

HUMA 5842 Buddhist Philosophy
Fall Semester 2021

Instructor: Prof. Eric S. Nelson

Course will be conducted in person and online (mixed mode)

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites: None; this class is open to PG and advanced UG students

Office: 2370

Office Hours: Mondays 12 Noon to 2pm and by arrangement

Topics: Indian and Early Chinese Buddhist Philosophy; Self, Mind, Buddha-Nature, and Emptiness; negative/affirmative, holistic/singularizing ways of speaking; Buddhist hermeneutics

Course Description

Buddhist discourses teach that there is “no self” while engaging basic questions of identity, selfhood, and subjectivity. They teach abandoning the world and compassionately engaging with it. They express both the priority and emptiness of consciousness and the mind as well as both the fundamental emptiness and the suchness, self-nature, and buddha-nature of beings. In this course, we will trace and consider the development of controversies over selfness/selflessness, mind/no-mind, and nature/no-nature in forms of Nikāya and Mahāyāna Buddhism in India and China.

Through a close and systematic reading of select representative early Indian and Chinese sources, we will examine how emptiness is interpreted and mediated in relation to a variety of other concepts. We will consider the function of ‘negative’ and ‘affirmative,’ holistic and singularizing, ways of speaking and the extent to which, given that emptiness is form and form is emptiness, Buddhist philosophies are concerned with the determinate emptiness of forms, selves, and things rather than an abstract general negation or indeterminate nothingness.

SCHEDULE

I. Early and Nikāya Buddhist Teachings

Week 1. Sept 3: Introduction

- The awakening and teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama: who and what is the Buddha?
- Negative and Affirmative Ways of Speaking: What does the language of mind, nature, self, and person signify in the Pāli Suttas?
- Readings: 1. *Discourse on the Noble Quest* (Ariyapariyesana Sutta); 2. *Discourse to the Kālāmas* (Kālāma Sutta); 3. *Greater Discourse on Cause* (Mahānidāna Sutta)

Week 2. Sept. 10: Controversies over Self and No-Self, Person and No-Person in Nikāya discourses

- Readings: short selections from 1. fifth Abhidhamma Piṭaka text *Points of Controversy* (Kathāvatthu 論事); 2. Buddhaghosa 覺音, *Path of Purification* (Visuddhimagga, 清淨道論); 3. Nāgasena 龍軍, *Questions of Milinda* (Milinda Pañha 彌蘭王問經); 4. the ‘personalist’ Pudgalavāda school (補特伽羅論者)

II. Emptiness, Consciousness, and Buddha Nature

Week 3. Sept. 17: Madhyamika 中觀見, the Deconstruction of Self-Nature (svabhāva 自性), and the Priority of Emptiness (śūnyatā, kong 空)

- Reading: Nāgārjuna 龍樹, *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way* (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Zhonglun 中論)

Week 4. Sept. 24: Early Chinese Madhyamika before the Teaching of the Three Treatises (Sanlun 三論)

- Reading: Sengzhao 僧肇, *Discourses of Sengzhao* (Zhaolun 肇論)

Week 5. Oct. 1: No Class

Week 6. October 8: Yogācāra 唯識 and the Priority of the Experience and Analysis of Consciousness

- Vasubandhu 世親, *Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only* (Triṃśikā-vijñaptimātratā 唯識三十論頌)

Week 7. Oct. 15: Chinese Yogācāra and the Teaching of Dharma Characteristics (Faxiang 法相)

- Xuanzang 玄奘, selections from the *Discourse on the Perfection of Consciousness-only* (Cheng Weishi Lun 成唯識論)

Paper One Due on Canvas

Week 8. Oct. 22: Buddha-Nature and Original Awakening (本覺): tathāgatagarbha 如來藏 and Buddha-dhātu 佛性 teachings in Mahāsāṃghika 大眾部 and Mahāyāna Buddhism

- Reading: selections from the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* 大方等如來藏經; *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 大般涅槃經; and *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 大乘起信論

