

Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2025-2026

ELECTIVE COURSE
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

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

Offering Semester	1 st Semester
Lecturer	Dr. Tony Chui
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Day of the week	TBA
Assessment	100% coursework
Class Venue	TBA

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.D., 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) Quiz 1 – 25 %
- (2) Quiz 2 – 25 %
- (3) Research Project (Essay 2000 words) – 40 %
- (4) Participation – 10 %

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>

Grading Criteria

Correct understanding of the material in the lectures is essential. Students are expected to show critical and research elements in their essays. Further information will be provided in the lectures. Here is the Faculty Grade Expectations. http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf

Recommended Readings (additional reading list available on Moodle)

1. Yoshiro Tamura: *Japanese Buddhism: A Cultural History*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 2001. [Main Library. 294.392 T15]
2. Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga: *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, Vols. 1 & II, Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1978 (Vol. I), 1984 (Vol. II) [Main Library. 294.30952 M4]
3. Robert E. Carter: *The Japanese Arts and Self-Cultivation*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007. [Main Library. 700.952 C32]
4. H. Byron Earhart: *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity* (Religious Life in History Series) (4th), USA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2003. [Main Library. 200.952 E1]
5. Ian Reader, Esben Andreasen, and Finn Stefansson: *Japanese Religions: Past and Present*, USA; University of Hawaii Press, 1993. [Main Library. 200.952 R28]
6. D.T.Suzuki: *Zen and Japanese Culture*, USA: Princeton University Press, 1970. [Pochung CEO collection – CEO 294.3927 S96z]

7. Ian Reader: *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*, USA: University of Hawaii Press, 1998. [Main Library. 200.952 R286p]
8. Hajime Nakamura: *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, USA: University of Hawai'i Press, 1964. [Main Library. 181 N1]
9. H.Paul Varley: *Japanese Culture*, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1973, 1986. [Main Library. 952 V31]
10. Ruth Benedict: *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, London: 1967 [Main Library. 301.2952 B46]

Additional reading list available on Moodle.

(Last updated: July 14, 2025)