Undergraduate Course offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2024-25

ELECTIVE COURSE
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

**BSTC2028 Making Sense of Chan Buddhism (6 Credit) (Semester 2)**

Lecturer: Dr. Ben Luk  
Email: benluk@hku.hk  
Schedule: Monday 3:30pm to 5:20pm  
Venue: CPD 2.37

**Course Description**

Chan Buddhism is one of the most important and influential Buddhist schools in China. This course introduces the origin, development, basic doctrines, and cultural influences of Chan Buddhism. Some eminent Chan masters such as Bodhidharma, Huineng, Mazu Daoyi, etc. will be specifically highlighted as to show their significant role in Chan Buddhism. Students will be guided to appreciate and decipher a number of well-known *gong’an* which are characterized by its enigmatic stories and dialogues about religious epiphany.

**Course Objectives**

After completing the course, students will acquire solid knowledge of Chinese Chan Buddhism and be able to connect this form of Buddhism with the culture and history of China and East Asia. This course will lay a foundation for students to study further Chinese Buddhism and the culture and thought of East Asia (specifically Japan and Korea)

**Teaching and Learning Method**

Lectures and class discussions.

**Lecture Schedule (tentative):**

Lecture 1. Dual Roots of Chan Buddhism: Philosophical Basis and the Legacy of Meditation Practice  
Lecture 2. Bodhidharma: The First Patriarch of Chan Buddhism  
Lecture 3. The East Mountain School (東山法門)  
Lecture 4. Shenxiu (神秀) and The Northern School  
Lecture 5. Huineng (慧能): The Sixth Patriarch (638-713)  
Lecture 6. Two Lineages: The Hongzhou School (洪州宗) and the Shitou School (石頭宗)
Lecture 7. Five Houses: Weiyang (唯仰), Linji (臨濟), Caodong (曹洞), Yunmen (雲門) and Fayan (法眼)


Lecture 9. The Origin and Significance of Gong’an Collections

Lecture 10. The Prominent Chan Masters in Song Era: Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲) (1089–1163) and Hongzhi Zhengjue (宏智正覺) (1091–1157)

Lecture 11. The Integration of Chan Buddhism and the Pure Land School in the Song Dynasty

Lecture 12. The Transmission of Chan Buddhism across the East Asia

Course Assessment

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<th>10%</th>
<th>Attend lectures, and actively participate in class discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Each quiz carries 15%</td>
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<td>Two Class Quizzes</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Students will be guided to write Chan poems in a creative way.</td>
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<td>Chan Poem Writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Students are encouraged to delve deep into the topic and present the essay critically and creatively. Submission deadline: before the second lecture after the reading week</td>
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<td>Mid-term essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Various types of questions will be asked. Students are expected to have an overall knowledge of the course.</td>
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<td>(1200-1500 words)</td>
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<td>Final Quiz</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Faculty Grade Expectations: [http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf](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](http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism)
Disability

Any student who has a documented disability and may require special arrangements (seating, testing, later submission, etc.) should consult the instructor in person at the beginning of the course so that provisions can be made.

Recommended Reference Books


Online Sources:

52. A Comprehensive History of Chinese Buddhism:

https://www.hinduwebsite.com/buddhism/history/chinesebuddhism.as
53. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddhism-chan/


55. Film: Biography of the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng. (English subtitle).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMceiRBHhjY

56. Film: Biography of Master Bodhudharma.
(English subtitle). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kOvLb4YnRI