

PHIL/RELIG 331/531: Zen Buddhist Philosophy**Spring 2006**

Monday 7:00–9:30pm

Dane Smith 128

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1 Subject matter of the course

The Zen tradition, which took form in East Asia, migrated to the West through a variety of channels. Some Asian teachers came to the West, and many Western people went to Asia to train under teachers there. As a result of this cross-fertilization, Zen has come to be a household (and highly successful commercial) word. The focus of this course will be the writings of Zen teachers who used English as their main medium of communication. Most of the authors we look at are American men and women who have struggled to find a balance between their Zen persona and their Western persona. The authors to be examined are Shunryu Suzuki, Philip Kapleau, Robert Aitken, Charlotte Joko Beck, Bernard Glassman, and Toni Packer.

Readings

Six books have been ordered for sale in the UNM bookstore. They are Aitken (1984), Beck (1995), Glassman & Fields (1996), Kapleau (2000), Packer (2002) and Suzuki (1970b). All these books are required reading and will be the basis of class discussions.

Several other books of interest to this course are available in the Zimmerman library. Students wishing to review the basic teachings of Buddhism are advised to read Harvey (1990) or 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). Dumoulin (1963) provides a concise history of Zen Buddhism in Asia. Hori *et al.* (2002) has a collection of articles on the teaching of Buddhism in academic settings in the West. Tweed (1992) offers good insights into currents in 19th century American religious culture and the early reception of Buddhism; much of what he observes about 19th-century American interest in Buddhism is still true today. Another valuable study of Buddhism in America is Fields (1981).

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. The books in that section can also serve as a point of departure in your own investigation of Buddhism in general and Zen Buddhism in particular. 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.

Format of classes

Each week's class will be divided into two parts. First there will be a one-hour lecture in which information about the history and philosophy of Zen Buddhism will be given. This will be followed by a short break, after which we will return for a class discussion of the reading assigned for that week. The readings, unlike the lectures, will focus on contemporary Zen in America.

In order to facilitate discussion, each student will be required to hand in, at the beginning of class, at least three questions. At least one question should be about the previous week's lecture; at least two of the remaining questions should be on issues arising from the readings. Please submit your questions with your name in the upper left-hand corner of the page, followed by your course number (PHIL 331 or RELIG 331), and the date. It would be a good idea to keep a copy for yourself to refer to during the discussion period.

If for some reason you must miss a class, please notify me in advance. You can make up a missed class by writing a two-page summary of the reading for discussion in the class that you missed.

2 Assignments and evaluation

Undergraduate students (PHIL/RELIG 331)

In addition to the questions that you submit at the beginning of each class, you will be required to do the following:

1. Write a short (1250–1500 words) essay on one of a choice of topics to be announced during the term.
2. Write a critical book review essay that covers at least two books related to the topic of this course (you may include one or more of the required texts). (1500 words)
3. Take the final examination, which for this time-slot is scheduled for May 8.

The weight and due dates of assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Weight
Written questions and class participation	weekly	15%
Essay	February 27	25%
Book review essay	April 24	30%
Final exam	May 8	30%

Graduate students (PHIL/RELIG 531)

Each graduate student in this course will be required to do the following:

1. Give a 20 to 25 minute presentation on one of the readings assigned for class discussion, then lead the class discussion of it. The notes for your presentation should be handed in the week it is given. The following week please submit a brief (maximum 1 page) critique of your own performance.
2. Write a book review essay of one of the books listed in the references at the end of this syllabus (or of some other book of your choice on the topic of Zen Buddhism). (1500 words)
3. Write either a research essay or a philosophical paper on a topic of your choice that is related to Zen Buddhism. (20 pages)

The due dates and the weights of the assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Weight
Class presentation	Depends on schedule	30%
Book review	March 20	30%
Essay	May 8	40%

Policy about extensions for written assignments

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. The one exception is the graduate student's in-class presentation, which must be given on the day the topic is scheduled.

3 Schedule of lectures and discussions

Date	Topic
Jan 23	The American reception of Buddhism. Currents in 19th-century American religious thought. The Parliament of World Religions in 1893. D. T. Suzuki.
30	Mahāyāna Sūtras that influenced Zen: Diamond Sūtra and Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra. Discussion of Shunryu Suzuki (1970b, pp. 21–83)
Feb 6	The myth of Bodhidharma. The early Chinese Ch’an patriarchs. Discussion of Suzuki (1970b, pp. 83–138)
13	The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch. Discussion of Beck (1995, pp. 3–103)
20	The debate over sudden versus gradual enlightenment Discussion of Beck (1995, pp. 113–218)
27	Chinese Ch’an schools and masters Discussion of Aitken (1984, pp. 3–104)
Mar 6	Religious and social turmoil in Kamakura Japan and the dawn of Japanese Zen Discussion of Kapleau (2000, pp. 29–120)
13	Spring break. No class.
20	Eisai and Dōgen, founders of Rinzai and Sōtō Zen Discussion of Glassman & Fields (1996, pp. 1–85)
27	Bassui Discussion of Kapleau (2000, pp. 141–208)
Apr 3	Hakuin Discussion of Aitken (1984, pp. 105–173)
10	Thich Nhat Hanh and engaged Buddhism Discussion of Glassman & Fields (1996, pp. 88–169)
17	“If you see the Buddha on the road, kill him.” Zen without the Buddhism Discussion of Packer (2002, pp. 29–120)
24	Christianity meets Zen Packer (2002, pp. 93–170)
May 1	Review of main themes

References

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