



Buddhism & Medicine

RLST 405/ASIA 497

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COURSE SUMMARY & Goals

The goal of this class is to introduce you to the history and contemporary practice of a broad range of Buddhist traditions of religious healing. Readings and discussions will cover India, China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Mongolia, and elsewhere in Asia, and will span from the BCE period to the present. At the end of the semester, we will examine the position of Buddhist healing in the contemporary globalized medical context of the US.

While the class casts a wide net in terms of content, my ultimate concern is to help you develop skills that are central to academic success in the humanities and social sciences beyond the topics covered this semester. This class focuses on the thoughtful consumption and curation of knowledge. In other words, close reading, critical thinking, analysis of sources, and expository writing will be prioritized over memorization and exams. Throughout the semester, you will undertake a series of exercises that will give you the opportunity to put these skills into regular practice, which are detailed below in the syllabus.

Specific learning outcomes include:

- Listening skills
- Close reading skills
- Note-taking skills
- Acquiring and assessing primary and secondary sources using library
- Organize or systematize information
- Formulate a coherent argument
- Understand the audience for a work
- Written communication
- Literature review
- Analysis of sources

READINGS

This semester's readings include excerpts from a series compiled by the professor:

- *Buddhism and Medicine: A Global History* (Columbia University Press, 2022).
- *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Premodern Sources* (Columbia University Press, 2017).
- *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Sources* (Columbia University Press, 2020).

Required readings for each week are given in the schedule below. It is recommended that you read the assignments in the order given in the syllabus, and that you have all the week's reading done before the first class of the week.

Grading

The components of the final grade are as follows:

Reading Reviews (40%): This is a written review of the textbook chapters assigned from *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*. These will be handed in on the first meeting of each week, to prepare for the discussion in class. Length is 300–400 words per assignment. Your review should clearly discuss: (1) the strengths of the chapter, e.g., which sections were interesting and why; (2) the gaps in your understanding of the chapter, e.g., which sections are the most difficult to follow; as well as (3) what questions do you have after reading the chapter? Plan on more or less evenly splitting your essay between these three sections, at a minimum 100 words each.

Lit Review (40%): This is a 12–15 page literature review of a cluster of secondary source readings that you will select. The final draft of the review (double spaced, 12–point font) is due at the end of the semester, however, there are several preliminary deadlines in the syllabus. Any missed deadlines will result in reduction of the final grade of the review. More information about this assignment will be distributed in class.

Effort & Attendance (10%): This is a holistic assessment of your overall effort and contribution to the class each and every day. Attendance and participation in class discussions are major factors. If you are late, texting, checking your email, Facebooking, doing your homework for other classes, sleeping, or disengaged from the discussion taking place in class, your effort grade will immediately be dropped to zero. You should be attentive in class, be reflective upon the material, be willing to participate in the conversation, raise questions of your own, and otherwise contribute constructively to the group in every class period.

Experiential assignments (10%): For full credit, all students must do one of each of the following field trips.

- Visit the Buddhist art galleries of the Penn Museum or Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- Visit one of the area's Buddhist temples during the semester from the list given in class. Take a picture of the temple. Speak with a temple-goer or

representative of the temple and answer the following questions: (1) when was the temple established? (2) is it affiliated with a temple in the homeland? (3) how many monks/nuns are currently in residence? (4) what kind of Buddhism do they practice at this temple? (5) what days/times do they hold services that are open to the public? (6) what connections do they see between Buddhism and health?

- Attend a meditation or mindfulness class at a local meditation center or on campus.

Reasonable expectations: It is anticipated that all students will live up to the reasonable expectations of college-level work, comportment, attendance, and effort. (Attendance of all classes is mandatory.) If reasonable expectations are not met, individual students will be given a warning and then will be penalized in accordance with the severity, within the guidelines of the Student Code of Conduct.

Proposed Course Schedule

Orientation & Background

Week 1, Intro

(T) Discuss syllabus

(R) Lecture: What is Buddhism?

Week 2, Mainstream Buddhism

Readings:

- Entry from *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* on Mainstream Buddhism
- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 1: Introduction, chp. 2: Mainstream Buddhism

(T) Lecture: Overview of basic Indian medical doctrines

(R) Discuss this week's readings (secondary sources)

Week 3, Mainstream Buddhism

Readings:

- Pick four of the following to read: *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20

(T) Library session: Introduce lit review assignment

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary sources)

Week 4, Mahāyāna Buddhism

Readings:

- Entry from *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* on Mahāyāna Buddhism
- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 3: Mahāyāna Buddhism

(T) Lecture: Mahāyāna deities

(R) Discuss this week's readings (secondary sources)

Week 5, Mahāyāna Buddhism

Readings:

- Pick four of the following to read: *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 4, 8, 9, 25, 26

(T) Activity: Four elements and tridoṣa. Topic and bibliography for lit review due in class today.

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary sources)

Week 6, Vajrayāna Buddhism

Readings:

- Entry from *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* on Vajrayāna Buddhism
- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 4: Vajrayāna Buddhism

(T) Lecture: What is Tantra?

(R) Discuss this week's readings (secondary sources)

Week 7, Vajrayāna Buddhism

Readings:

- Pick four of the following to read: *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 30, 36, 40, 41, 42, *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 2, chp. 33

(T) Analyze sample lit reviews.

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary sources)

Week 8, Common concerns

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 5: Common Concerns
- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 17, 62

(T) Lecture: Buddhist medical ethics

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Unit 2: Currents & Transformations

Week 9, Currents of circulation

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 6: Networks of Premodern Circulation
- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 16, 21

(T) Lecture: Toward a global history of Buddhism & medicine

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Week 10, Texts & Translations

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 7: Texts & Translations
- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 28, 44

(T) Lecture: Introduction to translation theory

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Week 11, Localization

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 8: Localization
- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 1, chp. 47, 48

(T) Lecture: Buddhist healing in China

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Week 12, Modernization

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 9: Modernization

- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 2, chp. 7, 10

(T) Lecture: Colonialism, post-colonialism, and Buddhist modernism

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Week 13, Globalization

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, chp. 10: Globalization
- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 2, chp. 19, 22

(T) Lecture: Buddhist healing in Thailand

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Week 14, Buddhist medicine in the USA

Readings:

- *Buddhism & Medicine: A Global History*, Conclusion
- *Buddhism & Medicine: Anthology* vol. 2, chp. 27, 29, 35

(T) Lecture/film: Buddhism & medicine in Philadelphia

(R) Discuss this week's readings (primary & secondary sources)

Finishing Up

All outstanding work is due by the last minute of the last scheduled final exam, or it will not be graded. Check the registrar for exact date and time. No late assignments can be accepted without explicit prior clearance.