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Seminar on Buddhism
REL 225 - 00
Spring 2009
 Wednesdays, 1:00 – 3:30 p.m.

In this course, students explore the growth of Buddhism in the United States through immigrant communities and converts. Gaining an understanding of participant observation as a methodology, students begin the course with a visit to a Zen Buddhist monastery and learn a variety of meditation techniques. Field trips to regional Buddhist temples and cultural centers are part of the course. In addition, participants study ritual, art and other facets of traditional Buddhist cultures, exploring patterns of retention of tradition and adaptation.

Outcomes, Objectives and Methods of Evaluation

Students enrolled in Rel 225 will gain a number of outcomes including a knowledge of the Buddhist tradition and its influence among a variety of cultures as well as understanding of Buddhism as an American religion with appreciation for its patterns of adaptation and assimilation.

These outcomes will be advanced through the following objectives and methods of evaluation: to understand Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana as distinct cultural and religious traditions (evaluated through the second short paper, the term paper and the final examination), to become proficient in the study of Buddhism through a variety of research disciplines including the anthropology of religion and the use of participant observation (to be evaluated through the first term paper), and to engage in a variety of writing styles, gaining experience and expertise in research in the social sciences (to be evaluated through the second short paper, the term paper and the journal)

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| Jan. 21 | Course introduction; the History of Religions, participant observation; Myth, ritual, and the encounter with the sacred. |
| Jan. 28 | Introduction to Buddhism; the historical Buddha, basic doctrines. |
| Feb. 4 | Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism as a reformist tradition. |
| Feb. 7 | Meditation training at Mount Equity Zendo, Mount Equity, PA. |
| Feb. 11 | Reflections on meditation. Introduction to Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana. Group review of first paper. |

- Feb. 18 Zen Buddhism in Japan and the United States **First Paper Due**
- Feb. 25 Tibetan Buddhism
Film: Wisdom of Faith series – “Hinduism and Buddhism”
Journals due
- Feb. 28 Mount Equity Zendo snow date
- March 4 Buddhism in Japan after World War 11
Film: The Long Search series – “Buddhism in Japan.”
Discussion of Emptiness Project
- March 11 Spring break
- March 18 Pure Land Buddhism in China, Japan, and the United States
Introduction to Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia
- March 25 Emptiness as a cultural and religious value
Emptiness Project and Second Paper Due
Class Presentations
- April 1 Visit (tentative) to the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center, Washington, NJ
- April 8 Engaged Buddhism in Theravada Countries
Film – The Long Search Series – “Footprints of the Buddha”
- April 15 Buddhism and Women. Readings assigned from Women’s Buddhism
Oral reports on the readings.
Review of Term Paper drafts
- April 22 Student Reports
- April 29 Student Reports
Journals due
Term Papers due
Take Home Final Examination distributed.
- May 6 **Take Home Final Examination due in Curtis 239 by 4:00 p.m.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings

Three books are required for the course:

Ross, N. W. (1980). *Buddhism: A way of life and thought*. New York: Random House.

Findly, E. B. (2000). *Women's buddhism, buddhism's women*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Seager, R.H. (1999). *Buddhism in America*. New York: Columbia University Press.

The following book is recommended for students who have not had Rel 100:

Cunningham, L. S. (1991). *The Sacred Quest*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

A recommended schedule of readings is as follows:

Jan. 21 – 328	Cunningham, chapters 1-4, Seager, chapters 1-2
Feb. 4 - 11	Ross, pp.3 –100, Seager chapter 8
Feb. 18 – 25	Ross, pp.101-140, Seager chapters 3 and 4
March 12-19	Findly (readings to be assigned), Ross, pp. 141-182, Seager, chapter 5
March 25 – April 1	Findly (readings to be assigned), Seager chapter 6 - 8
April 8 - 15	Findly (readings to be assigned)

Students will be evaluated through their participation in class (5%), journals (5%), first short paper (15%), Emptiness project and paper (25%), term papers (25%), Oral reports on term papers (5%) and final examination (20%).

Two Short Papers are each to be 3-5 pages in length and must conform to one of the three style systems (MLA, APA or Chicago). The papers are designed to help students reflect on their role as participant observers. The topics include:

Paper #1 - Describe your experience of participant observation. Identify the boundaries that your own faith, or (if you do not practice a religion) your unique world view sets for the experience of Buddhism. What insights do you hope to gain as a result of both observing and participating in the Buddhist tradition?

Paper #2 (and Project) What is emptiness? You may respond to this question in any way you feel appropriate, using art, poetry or personal reflection. Projects must be accompanied by a written description of 3-5 pages in addition to the material in the project.

