

COURSE SYLLABUS

21:510:226:01 History of Ideas in Early Buddhism

Fall 2014

LSC 103

Tuesday, Thursday: 10:00-11:20 am

Instructor: Dr. Amita Satyal

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Office Hours: 1-2pm on Tuesdays & by appointment

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Course Overview

This is a course in the history of ideas; it proposes a thematic survey of the Early Buddhist Tradition through a selective study of the formative primary texts in translation. These texts, constituting the Buddhist Canon (in Pali language), contain several thousand discourses attributed to the famous teacher-monk from India, Gautama the Buddha (lit., The Awakened One, 563-483 BCE). In this course, students will not only learn to creatively and critically engage with these literary materials representing the Buddha's insights from 2600 years ago, but also explore ways in which these ancient teachings might be relevant to the present times. In addition, students will be able to consistently practice their reading and writing skills on quizzes and papers. Further, students will be able to bring questions and observations to class on numerous occasions throughout the semester. The course format will be a combination of lecture and class discussion. Lectures will complement readings using written materials and visual aids. Class discussion will draw upon several strategies designed to facilitate student comprehension and participation. At the same time, students' purposeful reflection—i.e., regularly examining what has been learnt and connecting it to what is being learnt—will be indispensable to developing interpretive skills and new understanding as this course progresses. Prior knowledge of Buddhism will be an asset but is neither required nor assumed for this course.

Students must be prepared to learn a few Pali terms. Also, these discourses must be read bearing in mind that these were originally oral texts—arranged, delivered, and engaged differently in distinct cultural-historical contexts—structured to elaborate parts of *Dhamma* [lit., Truth/natural laws], never the whole (how knowledge is typically transmitted in preliterate cultures.) Moreover, the texts in question are not isolated from meditative practice. In the Buddha's teachings, it is this unique interplay between knowledge and practice—really practical training of the mind—that is held foundational to the generation of wisdom that is liberative; wisdom that is, indeed can be, born only within, out of quiet contemplation.

Course Readings

There is one course textbook:-

Bhikkhu Bodhi ed., *In the Words of the Buddha An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2005). Paperback: 512 pages. ISBN-10: 0861714911. ISBN-13: 978-0861714919.

Textbook publisher website, if needed: <http://www.wisdompubs.org/book/buddhas-words>.

For a copy of the course textbook, try the following (or a retailer of your choice):

- Campus Bookstore:

<http://www.newark.rutgers.edu/about-us/have-you-met-rutgers-newark/campus-bookstore>.

- Non-profit bookseller, 'Pariyatti':

http://store.pariyatti.org/In-the-Buddhas-Words_p_2433.html

Additional course materials will be posted to <https://blackboard.newark.rutgers.edu/> as needed. Course materials posted to blackboard may be accessed by students registered for the course and be used for course-related purposes only.

Readings in this course are assigned on a weekly basis [*for further details, see PDF file 'EB Reading List and Calendar'*]. Each week's assigned reading includes selections from the course textbook and readings posted to and downloadable from blackboard.

Students may **not** use electronic devices while class is in session. Instead, students will be required to bring a **hardcopy** of all the relevant course materials to class since we will make extensive use of these materials in class: get either the course textbook, or print the relevant pages (*if printing from the e-book, ensure that the e-version is printable*) **plus** a printout of all the additional blackboard materials assigned for the week. Coming to class without a hardcopy of all the assigned readings will negatively influence the student's class grade starting the second week of classes (onward of September 9). No excuses, e.g., shipping delays, no blackboard access, late registration etc. will be accepted, please be advised.

Course Policies

1. Academic Integrity and Code of Student Conduct

Registration for this course assumes the student's agreement to read and abide by the university's policy on academic integrity and code of student conduct. This information is available on <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity>.

In particular, note the following: proper classroom etiquette is required of all and at all times; no cellphones etc., may be used while class is in session; plagiarism and cheating will fetch a failing grade on the course, and additional penalties determined by Newark Academic Integrity Facilitators may apply; students must fully fill out the **Academic Integrity Honor Pledge** on every assignment. **No pledge, no grade.**

Academic Integrity Honor Pledge

On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

2. Attendance

Attendance is required—no exceptions. Bring any special circumstances to the instructor's attention immediately. Please bear in mind that:

Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences may not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting a failing grade.

