual (2) — Merit Making and Transference**

**Readings:**


Lecture Seven (10 Mar) Reading Week

Lecture Eight (17 Mar) Topic: Confessional Ritual

Reading:

Lecture Nine (24 Mar): Death Ritual of Chinese Buddhism

Reading:
Jing Yin (2006), “Death from the Buddhist View: Knowing the Unknown” in Chan, Cecilia Lai Wan and Chow, Amy Yin Man (ed.), Death, Dying and Bereavement - A Hong Kong Chinese Experience (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press), pp.93-104.

Lecture Ten (31st Mar): Ritual for Saving the Flaming-mouth Hungry Ghosts

Reading:

7th April: General Holiday

Lecture Eleven (14 April): Buddhist Rituals for Saving All Sentient Beings (1)

Reading:

Lecture Twelve (21 April): Buddhist Rituals for Saving All Sentient Beings (2)

Reading:

Lecture Thirteen (28 Apr): Course Revision
*Recommended readings

**Further Reading**


Prip-Möller, Johannes (1967), Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and Its Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press).


Reader, Ian (2005), Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).


Stephen C. Berkwitz (ed.), Buddhism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives (Santa Barbara (US): ABC-CLIO).


Tong, Chee Kiong and Kong, Lily (Sep., 2000), 'Religion and modernity: ritual transformations and the reconstruction of space and time', Social & Cultural Geography, pp. 29 - 44.


Watson, James L. and Rawski, Evelyn S. (ed.) (1988), Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Welch, Holmes (1968), Buddhist Revival in China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).


3) E-Journals

**Journal of Buddhist Ethics.** Free. This is a web based academic journal for free distribution.
Web address: [http://www.jbe.gold.ac.uk/](http://www.jbe.gold.ac.uk/)

**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)

**Buddhist Studies Review.** HKU Library. Published twice a year by the UK Association for Buddhist Studies, started form 1984. S 294.3 B927 S9

**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- S 294.3 C761 B

**Website Recourses**

**JSTOR** The Scholarly Journal Archive. This Archive needs subscription, so use it through HKU Electronic Recourses. [http://www.jstor.org/jstor](http://www.jstor.org/jstor)

**NII Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator.** Mostly Free. The National Institute of Informatics (Japan) has incorporated approximately 2.8 million full text articles (PDF) in NII-ELS, from [1,000 published academic journals](http://www.jstor.org/jstor). Currently NII has obtained permission of 271 academic societies. NII-ELS also provides full text (PDF) of [Research Bulletins of Japanese universities](http://www.jstor.org/jstor). All of the full text articles incorporated in NII-ELS are available through CiNii along with bibliographical information on other academic papers.

**Taisho Edition of Chinese Tripitaka.** Free. If you can read classical Chinese and wish to refer to the original Chinese texts, please visit [http://www.cbeta.org/index.htm](http://www.cbeta.org/index.htm). This website includes volumes 1-55 & 85 of Taisho Edition of Chinese Tripitaka.

**Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon.** Free for download and reading from The University of The West website: [http://www.uwest.edu/sanskritcanon/index.html](http://www.uwest.edu/sanskritcanon/index.html)