

Phil 380: Buddhist Philosophy

Illinois Institute of Technology

Instructor: Stephen Harris

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Office: Siegel Room 235

Spring 2012

Class Room: Engineering 1 102

MW: 5-615 pm

Office Hours: Mon, 6:40-7:40; Wed, 2:15-3:15.

Course Description: Philosophers struggle with difficult questions such as what ultimately exists (metaphysics), what is knowledge and how can we be certain when we have it (epistemology), and how should we act and what kinds of lives we should live (ethics). Moreover, philosophers use a distinctive method in which positions are carefully stated, subjected to rational scrutiny, and objections are considered and replied to. This course provides a survey of philosophical thought as it develops in the Indian Buddhist tradition. The first half of the course focuses primarily on core doctrines that develop during the early Buddhist period, which are essential to almost all Buddhist thought in its 2500 year worldwide history. These include the four noble truths, the doctrine of no-self (*anātman*), dependent origination, karma and rebirth, and Buddhist meditation. The second half of the course focuses on developments in the later *Mahāyāna* tradition. We will read selections from some of the greatest of the later Buddhist philosophers, including Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. One of the themes I will emphasize throughout the semester is the way philosophical arguments develop out of, support, and slowly transform basic Buddhist tenants. On occasion, we will consider material that is not usually considered philosophical (for example, the story of the Buddha's life, and Buddhist meditation), but I want to do so in a way that considers the extent to which these essential elements of Buddhist tradition and practice are related to philosophical questions.

Course Texts:

Williams, Paul. *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. New York: Routledge. 2000. (Abbreviated as **BT**)

Edelglass, William and Garfield, Jay. *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2009. (Abbreviated as **EG**)

Additional material will also be available on the course website, either under the external links or the assignments tabs.

Expectations and Course Policies: Students will be expected to prepare for each class by completing the assigned reading before class. No texting, using laptops except for class related purposes, whispering in class or any other activities that are disruptive to me or your fellow students. No work will be accepted by email.

Course Evaluation

2 Short Essays (3-4 pages): 30% (15% each).

1 Final Essay (6-8 pages): 30% (Draft due April 9).

Journal and Class Participation: 15% (Class attendance required for credit).

Midterm Exam: 10%

Final Exam: 15%

Journal: Students should purchase a journal and bring it to every class. Sometimes I will give homework or in class writing assignments for students to write about in their journal. Also, we will sometimes do short review quizzes in class. I will collect and check the journals a couple of times during

the semester. Students will only be given credit for doing journal assignments if they are on time to class the day the journal assignment is due.

Late Work: Short Essays will be penalized a half grade per class they are late. Short essays will not be accepted by email. Final Essay will be penalized a whole grade per day late. They will not be accepted later than the Friday of finals week.

Academic Integrity: Students who plagiarize assignments or cheat on any test will be dropped from the class with a grade of F. All instances of plagiarism will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

The University's Code of Academic Honesty can be found at this website:

http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/information_and_regulations/code_of_academic_honesty.shtml

Students With Disabilities: Any students with a documented disability requiring modification of the course setting or materials should contact the Office of Disability Accommodations, or the instructor so that such needs may be accommodated.

Tentative Schedule

Early Buddhism

- Jan 9: Course Introduction
11: Four Noble Truths & 3 Refuges. Reading: *Turning the Wheel of Dhamma Sutta* (Website)
16: No Class—MLK Day
18: Brahmanical Background. Reading: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (Website). Highly Recommended: BT 6-21. Optional: Selection from the *Vedas*. (Website).
23: Buddhist Scripture & development. Reading: BT 34-40. *The Snake Simile* (Website).
25: Life of the Buddha. Readings: *Aśvagoṣa* (Website). BT: 21-30.
30: 4 Noble Truths: *dukkha*. Readings: BT 40-43. *Abhidharmakośa* (Website). Optional: *Potaliya & Magandhiya Suttas*.
- Feb 1: 4 Noble Truths; Cause & Nirvāṇa (BT 43-52). Recommended: To Vacchagotta on Fire Sutta (Website)
- Feb 6: 4 Noble Truths: 8 Fold Path (BT 52-62)
8: No-Self (*anātman*): *Questions of King Milinda* (Website)
(Recommended: EG 265-274; Optional: EG: 46-60; Optional: To Vacchagotta on Fire Sutta (Website)
- Feb: 13: No-Self continued. Reading: Siderits (Website).
15: Dependent Origination (BT 62-72) *Visuddhimagga* selection (website).
- Feb: 20: Karma & Rebirth (BT 72-74). *Culakammavibhanga Sutta & Sīgāla Sutta* (website). Optional: *Maha-kammabidhanga & Devadaha Sutta* (website).
22: Buddhist Meditation Readings: *The Foundations of Mindfulness Sutta* (Website). BT 81-87.
- Feb: 27: Abhidharma. Reading: Siderits (Website) Recommended: BT 87-95.
Feb: 29: Early Buddhist Ethics. Reading: *Dhammapada* (Website)

March: 5: Midterm

7: Introduction to the Mahāyāna. Reading: BT 96-111.

March: 12: Nāgārjuna on Causality. Reading: *Mulamadhyamakakarika* Chap 1 (Website)

14: Nāgārjuna continued. Reading: EG 26-34.

March: 19: Spring Break

21: Spring Break

March 26: Khedrupjey (EG 126-137)

28: Vasubandhu's *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (EG 35-45)

(Optional: EG 309-19 Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*)

April 2: Vasubhandhu's 20 verses (Website).

4: Vasubhandhu: *Buddhabhūmy-upadeśa* (EG 205-217)

April 9: Dignaga *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. Reading: EG: 107-115

11: Dharmakīrti. Reading: EG 197-205.

April 16: Tantric Buddhism. Reading: TBA

18. Mahāyāna Ethics: Reading: Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (EG 388-399)

April 23: Mahāyāna Ethics. Reading: Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (EG 400-408)

25: "Buddhist Feminist Reflections." (EG 437-448). Śāntideva BCA 9:87 (e-reserves)

Final Exam: Monday April 30: 5-7pm.