Centre of Buddhist Studies
The University of Hong Kong

Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2020-2021
ELECTIVE COURSE (OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

BSTC2009 Japanese Culture and Thought: The Buddhist Impact (6 credits)

Offering Semester 2nd Semester
Lecturer Dr. Tony Chui
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Day of the week Every Tuesday 4:30pm-6:25pm
Assessment 100% coursework
Class Venue CPD-LG.01

Course Description

Buddhism was perhaps the first instance of cultural globalization particularly in Asia beginning from the 3rd century B.C. Through missionary zeal it spread far and wide beyond the shores of the Indian subcontinent touching and influencing many lives of Asian peoples.

Since its introduction in the 6th century A.C., Buddhism together with the indigenous religion of Japan called Shintoism and Confucianism of China played a pivotal role in molding ways of thinking of the Japanese people. This course introduces Japanese culture and thought mainly from the Buddhist perspectives making constant references to both common and different features in the ways of thinking between Chinese and Japanese peoples, and also to how Japanese Buddhism and culture including Zen Buddhism, tea ceremony, Japanese cuisine, and other cultural activities became a global phenomenon after the 19th century. The aim is to critically appraise the cultural diversity based on Buddhism and heighten awareness of other cultures through the understanding of Japanese culture and thought.

Topics covered

1) The beginnings of Japanese Buddhism: Their relations to the neighboring countries, China and Korea;
2) The nature and influence of Shintoism on Japanese culture and thought;
3) Prince Shotoku’s contribution to the spread of Buddhism in Japan;
4) Nara Buddhism; Duplication of Chinese Buddhism;
5) Heian Buddhism: Beginnings of Japanese Buddhism in spirit;
6) The Mappo (Degeneration of the True Dharma): Attitudinal changes of the Japanese to their outlook of life based on Buddhism;
7) Kamakura Buddhism: Its impact on the ways of thinking of the Japanese people;
8) Pure Land Schools of Buddhist Thought and their impact on Japanese culture and thought;
9) Zen Buddhism: A unique cultural phenomenon;
10) Zen and its impact on Japanese culture and thought and its influence outside Japan;
11) Cultural heritage: Tea ceremony, Haiku poetry, Zen gardens, Noh drama, and others;
12) Buddhism in modern era: Buddhist missionary work within and outside of Japan.

Assessment Ratio

100 % coursework with the following breakdowns:
(1) Presentation – 25 %
(2) Final Essay (2000 words) – 60 %
(3) Class Participation – 15 %

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

Plagiarism: 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

Recommended Readings


Audio-visual materials: selected DVD-s on Zen and Japanese Culture, pictures, etc. will also be used.

(Last updated: July 20, 2020)