Term papers are to be a critical examination of any facet of the Buddhist tradition. Papers are to be a minimum length of 10 pages and should also employ one of the three accepted style systems. The choice of which format to use is entirely up to the student as long as the method of documentation is consistent.

In keeping with the emphasis on writing and peer review that are part of the requirements of the central curriculum, students will prepare a draft of each paper and bring 6 copies to class for group review. The first short paper will be reviewed on February 6. The term paper will be reviewed on April 9.

Drafts of Papers

Partial drafts of any of the three papers can be turned in any time up to a week before the due date. A “pencil” grade will be assigned. If no further revisions are completed, the final grade will be entered as a permanent grade once the complete paper is submitted. If revisions are done, the pencil grade will either remain the same or increase and cannot be lowered. Revisions can be submitted until the class before the deadline for each paper.

Any completed paper may be revised and resubmitted before the final class on April 29.

Oral presentations are not intended to be a reading of a paper. Instead, they are arranged as a time for each student to lead a class discussion on some aspect of the research for the course.

Journals are a device for recording the experiences that each student has with the regimen of Buddhist practice. Accordingly, they should both reflect the student's increasing knowledge of the tradition and insights into the nature of zazen and the meditative experience. Journals will be graded as satisfactory, satisfactory plus, or unsatisfactory. They will be collected two times during the semester, February 25 and April 29.

Attendance - This course is designed for students who have had no prior exposure to Buddhism. Therefore, of necessity, the tradition is probed through expected historical/critical means. However, as a seminar based on participant observation the course is also a mutual experience. For this reason attendance both in the class and for field study is critical.

THE HONOR CODE

Students are expected to abide by the principles of the college's honor policy throughout the course. The Honor Code policy can be found in the Customs Book. Any violation will be dealt with according to college procedure.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is “the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work,” (The Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition, New York: Random House, 1975, p. 1014). The Cedar Crest College Faculty Handbook (Book Four, Article B, Section 3, p. 14) further defines it:

Any language taken from another source, whether individual words or entire paragraphs, must be placed within quotation marks and attributed to the source, following the citation format specified by the instructor. Paraphrased material from an outside source must also be attributed. In addition, if the student is indebted to another source for a specific perspective or a line of argument—regardless of whether the student has directly quoted the source or not—that debt must be acknowledged.

In consideration of these ideas, all Religious Studies courses will treat plagiarism in the following ways. Inadvertent plagiarism, the occasional failure to include a citation or the occasional use of a phrase from another source or the omission of a reference, represents sloppy scholarship and is subject to the loss of points on the paper or examination on which it occurs. However, the importation of either complete sentences or paragraphs from an external source and integrating them within the body of a paper constitutes plagiarism and will result in a failing grade being given for the entire course.

Academic papers or projects submitted for another college course cannot be re-submitted for any Religious Studies course without the permission of both instructors. Dual submission of papers is a violation of academic policy and will result in a failure for the course.

INTERNET SOURCES

Internet sources on all academic papers must be used with discretion since they represent a surface level of research and are often not subjected to peer review prior to publication. Research papers must include at least ten sources and no more than four internet citations with the exception of on line journals and academic papers available on educational (.edu) sites. Encyclopedias (including Wikipedia) cannot be cited as resources in research papers.

GRADE REQUIREMENTS FOR PAPERS

An “A” paper must have:

- Excellence in the creative and critical presentation of an argument relevant to the assignment.
- A clearly identified thesis or central idea.
- A structure that connects the ideas in the paper with the thesis.
- A complete bibliography or “works cited” page(s) in appropriate format.
- Clearly articulated relevance and significance of the subject matter.
- The paper must be grammatically correct and relatively free from errors in grammar, syntax or spelling. It must also contain appropriate references in the text and follow an accepted style system.

A “B” paper must have:

- A clearly identified thesis or central idea.
- A structure that relates to the thesis but may lack some connections.
- A bibliography or “works cited” page(s) that is relatively free from error.
- Appropriate connections with the assignment.
- The paper must be relatively free from errors in grammar, syntax or spelling. It must also contain appropriate references in the text and follow an accepted style system.

A “C” paper is identified by:

- A poorly constructed central idea and the absence of a thesis.
- Poor structure.
- Incomplete bibliography, “works cited” and references in the text.
- Appropriate connections with the assignment.
- Errors in grammar, syntax or spelling.

A “D” paper is identified by:

- No central idea.
- Little or no structure.
- Incomplete or missing bibliography, “works cited” and references in the text.
- Abundant errors in grammar, syntax or spelling.
- Unclear or confused relationship to the assignment.

A failing paper is identified by:

- No central idea or structure.
- Failure to include bibliography “works cited” or references in the text.
- Abundant errors in grammar, syntax or spelling.
- Lack of relationship to the assignment.