

PHIL 331: Zen Buddhist Philosophy**Spring 2004**

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Classroom: Dane Smith 234

Office hours: Mon 2:00–4:00PM

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1 Subject matter of the course

East Asian Buddhist thinkers concerned themselves with such issues as whether virtue is innate or acquired, how wisdom manifests itself in one's social relations, and whether various kinds of knowledge are conducive to the acquisition of wisdom. Some wrote systematic essays, but many presented their insights through anecdotes, which it is left to the reader to interpret. Because Ch'an is a school of Mahāyāna Buddhism that has its roots in India, the first several weeks of the course will be devoted to reviewing issues in early Mahāyāna literature that became important issues in Ch'an and Zen.

2 Structure

The course will be divided into four parts.

The Indian Background Chinese Buddhism drew primarily on various Indian Mahāyāna Sūtras. The school of Chinese Buddhism that evolved into what was eventually called the Ch'an school was first called the Lañka School, because the principal text studied was the *Lañkāvatāra Mahāyāna Sūtra*. Another key text was the *Vajracchedika Prajñā-parāmitā* (The Perfection of Wisdom called the Cutter of Diamonds). Both of these texts contain themes that later followers of the school took as points of departure.

Ch'an in China The most important of the early Chinese Ch'an writers was Hui-nêng (638–713), for whom a key issue was whether the cultivation of virtue is a gradual process of acquiring new characteristics or a matter of discovering innate properties.

Medieval Korean Son and Japanese Zen The founder of the Son (Ch'an) movement in Korea was a remarkable monk named Chinul (1158–1210). Meanwhile, the Kamakura period (12th and 13th centuries) was the time of greatest innovation in Japanese Buddhism. One of its most creative thinkers was Dōgen (1200–1253), founder of the Sōtō school.

Modern Issues in Zen An important issue in modern Western thought is the question of the value of non-rational modes of thinking and their relationship to linear logic-based thinking. Some modern authors on Zen have suggested that Zen *kōan* practice offers an alternative way of

knowing that is in some ways superior to rationality; others have disputed this. After exploring this issue, we'll finish by looking at one of the most creative Buddhist authors on the contemporary scene, David Loy (1947–), who has presented essays based on Ch'an and Zen thought and modern Western, especially Continental, philosophy.

3 Readings

Three books have been ordered for sale in the UNM bookstore. They are McRae (2000), Chinul (1991) and Loy (2003). All these books are required reading and will be the basis of class discussions.

Several other books have been put on reserve in the Zimmerman library. Students wishing to review the basic teachings of Buddhism are advised to read Gethin (1998). Williams (1989) provides a good review of the doctrinal development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. A history of Chinese thought in general is available in Feng (1948). Particular aspects of Ch'an and Zen thought are to be found in works listed in the references section at the end of this syllabus. Still other writings will be scanned and made available on webct.unm.edu and on ereserves.unm.edu. The books in the reference section can also serve as a point of departure in your own investigation of Ch'an, Son and Zen. The Zimmerman library has a useful collection of works on Chinese, Korean and Japanese Buddhism; please explore the library freely and discover some of the treasures on Buddhism and Asian culture to be found there.

4 Schedule of lectures and discussions

4.1 The Indian background

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan 21	Introductory comments	
23	The Perfection of Wisdom Literature in general	Conze (1973)
26	The Diamond-cutter Sūtra and the use of paradox	Conze (1958)
28	Themes in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra: non-dualism, forms of delusion and liberative wisdom	
30	Themes in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra: the nature of mind	

4.2 Ch'an in China

Feb 2	Chinese precursors to Ch'an. The San-lun school	Skilton (2000, ch. 22)
4	Hua-yen Buddhism	Chen (1973)
6	T'ien-t'ai Buddhism	Chen (1973)
9	The myth of Bodhidharma	Dumoulin (1963, 67–87)
11	The first five Ch'an patriarchs	
13	Hui-nêng: the mythic and historical background	
16	Sudden versus gradual awakening: the contours of the controversy	Gregory (1987)
18	The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch	McRae (2000, 1–25)
20	Platform Sūtra	McRae (2000, 27–55)

4.3 Medieval Korean Son and Japanese Zen

Feb 23	Buddhism in Korea	
25	The life of Chinul	
27	Tracing Back the Radiance	Chinul (1991)
Mar 1, 3, 5	Tracing Back the Radiance	Chinul (1991)
8	Japanese Buddhism: Nara Period (710–784)	Saunders (1977, 89–133)
10	Heian Period (794–1185)	Saunders (1977, 134–184)
12	Kamakura Period (1185–1333)	Saunders (1977, 185–237)
22	Eisai and Rinzai Zen	Dumoulin (1963, 137–150)
24	Life of Dōgen	Dumoulin (1963, 151–174)
26	Dōgen's "Theory of Time"	Kennett (1972, 164–171)
29	Dōgen's "The Problem of everyday Life"	Kennett (1972, 171–175)
31	Dōgen's "Lecture on Training"	Kennett (1972, 138–155)
Apr 2	Dōgen's "Instructions to the Chief Cook"	Kennett (1972, 175–190)

4.4 Modern Issues in Zen

Apr 6	D.T. Suzuki on <i>kōan</i> practice	Suzuki (1956, 111–154)
8	Jiyu Kennett on <i>kōans</i>	Kennett (1972, 61–67)
10	Victor Sōgen Hori on <i>kōans</i>	Hori (2003)
19, 21, 23	David Loy's Buddhist social theory	Loy (2003)
26, 28, 29	David Loy's Buddhist social theory	Loy (2003)

4.5 Review week: May 19–14

The UNM Senate recently passed a resolution that the final week of each semester be set aside for review. No new material is to be introduced during this final week. As the time draws near, we can decide whether it would be your preference to hold reviews in class. If it is decided that classes will not meet, I will be in my office at class time as well as during my normal office hours.

5 Assignments and evaluation

- **For undergraduates**, the requirements are 1) to write two essays on one of a choice of topics to be announced during the term and 2) to take the final examination, which for this time-slot is scheduled for May 12. 10% of the final grade will be determined by class participation. The weight and due dates of assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Weight
First essay	February 27	25%
Second essay	April 29	35%
Class participation		10%
Final exam	May 12	30%

- **Graduate students** will be required to write two short essays and one longer one. The topics for the first two essays will be assigned, and the topic for the third is of your choice. The due dates and the weights of the assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Weight
First essay	February 27	30%
Second essay	March 22	30%
Third essay	May 7	40%

- **About due dates:** If you find that it is unrealistic to meet the deadline for a particular assignment, please let me know in writing or by e-mail at least a few days in advance. In your notification to me, please indicate the date by which you will turn in the assignment. Be realistic in determining this new deadline. This new deadline you give yourself is final; if you do not meet it, I cannot guarantee that I will accept your assignment for evaluation. This policy applies to both undergraduates and graduate students.

References

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