

Ant 391 (31465)
Spring, 2013
SAC 4.120
W 9 – 12

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Anthropology and Buddhism

After an initial consideration of the Western engagement with Buddhism, and then of some fundamental Buddhist concepts, the course will focus almost exclusively on two Theravada Buddhist societies, Burma and Thailand. The emphasis throughout will be on the social relations that Buddhists in each of these societies enter into, whether among lay people, among religious, or across the lay/religious divide.

Requirements:

Each student is expected to complete the assigned reading every week and to write a brief, one-paragraph or half-page comment or question on the reading. Those comments are to be submitted on Blackboard by Tuesday evening at 9. Class on Friday will begin with a discussion of those submissions.

Students must submit two additional written assignments. The first, due mid-way through the semester, is a consideration of at least four of the readings we have discussed, with reference to each other. This can be a review of the most pertinent or interesting issues that arise, or that touch on projects you are working on. The second is either of the following: 1) a paper of ten to twenty pages on a topic of your choosing, but with evidence in the paper that the readings and discussion for this course have had some impact on your thinking; or 2) an annotated syllabus for a course in your field that draws on ideas we have discussed. Were you to teach a course on Buddhism at the upper-division undergraduate level, what topics would you address and what readings would you assign? You are expected to develop a syllabus that goes beyond the readings in this course, emphasizing whatever perspectives and areas most directly concern your own interests or work. The syllabus must be extensively annotated. For *every* reading assigned, you need to provide a brief synopsis of its contents and then an explanation of what purpose it serves in the course and why it comes at that point.

During the last sessions of the seminar, students will present their term projects as works in progress, to solicit reactions and suggestions from members of the seminar.

Regular attendance is required. All absences must be explained, and following any absence, a two-page discussion of the reading must be submitted at the next meeting of the seminar.

I have placed book orders at the Co-op Bookstore. The readings will also be available on reserve at the PCL Reserve Room.

Schedule

Week 2

Almond, Philip The British Discovery of Buddhism. Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1988. [BQ 162 G7 A45 1988](#)

Gombrich, Richard, and Gananath Obeyesekere Buddhism Transformed: religious changes in Sri Lanka. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988. [BQ 374 G65 1988](#) (pp. 3-63, 202-73)

Week 3

Collins, Steven Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities, Part 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. [BQ 4263 C65 1998](#)

Week 4

Collins, Steven Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities, Part 2

Week 5

Southwold, Martin Buddhism in Life: the anthropological study of religion and the Sinhalese practice of Buddhism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983. [BQ 359 S68 1983](#)

Week 6

Strong, John Relics of the Buddha. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2004. [BQ 924 S77 2004](#)

Week 7

Jackson, Peter Buddhadasa: Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003. On order at the PCL.

Week 8

Scott, Rachelle Nirvana for Sale?: Buddhism, wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple in contemporary Thailand. Albany : SUNY Press, 2009. [BQ 6337 K452 W3636 2009](#)

The midterm assignment is due by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 8. Please submit your assignment on Blackboard.

Week 9

McDaniel, Justin The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk. New York : Columbia University Press, 2011. [BQ 566 M38 2011](#)

Week 10

Patthana Kitiarsa Mediums, Monks, and Amulets: Thai Popular Buddhism Today. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012. On order at the PCL.

Week 11

Schober, Julianne Modern Buddhist conjunctures in Myanmar : cultural narratives, colonial legacies, and civil society. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 2011. [BQ 420 S36 2011](#)

Week 12

Braun, Erik Ms. on Burma's Ledi Sayadaw. Available online at the Blackboard site.

Week 13

Holt, John Spirits of the Place: Buddhism and Lao religious culture. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. [BL 2067 H66 2009](#)

Week 14

Freiberger, Oliver ed. Asceticism and its critics: historical accounts and comparative perspectives. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. [BL 625 A838 2006](#)

Week 15

Anderson, Benedict The Fate of Rural Hell: asceticism and desire in Buddhist Thailand. Calcutta : Seagull Books, 2012. [N 72 S6 A63 2012](#)

Final assignments are due Monday, May 13.