If a student misses more than two classes before and after the drop date, their final grade is lowered by a third of a grade; if a student misses more than four classes, their final grade is lowered by one full grade; and, if a student misses more than six classes, their final grade is lowered by two full grades.

All student communication concerning class absences—indeed, important course-related matters—must be made on e-mail; verbal intimation alone is not sufficient. Class absences that can be excused include (i) planned absences, i.e., participation in university athletics and religious observance excused per university policy (ii) emergencies. Supporting documentation will be required and must be produced with minimal delay. Also note:

- Students are responsible for signing attendance sheet in each class—they will have until 10:05am to do so.
- Arriving late to class or leaving class early without the instructor’s prior permission will cause loss of attendance for the day (there is no partial attendance).
- Makeups are **not** permitted for missed classes, quizzes & papers.

3. Students with Special Needs and Disability

Students with special needs and disability are requested to first contact the Office of Student Life and Leadership, Paul Robeson Campus Center for academic accommodations, approvals and related documentation. For further information, see the following link: <http://robeson.rutgers.edu/studentlife/disability.html>. Once a letter of accommodation is granted, the concerned student is advised to contact the instructor to discuss implementing the approved accommodation. If needed, the student may electronically access course materials in class, record lectures, and capture slide images of lecture presentations with the instructor’s permission.

4. Office Meetings, Blackboard Access and Course Communication

Office hour meetings are walk-ins. E-mail the instructor in advance for appointments, which will be scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:00-10am and 1:00-3:00pm. Individual paper and grade questions will typically be brought to office meetings. Students are also welcome to meet the instructor with their feedback at any point or to discuss any course-related matters as needed.

Students are responsible for regularly checking their e-mail and blackboard—a few times in a day is recommended!—for e-mails from the course instructor and updates and class announcements posted to blackboard. Neither will bounced, skipped or forgotten e-mails nor will blackboard problems/access issues be considered as valid reasons for any purpose in this course. It is the students’ responsibility to resolve any blackboard/account issues without delay: the on-campus ‘Help Desk’, not the instructor, is the relevant resource in this regard.

On course e-mails, make sure that the addressee and sender’s name along with a short and relevant subject line are provided. Voicemail messages are not acceptable.

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation: Class preparedness, participation in class discussion and class conduct.
2. Quizzes: In-class, but one. Quiz format may vary (e.g., objective type, filling in blanks, short essays and answers etc.). For quiz schedule, see PDF file ‘EB Calendar and Reading List’.
3. Long Papers: Two papers (4-6 pages each) due via blackboard—details will be on blackboard closer to the time. For paper submission schedule, see PDF file ‘EB Calendar and Reading List’.

Scoring Rubric and Grades

CATEGORY	WEIGHT
Class Grade	20%
Quizzes	40%
Long Papers	40%

Grades are non-negotiable. A student's final grade is based on their individual performance and fulfillment of the course requirements listed on the syllabus.

Outline: Weekly Topics*

WEEK	TOPIC
1) Sep 2, 4	Introduction to Early Buddhism
2) Sep 9, 11	The Buddha: Historical and Literary Context
3) Sep 16, 18	The Human Condition and Release (from it)
4) Sep 23, 25	Approaching the <i>Dhammā</i>
5) Sep 30, Oct 2	Happiness and Rebirth
6) Oct 7, 9	A Conditioned Existence
7) Oct 14, 16	The Path to Liberation; Review
8) Oct 21, 23	Content of Insight-I
9) Oct 28, 30	Content of Insight-II
10) Nov 4, 6	Early Buddhist Women
11) Nov 11, 13	On Freedom
12) Nov 18, 20	On Fear and Violence
13) Dec 2, 4	In-class Films (TBA)
14) Dec 9	Final Review

*See 'EB Reading List and Calendar' on blackboard for details.



'The Bodhi Leaf'

A well-known motif in Early Buddhist art, the Bodhi or Peepal leaf (Bot. name: *Ficus Religiosa*) represents supreme wisdom and knowing. It was under a Peepal tree in Bodhgaya (northern India) that Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (To-Be), meditated for forty nine days and reached full and perfect awakening. Hence the Peepal's other name, Bodhi (lit., awakening/knowing), from which is derived the title 'Buddha.'

Have a nice semester! 😊