

THEO 368 BUDDHISM

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FALL SEMESTER 2010

368-01 MWF 10:30-11:20 a.m.

368-02 MWF 11:30-12:20 p.m.

Office: 118 Hinkle Hall

Office Hours: by appointment

ONLINE COURSE WEBSITE

<http://www.jonathantan.org/368/>

Please bookmark and visit the online course website regularly for announcements, weekly course outlines, readings and assignments.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

Among the great world religions, viz., religious traditions which have expanded to encompass distinct cultural areas, Buddhism is the oldest and arguably the most diverse and universal. Buddhism arose in ancient India, spread to encompass most of South, Central and East Asia in the centuries which followed, before taking root and expanding in Europe, the Americas and the rest of the world. While it is true that Sakyamuni Gautama Siddhartha, the historical Buddha sat beneath a tree to meditate some 25 centuries ago and much has changed since then in the world as well as within Buddhism itself, nevertheless certain features of human existence remain painfully constant: birth, pain, cravings, dissatisfactions, sufferings, illness, old age, and the unfailing certainty of death. As long as there is human suffering and dissatisfaction, there will be those for whom the Buddha's insights are truly liberative.

This course is a study of the history, central religious themes, spiritual practices and ethical insights of Buddhism. Through a combination of assigned readings, class discussions, and glimpses into the myriad religious worlds of Buddhism through video documentaries, YouTube clips and other media resources, we will examine the life and insights of Buddha Sakyamuni, the formulation of the foundational teachings of Buddhism in the Indian milieu, its transmission to China, Japan, and North America, and how it developed in new directions in these new environments. Particular emphasis will be placed in Buddhism's acculturation as it crosses new boundaries, paying attention to significant figures, historical and institutional developments and philosophical-doctrinal innovations. Since this course is an introduction to Buddhism, no prior formal studies, knowledge or experience of the Buddhist tradition is presumed or required. By the end of the semester, students should have a good grasp of:

1. the concepts and modes of inquiry that would enable them to read critically, think analytically, as well as formulate basic explications, careful comparisons, reasoned critiques, constructive analysis and evaluation of Buddhist ideas, practices, and way of living;

2. the key symbols, terminology, philosophical foundations, religious doctrines, ethics, and spiritual practices of major Buddhist traditions, as well as questions of dialogue between the Buddhist and Christian traditions;
3. Buddhism's acculturation as it crosses new boundaries, paying attention to significant figures, historical milestones, as well as emerging spiritual and ethical innovations (e.g., socially engaged Buddhism); and
4. the challenges and rewards of understanding and engaging with the symbolic universe and worldview of another religious tradition other than one's own in an age of religious pluralism, as well as the articulation of principal differences between the "Western" (specifically "Christian") worldview with that of the Buddhist tradition, which would necessarily entail some "self"-exploration, and existential enquiry.

II. COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

1. **Organizational Structure and Procedures of Class Discussion**

Unless otherwise indicated in the Weekly Schedule/Readings, all class sessions will be held in the discussion format according to the following procedures:

- (i) The instructor will begin each class session by introducing the background, context, principal ideas or issues, key issues, and/or important events for class discussion on that day.
- (ii) For the remainder of the class, the instructor will moderate a discussion and analysis of the materials and relevant issues among the students.

2. **Attendance and Participation**

As the primary format of this course is discussion, it is imperative that students complete all reading assignments before class, as well as attend and participate at all class sessions. Students are expected to do all the required readings assigned for every class before coming to class on that day, and encouraged to read the readings marked "Additional Readings," which complement the required readings and provide additional discussion for those who are interested to explore further. **Class attendance is required of every student enrolled in this course.** A 1% point will be deducted for each class you miss without excuse. Excuses will be accepted only for grave emergency situations (e.g., major illness with proper written documentation, death in family) or university-approved activities off-campus (e.g., varsity sports) and only at the instructor's discretion. Every two late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence and a 1% point will be deducted accordingly. Please note that any student with six or more unexcused absences will receive a grade of F for this course.

3. **Papers**

All students are required to write two papers on the topics listed below. Each paper is worth 25% of your final grade (See Computation of Grades for more information):

Paper #1: Compare and contrast the worldview and ethical teachings of Buddha Sakyamuni with your own ethical worldview.

