

BSTC1004 Introduction to Buddhism (6 Credits)
Undergraduate Courses offered by the Centre of Buddhist Studies in
2026-2027
Elective Course (open to all facilities)

Course Description

Buddhism is a major world religion and an important cultural heritage of mankind. Its teachings have influenced art and philosophy throughout history and have inspired contemporary psychotherapy, neuroscience, and education researchers.

This course will systematically introduce students to the essence of Buddhist teachings. Particular emphasis will be placed on the Buddha's core teachings, which include the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, Prajñā wisdom, Bodhisattva ideal, etc., and their practical applications.

Offering Semester	1 st Semester 2026 (Fall)
Lecturer	Dr. Mingyuan Gao
Tutor	Mr. Terence Shiu Long In
Tutor's Office	Rm 422, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus
Email	tershiu@hku.hk When writing to the course instructor, please begin the email subject with "BSTC1004-" and clearly state your name (as listed on the class name list) and your UID in the email.
Class Time	TBC
Class Venue	TBC

Assessment Ratio

100% coursework

Ratio	Content
10%	Lecture Attendance (weeks 3–12)
40%	Two Closed Book Quizzes: Mid-term during lecture 7 and; Term-end during lecture 11 Format: Multiple Choice Note: The mid-term quiz covers all material presented and discussed from lecture 1 to lecture 6; The term-end quiz covers all material presented and discussed from lecture 7 to lecture 10
20%	Eight weekly meditation logs documenting meditation experience due on: Lectures 4, 5, 6, and Reading Week (Mindfulness of Breathing) Lectures 8, 9, 10, and 11 (Cultivation of Loving-kindness)
30%	Site-visit Reflective Report with 1,500 - 2,000 words

	• Deadline: TBC • Please read the guidelines for the site-visit report
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Students with Disabilities

Any student who has a documented disability and may require special arrangements (seating, testing, extended deadlines, etc.) should consult the tutor in person at the beginning of the course to ensure appropriate accommodations can be provided.

Class Schedule (Tentative)

Week	Lecture	Date	Content (Tentative)
1	Lecture 1	(TBC)	Introduction: Overview of Buddhism • Triple Gems • Background of the emergence of Buddhism
2	Lecture 2		Life of the Buddha
3	Lecture 3		First Noble Truth: Suffering • Impermanence and Non-self
4	Lecture 4	Meditation Log 1	Second Noble Truth: Origination • Dependent Co-arising
5	Lecture 5	Meditation Log 2	Second Noble Truth: Origination • Karma
6	Lecture 6	Meditation Log 3	Third Noble Truth: Cessation • Nirvāṇa Fourth Noble Truth: Path • Eightfold Noble Path • Meditation
		Meditation Log 4	(Reading Week)
7			Movie Watching
8	Lecture 7	Mid-term Quiz Meditation Log 5	Early (Pre-Mahāyānic) Development in Buddhism • Split of the Saṅgha and King Ashoka • Sectarian Buddhism • Emergence of Buddhist Art • Development of Buddhology
9	Lecture 8	Meditation Log 6	Bodhisattva Path: Ride in the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna)

			• Bodhisattva Ideal • Six Perfections
10	Lecture 9	Meditation Log 7	Mahāyāna Concept of Emptiness • Diamond Sutra • Nāgārjuna and Madhyamaka School • Heart Sutra • Yogācāra Idealist School
11	Lecture 10	Meditation Log 8	Doctrinal Innovation of Mahāyāna • Lotus Sutra • Flower-adornment Sutra
12	Lecture 11	Term-end Quiz	World Buddhism • Theravāda Tradition • Chinese Tradition • Tibetan Tradition

Site-Visit Reflective Report Guideline

For this assignment, you will visit a Buddhist temple or chapel in Hong Kong or near your home. During your visit, you should talk to someone at the temple. This could be a Buddhist monk/nun, a staff member, or a visitor. Try to have a short, informal interview with them. You can ask questions such as:

- Why do you come to (or work in) the temple?
- What does Buddhism mean to you?
- How do you think Buddhism is connected to society today?

Please take a selfie at the temple to prove your visit. After your visit, you will write a reflective report based on your experience, the interview, and your own thoughts.

What to Include in Your Report

1. Title Page

Make sure your cover page clearly shows:

- Your name
- Your University Number (UID)
- Your essay title
- Word count (from Introduction to Conclusion only)

2. Introduction

Briefly introduce where you visited, when you went, and why you chose this place

3. Interview

- Introduce the person you interviewed (no need for personal details)
- Summarize the key points from your conversation

4. Reflection

This is the main part of your report. You should:

- Share what you learned from the visit
- Reflect on anything that surprised you
- Connect your experience to what you learned in class
- Explain your own thoughts about Buddhism and society

Tips: Be personal and honest (this is not just a summary, but your own thinking).

