

Undergraduate Course offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2025–26  
ELECTIVE COURSE  
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

**BSTC2050 Buddhism and Ecology: integrating thought with action**

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Offering Semester	Semester I
Schedule	To be confirmed
Class Venue	To be confirmed

**Course Description**

The adoption of pre-ecological thinking and engagement in environmental action are of paramount importance for the future of the planet and humanity. Within the context of Buddhism, there exists a profound emphasis on the interconnectedness of all entities and their inseparable connection to the natural world. Buddhism acknowledges the significance of embracing the environment and recognizes the karmic consequences of human actions.

This course aims to delve into the foundational principles of ecological thought within Buddhism. It will explore the ethical and doctrinal considerations of Buddhism regarding ecological issues, as well as examine perspectives on the interplay between humanity and nature. Furthermore, the course will scrutinize Buddhist environmental thought and activism, focusing on contemporary trends within the Buddhist community and their endeavors in addressing environmental challenges such as climate change, renewable energy, consumerism, deforestation, and education.

By integrating Buddhist philosophy and action into ecological consciousness, students will not only engage in critical analysis of Buddhism's role in fostering pro-ecological thinking and action, but they will also evaluate how these principles can be applied to foster both individual and communal activism that advances ecological well-being.

**Course Objectives**

This course endeavors to investigate the intricate connections between Buddhist teachings and the ethical responsibilities we bear towards the environment. Its primary objective is to furnish students with a comprehensive comprehension of how Buddhist doctrines, encompassing compassion, ethical conduct, and dependent co-arising, can facilitate the development of a balanced and enduring rapport with the natural world. Moreover, the course will offer pragmatic approaches for integrating Buddhist teachings with environmental conservation efforts, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.

## **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- gain a deep understating of Buddhist teachings related to ecology;
- integrate Buddhist teachings into thought and action to promote a sustainable environment;
- engage with others and establish communities around environmental issues;
- explore multiple cultural perspectives on the environment with a focus on the importance of understanding alternative ways of engaging with nature; and
- critically evaluate the role of Buddhist thinkers and develop a system thinking framework to understand how social and ecological systems interact.

## **Teaching and Learning Method**

Lectures, viewings, and class discussions

## **Assessment and Assessment Methods**

100% coursework. Coursework consists of

- 10% - Class participation,
- 20% - Group presentation (five minutes of video recording of each group member),
- 30% - Mid-term quiz, and
- 40% - Final essay (Word limit: 2000–2300 [excluding bibliography]).

## **Lecture Outline**

### **Week 1: Foundations of Buddhist Ecology: Religious and Philosophical Perspectives**

This lecture provides an introductory overview of the course and explore the foundational principles of Buddhist ecology from both religious and philosophical standpoints.

### **Week 2: Exploring the Intersection of Ecological Science and Buddhist Perspectives**

This lecture delves into the multifaceted relationship between ecological science and Buddhist perspectives, focusing on the contemporary environmental challenges posed by the Anthropocene era.

### **Week 3: Buddhism and Ecology through the Lens of the Theravada Tradition**

This lecture delves into the evolving ecological consciousness within the South and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions.

### **Week 4: The Evolution of Buddhist Ecology: Eco-Monks and the Practice of Tree Ordination**

This lecture explores the profound environmental challenges arising from rampant deforestation in Cambodia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. We will delve into the innovative response of eco-monks, who introduced the concept of tree ordination as a means of safeguarding forests.

**Week 5: Buddhism and Ecology from a Mahayana Buddhist Perspective**

This lecture delves into the ecological issues from the standpoint of Mahayana Buddhism.

**Week 6: Japanese Buddhist Perspectives on Nature**

This lecture explores the environmental ethics and perspectives of Japanese Buddhists, with a particular focus on their reverence for nature.

**Week 7: Perspectives on Nature in Tibetan Buddhist Traditions**

This lecture explores the perspectives on nature within Tibetan Buddhist traditions, highlighting their recognition of the profound relationship between humanity and the physical environment.

**Week 8: Engaged Buddhism, Humanistic Buddhism and Ecology: The Concept of Inter-Being**

This lecture explores the ecological perspectives of contemporary Engaged Buddhism, highlighting the recognition of the intrinsic value of all living beings and ecosystems.

**Week 9: Buddhism and Ecology: Perspectives from Western Buddhists**

This lecture explores the intersection of Buddhism and ecology from the perspective of Western Buddhists. It delves into academic studies conducted in the West on Buddhist ecology and examines the involvement of Western Buddhist organizations in environmental activism and conservation efforts.

**Week 10: Ecofeminist Views on Buddhist Ecology**

This lecture delves into the ecofeminist interpretation of Buddhist ecology, exploring the intersection between ecofeminism and Buddhism. Ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness between women and nature, and this perspective provides a unique lens through which to examine Buddhist responses to ecological challenges.

**Week 11: Buddhist Practices and Ecological Conservation Thought in Daily Life**

This lecture focuses on Buddhist practices that promote ecological worldviews, highlighting their relevance in addressing environmental challenges.

**Week 12: Discussion and Reflection**

This lecture constitutes group discussion by allowing students the opportunity to express their thoughts and observations on the integration of Buddhism and ecology.

**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)

## **References**

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### **Videos:**

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIZO4beW3xE> .
- Gamble, Ruth. “Is Buddhism an ecological religion?” November 14, 2022. Video, 58:48.  
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Ollé, Jordi Solé. «El estado del planeta hoy, proyecciones de futuro y una perspectiva budista (English subtitles)» May 28, 2024. Video, 17:14,

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