

Department of Religious Studies
Fall Semester 2004
RELS 603.11 L01 – Buddhism in the Modern World

04/08/24

Time: Monday 13:00-16:00
Place: SS 1332
Instructor: Eva Neumaier
Office Hours: Monday 12:00-13:00 or by appointment
Phone: 220-5886
E-mail: neumaier@telus.net

Course Content:

During the course we shall explore, analyze and critically reflect on how the major forces of the modern world have affected Buddhism and brought about a significant transformation of this ancient religion. In the view of many scholars this transformation resulted in a new strand of Buddhism: Modern Buddhism. In particular but not exclusively, we shall cover the following issues:

- The rise of “Protestant” Buddhism in the late 19th century as the beginning of Modern Buddhism
- The hybridity of religious identity
- The roles of the scholar vs. that of the practitioner
- Regional variations of Modern Buddhism
- Social activism (Engaged Buddhism)
- Impact of feminism
- Democratization of Buddhist institutions
- The role of Buddhism in modern political and military conflicts
- The Americanization and popularization of Buddhism in the late 20th century

Textbooks:

Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia, ed. By Charles Prebish and Martin Baumann. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002

A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West, ed. By Donald S. Lopez Jr. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002

Engaged Buddhism in the West, ed. By Christopher S. Queen. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000

Core Competencies:

By the end of the course, we should have a good understanding of how the major forces of modernity (e.g. democracy, equality, feminism, social activism) resulted in the transformation of an ancient Asian religion into a popular modern religious movement. Furthermore, we shall try to understand and critically analyse the processes that give shape to the rise of a

new religious tradition. Thus, we shall gain factual and descriptive knowledge together with competence in theoretical and analytical understanding of a religion in the making.

Students are expected to be familiar with the main concepts of Buddhism and its historical development up to the encroachment of Western colonial powers on Asian empires and kingdoms. If you feel you do not have this knowledge, but still would like to participate in this course, please contact the instructor (neumaier@telus.net).

Structure of the Course:

Given the nature of the issues and the seniority of the course, the course will be based on discussion of the assigned reading material and students' presentations. It is absolutely necessary that all students have read the assigned material prior to its discussion in class. A thorough analysis and critical reflection of the material will be given in the individual presentations. All students will participate in the subsequent discussions and reflections. If you have difficulties to speak up in class, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the course to discuss alternative arrangements.

Course Work:

- 30% of final grade: continuous and informed **participation in the in-class discussions** of the assigned readings;
- 30% of final grade: **in-class presentation** (time and topic to be discussed with instructor);
- 10% of final grade: **in-class presentation of final paper** (Nov. 29 and Dec. 6);
- 30% of final grade: **research paper** of maximal 20 pages (double spaced, 12 pt. Font) and not less than 15 such pages. The paper must contain a thesis statement, argumentation to substantiate the thesis, counter arguments, conclusion, proper annotation, and a list of used resources. Due date: 4:00 p.m. November 26. Papers have to be handed in in person at the instructor's office in the Department of Religious Studies.

Delayed submission of the paper will result in deducting 10% of the earned mark per day (for instance, a delay of 3 days results in a 30% reduction of the earned mark).

Missed assignments result in a zero for this part of the course work.

In-class Presentation:

The presentation should take up not more than 30 minutes of class time. The topic of the presentation is the topic of the week (s. Syllabus). The presentation will selectively reflect on the assigned reading material and present a critical review of the chosen reading. In critiquing the assigned reading the student is encouraged to draw on material other than the

textbooks and assigned readings. Grading is based on the quality of the oral presentation, accuracy of the presented facts, cogency of argumentation. The presentation is intended to lead to a broader discussion of the ideas given in the assigned readings. Thus, it is expected that the presentation raises some critical questions about the readings.

Research Paper:

The topic of the research paper has to be within the scope of issues and ideas discussed in the assigned readings and during the course. The topic should be discussed with the instructor not later than mid October. The research paper should address a different topic than the oral presentation. If a student feels strongly to research the same topic for the oral presentation and the final paper, the research paper must in content, cogency of argumentation and general academic quality go beyond the oral presentation. The research paper cannot be a written version – even with some variations – of the oral presentation.

Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

A+	100 - 96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Recording of lectures:

Recording any part of any lectures in any form must first approved be by the instructor in writing and is for individual private study only. See current Calendar, Tape recording of Lectures.

Academic Honesty:

Students should be familiar with University regulations regarding academic integrity; see relevant pages in the current University Calendar.

Academic Accommodation:

If you are a student with a disability who requires academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. Once registered, please discuss any upcoming tests/examinations with the instructor two weeks before the scheduled date.

Withdrawing from courses:

Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the current University Calendar.