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


Week 3

Week 4
Collins, Steven Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities, Part 2

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7

Week 8

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

Week 9

Week 10

Week 11

Week 12
Braun, Erik Ms. on Burma’s Ledi Sayadaw. Available online at the Blackboard site.

Week 13
Week 14


Week 15


Final assignments are due Monday, May 13.