5. Conclusion

- Wrap up your experience
- Briefly restate what you learned
- Any final thoughts

6. References (if any)

- You may include books, articles, or lecture materials

7. Appendix 1: Interview Transcript (with Photo)

- A full, word-for-word record of your interview
- Attach your selfie from the visit

8. Appendix 2: AI Declaration Form (template available on Moodle)

Submission: Please upload your report to Moodle via Turnitin

Late Submission Policy:

- Within 7 days: your grade drops by one sub-grade (e.g. A- → B+)
- From day 8 onward: your grade drops by a full grade (e.g. A- → B-)

Assessment Criteria:

Your report will be graded based on:

- 30% – Reflection & Personal Insight
How deeply you think about your experience and what you learned
- 25% – Engagement with the Visit & Interview
How well you describe and use your site visit and interview
- 20% – Understanding of Buddhism in Context
Your ability to connect your experience to course ideas about Buddhism and society
- 15% – Organization & Clarity of Writing
Clear structure, logical flow, and readability
- 10% – Presentation & Completeness
Following instructions (photo, appendices, format, etc.)

FAQs

1. Should I refer to secondary sources? Which referencing style should I use? Can I use MLA?

Although it is not compulsory, using secondary sources effectively may strengthen your argument. This course does not accept MLA style. All references must follow the

Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition), author-date format. Any reference without correct page numbers will be considered invalid. A quick guide can be found here: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

2. What is the word limit for the site-visit report?

- 1,500–2,000 words (including notes but excluding bibliography and appendixes).
- If the report exceeds the maximum length by more than 10% or falls below the minimum word count without prior approval, 5 percentage points will be deducted.
- The penalty will not reduce a passing grade to below the pass mark.
- No deduction will be applied to essays that already fall below the pass mark.

3. Do I need to attend the movie session?

Attendance for watching the movie is not compulsory. However, the content of the film may reinforce course concepts and help improve performance in the mid-term quiz.

Plagiarism:

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

HKU policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Teaching and Learning:

<https://libguides.lib.hku.hk/AI-literacy/Home>

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

Textbooks

1. Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
2. Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
3. Rahula, W. *What the Buddha Taught*. London: the Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd, 1978.

Reading List

Books and Articles

1. Anon, "The Three Treasures." *The Pluralism Project*. Harvard University, 2020. <https://pluralism.org/the-three-treasures>
2. Anālayo, Bhikkhu. *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010.
3. Anderson, C., & Cattoi, T. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Buddhist-Christian Studies* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003043225>
4. Appleton, N. *Jataka Stories in Theravada Buddhism: Narrating the Bodhisatta Path* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315590363>
5. Arbel, Keren. *Early Buddhist Meditation: The Four Jhanas as the Actualization of Insight*. Routledge, 2018.
6. Bhante H. Gunaratana. *Mindfulness in Plain English: 20th Anniversary Edition*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2011.
7. Bechert, H. & Gombrich, R. ed. *The World of Buddhism: Buddhist monks and nuns in*

- society and culture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995.
8. Berkwitz, Stephen C., and Ashley Thompson. *Routledge Handbook of Theravāda Buddhism*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2022
 9. Berkwitz, S.C. *South Asian Buddhism: A Survey* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203717608>
 10. Bluck, R. *British Buddhism: Teachings, Practice and Development* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2006.
 11. Burton, D. *Buddhism, Knowledge and Liberation: A Philosophical Study* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315261201>
 12. Burton, D. *Buddhism: A Contemporary Philosophical Investigation* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315222660>
 13. Conze, E. *Buddhist Wisdom: The Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra*. London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1958.
 14. Conze, E. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*. California. 1975.
 15. Derris, K., & Gummer, N. *Defining Buddhism(s): A Reader* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2007.
 16. Edelglass, W., Harter, P.-J., & McClintock, S. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2022.
 17. Edkins, J. *Chinese Buddhism: A Volume of Sketches, Historical, Descriptive and Critical* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2001.
 18. Engelmajer, P. *Women in Pāli Buddhism: Walking the Spiritual Paths in Mutual Dependence* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315752389>
 19. Eliot, S.C. *Japanese Buddhism* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2002. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315026053>
 20. Gokhale, P.P. (ed.). *Classical Buddhism, Neo-Buddhism and the Question of Caste* (1st ed.). Routledge India, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003045090>
 21. Gombrich, R.F. *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (2nd ed.). Routledge, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203016039>
 22. Green, R. *Buddhism Goes to the Movies: Introduction to Buddhist Thought and Practice* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203765692>
 23. Harris, Sam. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. W. W. Norton, 2005.
 24. Harding, J.S. (ed.). *Studying Buddhism in Practice* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203143964>
 25. Husted, W.R., Keown, D., & Prebish, C.S. *Buddhism and Human Rights* (1st ed.). Routledge, 1997.
 26. Kalupahana, David J. 1992. *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
 27. Karunadasa, Y. *Early Buddhist Teachings: The Middle Position in Theory and Practice*. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 2013.
 28. Keown, Damien. *A Very Short Introduction to Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
 29. Langenberg, A. *Birth in Buddhism: The Suffering Fetus and Female Freedom* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315512532>
 30. Marques, J. *Business and Buddhism* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315767437>

