

*The course outline below for 2023/24 is for reference;  
the latest version for 2024/25 will be provided soon.*

Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2023-2024

ELECTIVE COURSE  
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

**BSTC2049 Buddhism and Gender (6 Credits)**

Offering Semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester
Lecturer	Dr. Catherine Hardie
Office	4/F, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus
Tel	
Email	
Day of the week	Tuesday
Assessment	100% coursework
Class Venue	10:30 – 12:20

**1. Course Description:**

Gender dynamics shape religious worlds in diverse and complex ways. This holds true in Buddhism as it does in other religious traditions. In this course we will take an interdisciplinary approach to critically examine the relationship between Buddhism and gender in a broad variety of historical and Buddhist thematic contexts. To accomplish this, we will immerse ourselves in Buddhist texts and teachings, analyse material and visual culture, and delve into the lived experiences of Buddhist practitioners spanning from Early Buddhism to the present day, across a range of Buddhist traditions, cultures, and geographical settings. In so doing, we will explore topics including the role and status of women, the construction of Buddhist masculinities and femininities, the gendering of religious roles, institutions and practices, and activism towards gender equality in Buddhist communities. No background knowledge of Buddhism is required for this course and all students are welcome.

**2. Objectives:**

By completing this course, students will cultivate an understanding of the importance of gender in the study of Buddhism. They will develop a comprehensive grasp of the relationship between Buddhism and gender in a variety of concrete historical and thematic contexts. Furthermore, students will gain valuable insights into specific gender issues that arise within the context of Buddhist texts, visual culture, and lived religious experience, including issues pertaining to gender identity and representation, as well as soteriology, culture, ethics, and aesthetics.

### **3. Assessment Ratio:**

100 % coursework with the following breakdowns:

- (1) Group project– 30%
- (2) In-class tests– 20%
- (3) Long essay – 30 %
- (4) Class participation – 20 %

#### *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](http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf)

### **4. Course Content & Topics:**

1. Introduction to Buddhism and gender studies
2. Women in Early Buddhism
3. Women in Mahāyāna Buddhism
4. Buddhist masculinities across time and space
5. Gender and monasticism
6. Gender and the Bodhisattva ideal
7. Constructions of Gender in Buddhist Art and Iconography
8. Gender and the body in Buddhist practices
9. Women and gender in Tibetan Buddhism
10. Buddhist women's empowerment in the modern era I
11. Buddhist women's empowerment in the modern era II
12. The third gender and transgenderism

## **5. Recommended Readings**

### **Introductory Reading on Buddhism**

Peter Harvey. 2013. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **Recommended Readings:**

Bryson, Megan and Buckelew, Kevin (eds). 2023. *Buddhist Masculinities*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cabezón, José Ignacio. 2017. *Sexuality in Classical South Asian Buddhism*. Somerville, Wisdom Publications.

Cabezón, José Ignacio (ed). 1992. *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Collett, Alice. 2013. *Women in Early Indian Buddhism: Comparative Textual Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gutschow, Kim. 2004. *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Gross, Rita M. 1993. *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Falk, Nancy Auer. 2001. "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns: The Fruits of Ambivalence in Ancient Indian Buddhism." In *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives*. 3d ed. Edited by Nancy Auer Falk and Rita M. Gross, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Falk, Monica Lindberg. 2007. *Making Fields of Merit: Buddhist Female Ascetics and Gendered Orders in Thailand*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Jacoby, Sarah H. 2014. *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Keeler, Ward. 2017. *The Traffic in Hierarchy: Masculinity and its others in Buddhist Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Keyes, Charles F. 1986. "Ambiguous Gender: Male Initiation in a Northern Thai Buddhist Society." In *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, edited by Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman. Boston: Beacon.

Paul, Diana Y. 1985. *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition* (2nd ed). London: University of California Press.

Powers, John. 2009. *A Bull of a Man: Images of Masculinity, Sex, and the Body in Indian Buddhism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Salgado, Nirmala S. 2013. *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Samuel, Geoffrey. 2012. "Tibetan Buddhism, women and gender" in Geoffrey Samuel, *Introducing Tibetan Buddhism*. Abingdon: Routledge. Chapter 10: 203-17.