

American Buddhisms: PSR Summer Session 2009

July 13-24, Berkeley, CA

Class meetings: 5:30-9:30 p.m., PSR Mudd Building (see posted signs for room number).

Temple visits: See below

Instructor: Rev. Wakoh Shannon Hickey, Ph.D.

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OVERVIEW

This is a two-week course worth 3 units of graduate-level academic credit. It satisfies an M.Div. curriculum requirement for a course outside the Christian tradition. It provides an overview of: the varieties of Buddhism present in the United States; American Buddhist history since the mid-19th century; key events and people; racial and colonial dynamics that have shaped modern Buddhism in Asia and the United States; and various issues facing American Buddhists today, including race, gender, and social engagement.

Methods

The course alternates between sessions in the classroom and visits to temples, so that you gain both an intellectual and an experiential understanding of how diverse Buddhism is in the United States. During the first week of the course, we will have a 4-hour classroom session on Monday, visit a temple on Tuesday, have a classroom session on Wednesday, visit a temple on Thursday, and have both a classroom session and a temple visit on Friday. You may visit temples on your own during the weekend; several options will be offered, or you may identify others. During the second week, we will have full classroom sessions (4 hours each) on three evenings, and on the other two we will combine brief classroom sessions with temple visits. To help you understand intellectually what you are experiencing in the temple visits, we will read secondary literature and some primary texts. The classroom sessions will also employ a variety of methods: lectures, discussions, videos, online resources, demonstrations of Buddhist practices, ethical reflections, and an exam. In writing assignments outside of class you will integrate what you have learned in both the classroom and the field. Grading is based on several reflection papers of 4-6 pages each, which integrate observations during visits to different temples and the relevant readings; a final exam; and participation in class discussions.

Instructor

Wakoh Shannon Hickey is currently Assistant Professor of Religion at Alfred University in New York. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area, and earned a BA in political science from U.C. Berkeley in 1986, an MA in Buddhist and Christian studies from Pacific School of Religion (PSR) in 2001, an M.Div. from PSR in 2003, and a Ph.D. in religion from Duke University in 2008. She is also ordained as a priest of Soto Zen, which she has practiced for 25 years. She trained as a chaplain in three Bay Area hospitals and was the Buddhist Chaplain for Duke University and Medical Center from 2004-2007.

A complete syllabus will be sent to students enrolled in the course; it outlines the grading criteria and course policies in detail, the schedule of readings, and the schedule of class meetings and temple visits.

TEXTS

Required

Buddhism in America

Richard Hughes Seager

Columbia U. Press, 1999

ISBN 0231108699

The Faces of Buddhism in America

Ed. Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka

UC Press, 1998

ISBN 0520213017

Highly Recommended

Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia

Ed. Charles Prebish and Martin Baumann

UC Press, 2002

ISBN 0520234901

Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism

Damien Keown

Oxford U. Press, 2004

ISBN 0192800620

Optional

How the Swans Came to the Lake, 3rd ed.

Rick Fields,

Shambhala Press, 1992

ISBN 0877736316

TEMPLE VISITS:

- Soka Gakkai East Bay Community Center (Soka Gakkai)
- Berkeley Buddhist Priory (Order of Buddhist Contemplatives/Anglican-Amer. Soto-Zen)
- East Bay Meditation Center (Vipassana)
- (Possibly) Berkeley Buddhist Monastery (Ch'an/Pure Land)
- (Possibly) Berkeley Zen Center (American Soto Zen)
- Empty Gate Zen Center (Korean-American Soto Zen)

Optional:

- Berkeley Buddhist Temple (Japanese-American Jodo Shinshu)

- Berkeley Shambhala Center (Tibetan-American: Karma Kagyu)
- Nyingma Institute (Tibetan: Nyingma)
- Kojin-an Zendo (Japanese Soto Zen)
- Wat Mongkolratanaram (Thai Theravada)

COURSE GOALS:

- Introduce the major varieties and lineages of Buddhism in the United States.
- Introduce key events and individuals in American Buddhist history since the 19th century.
- Engage students in thinking critically about race and gender dynamics that have shaped modern Buddhism in Asia and the West.
- Involve all of students' faculties in the learning process by using a variety of pedagogical methods.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Articulate basic Buddhist doctrines including the legendary biography of the Buddha, the Three Marks of Existence, the Four Noble Truths, and the Three Legs of Training.
- Identify and describe the four major strands of Buddhism present in the United States (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, eclectic or unaffiliated), with examples.
- Describe key events in American Buddhist history.
- Identify key figures in spreading and developing Buddhism in the United States.
- Demonstrate critical reflection on how race and gender dynamics have affected the development of American Buddhism and western Buddhist Studies.
- Describe the sacred spaces, body practices, material culture, literature, and people observed in four to seven local Buddhist communities.