III. Huayan, Tiantai, and Chan Teachings

Week 9. Oct. 29: Dharmadhātu (法界) and the Teaching of Flower Garland (Huayan 華嚴)

- Readings: attributed to Dushun 杜順, *Meditation on the Dharmadhātu* (Fajie Guanmen, 華嚴法界觀門); Fazang 法藏, *Rafter Dialogue* (from Huayan Yisheng Jiao Fenqi Zhang 華嚴一乘教分齊章) and *Golden Lion Treatise* (Jin Shizi Zhang 金獅子章)

Week 10. Nov. 5: “three thousand realms in a single thought” (一念三千) and the teaching of Tiantai 天台

- Reading: Zhiyi 智顓, selections from the *Great Treatise on Concentration and Insight* (Mohe Zhiguan 摩訶止觀), volume 5

Week 11. Nov. 12: From Meditation to Radical ‘Wild’ Chan 禪

- Reading: attributed to Sengcan 僧璨, *Trust in Heart-Mind* (Xinxin Ming 信心銘); selections attributed to Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 and Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄

Week 12. Nov. 19: Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密, the Critique of Chan Radicalism, and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings

- Reading: *Prolegomenon to the Collection of Expressions of the Chan Source* (Chanyuan Zhuquanji Duxu 禪源諸詮集都序)
- Reading: *Origin of Humanity* (Yuanren Lun 原人論)

Week 13. Nov. 26: Class Presentations and Concluding Matters

December 19 Midnight: Paper Two Due on Canvas

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

	Course ILOs
1	Recognize key moments in the history of Indian and Chinese Buddhist philosophy and

	consider their implications.
2	Improve abilities to interpret Indian and Chinese philosophical texts and sources.
3	Cultivate aptitude in analyzing the logical structures of arguments and interpreting the systematic conceptions in these sources.
4	Develop capacities to orally express own ideas in classroom participation and discussion.
5	Practice skills in academic and philosophical writing.

Assignments and Assessment

1. **15%:** Class Readings and Class Participation
2. **15%:** Class Presentation (15-minute presentation on final paper topic)
3. **35%: Paper One:** describe a specific Buddhist teaching through an analysis of a particular Buddhist text.
4. **35%: Paper Two:** apply or relate the Buddhist teaching described in paper one to a modern East or South Asian or European philosophical topic or discourse.

Details on Paper Assignments

1. **Paper One:** this should describe a particular canonical or non-canonical Buddhist philosophy through the interpretation and analysis of a specific text or chapter of a text.
2. **Paper Two:** this should be an expansion or extension of your interpretation and analysis in paper one applied and related to an intercultural/comparative or modern philosophical topic or discourse.
3. **Length:**
 - a. **UG, MA, and MPhil students** should write papers from 7 to 8 pages each;
 - b. **PhD students** are expected to write papers from 9 to 10 pages each.
4. Papers should use standard formatting and citation style and they should be submitted on time **in doc or pdf** on canvas.
5. **NO PLAGIARISM is the policy of HKUST.** All papers will be automatically checked for plagiarism via the turnitin function on Canvas. The discovery of cheating will result in automatically failing the course. See <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/staff-6.html>

Course Readings

- Buddhist Selections: All English translations and classical Chinese sources will be made available on canvas
- Note that each week's readings should be done prior to class.
- Details of some readings will be provided/modified in a timely fashion as the semester progresses. Pay attention to announcements in class and on canvas.

Further Online Resources

- You can access a variety of resources with online books and articles (such as JSTOR, etc.) though library access at: <https://library.ust.hk/>
- The Chinese Buddhist Canon is available online at: <https://www.cbeta.org/>
- The Japanese Buddhist Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō is available online at: https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html
- English Translations of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese canonical texts are available at: <https://bdkamerica.org/tripitaka-list/>
- English Translations of Korean Buddhist canonical as well as modern texts are available at: http://www.koreanbuddhism.net/bbs/board.php?bo_table=5040
- English Translations of Pāli and Theravāda sources: https://www.bps.lk/library_books.php
- British Library: Discovering Sacred Texts – Buddhism: <https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/themes/buddhism>