31. Pelden, K. *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech: A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva*. Boston: Shambala, Padmakara Translation Group, 2010.
32. Prebish, Charles and Keown, Damien. *Introducing Buddhism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
33. Queen, C., & Williams, D.R. *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship* (1st ed.). Routledge, 1999.
34. Rizzo, R. *Buddhism in Indonesia: A Study of Multiple Revivals* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003389514>
35. Robinson, R., Johnson, W. *The Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997.
36. Schober, J., & Collins, S. (eds.). *Theravāda Buddhist Encounters with Modernity* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637600>
37. Schumann, H.W. *The Historical Buddha*. London: Arkana Penguin Books, 1989.
38. Shields, J.M. *Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315574912>
39. Somaratne, G. A. *The Buddha's Teaching: A Buddhistic Analysis*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
40. Tikhonov, V., & Brekke, T. (eds.). *Buddhism and Violence: Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203111024>
41. Thich Nhat Hanh. *Old Path White Clouds: Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha*. Parallax Press, 1991.
42. Thich Nhat Hanh. *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.
43. Williams, Paul. *Mahāyāna Buddhism: A Doctrinal Foundations*. London: Routledge, 2008.

References and Internet Resources

If you find any link is broken, please use Google search to find it as the links sometimes change.

- **Encyclopaedias**
 - *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, eds., Robert E. Buswell, Jr., Ed New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003. 2 vols. This encyclopedia describes the Buddhist worldview, 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](#).
 - *Encyclopaedia of Religion*. Lindsay Jones, Ed. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 15 vols. This *Encyclopedia* needs subscription, so use it through [HKU Electronic Recourses](#).
 - *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. This *Encyclopædia* needs a subscription, so use it through [HKU Electronic Recourses](#). <http://search.eb.com/>
- **Dictionaries**
 - *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, eds., Charles Muller. Free for online checkups. This is an internet-based dictionary similar to the *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* by Soothill and Hodous, but it has many more entries. If you know the Chinese Buddhist technical terms but do not know how to translate them into English, please visit Muller's DDB website address: <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>
Users can access the search function with the user ID of "guest" (case-sensitive, no quotes), leaving the password area blank, allowing 10 searches in 24 hours. To search Sanskrit and other terms containing diacritics, type in the term in simple

ascii.

- A Dictionary of Buddhism, eds., Damien Keown. This Dictionary needs a subscription, so use it through [HKU Electronic Recourses](#)
- 《佛光大辭典》線上查詢 **Free for online search** for Chinese Buddhist Terms explained in traditional Chinese <http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/>
- AccessToInsight. This website is entirely dedicated to teaching 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/

- **Academic Journals**

- ***Journal of Buddhist Ethics***. **Free**. This is a web-based academic journal that is distributed for free. Web address: <http://www.jbe.gold.ac.uk/>
- ***Journal of Global Buddhism***. **Free**. This is a web-based academic journal that is distributed for free. <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/dig.html>
- ***Taisho Edition of Chinese Tripitaka*** 佛教大正藏. **Free**. If you can read classical Chinese and wish to refer to the original Chinese texts, please visit <http://www.cbeta.org/index.htm>. This website includes volumes 1-55 & 85 of the *Taisho Edition of Chinese Tripitaka* and volumes 1-88 of Shinsan Zokuzokyo (Xuzangjing 續藏經). Now, the database is still developing.
- ***Buddhist Digital Library and Museum***. 臺灣大學佛學數位圖書館暨博物館. **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 the database.
- ***The Internet Sacred Text Archive***. **Free** You can find the old texts of almost all major religions in the world on this site, and you can download and copy the full texts if you wish. For instance, you can find the *Sacred Books of the East*. Website Address: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/>