DUE DATE: 5:00 p.m. on Friday, 17 September 2010

Paper #2: What is the relevance of Buddhism today in the United States?

DUE DATE: 5:00 p.m. on Friday, 10 December 2010

Each paper should be about **five (5) pages** in length, double-spaced and typed in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or OpenOffice format. If you are using Microsoft Works, please save in Microsoft Word format. All references to external sources, e.g., books or articles, must be properly cited in accordance with either the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the Turabian writing style. All project reports that do not conform to either one of these writing styles will also be rejected as unacceptable. Please visit Xavier University's James A. Glenn Writing Center if you require assistance in writing properly formatted papers.

4. Book Report

All students are required to a book report on *Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume*, ed. Stephanie Kaza. This book report is worth 25% of your final grade is due by **5:00 p.m. on Monday, 8 November 2010**. Your book report should be a careful and critical analysis of the assigned book and pbe around **5 pages** in length, double-spaced and typed in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or OpenOffice format. Your book report will be graded on the extent and quality of your discussion of the following:

- (a) introduce the book and its themes, objectives, approach, methods, and assumptions;
- (b) identify the essays which, in your judgment, are significant and explain why;
- (c) identify and discuss what you perceive to be the key strengths/weaknesses of this book, supporting your contentions with appropriate references to specific passages in the book. Please identify the specific page numbers for all the passages that you cite in this part;
- (d) explain what insights you have gained from reading this book;
- (e) discuss the questions that you still have on the topic that the author has not addressed;
- (f) discuss whether you would recommend this book to anyone; and
- (g) discuss whether you would retain this book in your personal library.

5. Writing and Submission Requirements for Papers and Book Report

Please check the spelling and grammar of all your papers and book report before e-mailing them to **ProfessorJTan@gmail.com** within the deadline specified above. Please do not submit a printed copy of your paper/book report or paste the contents your

paper/book report in the main body of your e-mail. All submissions that are 1-5 days late will automatically received a full letter grade reduction. Please be warned that the instructor will not accept any submission that is more than five (5) days late, and will accordingly assign a zero for non-submission of that paper/book report. For grading criteria, please refer to the Theology Department's Grading Guidelines. All submissions will be independently verified to ensure compliance with the university's policy on plagiarism/dishonesty.

6. **Tutoring/Learning Assistance**

Xavier University's Learning Assistance Center provides one-on-one and group tutoring, assistance with general study skills, e.g., reading, note taking, time management, organization, learning styles and test taking, as well as services to students with disabilities. For more information, please contact Stephanie Mosier by phone at 756-3214 or by e-mail at mosier@xavier.edu. Referral by the instructor is also available on request.

7. **Prohibition against the Use of Electronic Devices**

Please turn off all cellphones, smartphones, pagers, laptops, notebook and netbook computers, tablet PCs, PDAs, and other electronic devices when class is in session. Laptops, netbooks, notebook computers, and tablet PCs may not be used in this class. A first-time offender will receive a one-time warning and the confiscation of the electronic device in question for the duration of the class. Thereafter, subsequent violations will result in the loss of all extra credit privileges for this course, as well as the reduction of the student's final grade for this course by 5% for each violation.

8. **Academic Honesty**

According to the provisions on Academic Honesty in Xavier University's Undergraduate Academic Policies and Regulations:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon the integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include ... cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests ...

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

Please be warned that there is a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty in this course. The instructor expects all work that appears under the student's name to be that student's own, and will follow up on evidence that a student has contravened the university's regulations on academic honesty. If an incident of academic dishonesty is

established, the student will automatically receive a grade of F for the entire course, in addition to a letter of warning from the Dean and details of the offense being noted down in the student's record file.

III. GRADE COMPUTATION

Midterm Grade: Paper #1 (50%)
Attendance and in-class Discussion (50%)
less: absences/deductions (if any)

Final Grade: Paper #1 (25%)
Paper #2 (25%)
Book Report (25%)
Attendance and in-class Discussion (25%)
less: absences/deductions (if any)

The following information is available online:

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: <http://www.jonathantan.org/368/>

GRADING POLICY: <http://www.xavier.edu/theology/Grading-Policy.cfm>

CLASS SCHEDULE/READINGS: <http://www.jonathantan.org/368/>