

PHIL/RELG 331/531: Chan and Zen Buddhist Philosophy

Class: MWF 1:00–1:50 in HUM 518
Instructor: Richard Hayes
Office hours: MF 2:00–3:00 in HUM 525

1. Course description

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 Chan is a school of Mahayana Buddhism that has its roots in India, the first part of the course will be devoted to reviewing issues in early Mahayana literature that became important issues in Chan and Zen.

After a survey of relevant themes in Indian Mahayana Buddhism, we shall read key texts by two classical Chinese Chan masters (Huineng and Huangbo), a medieval Japanese Zen master (Dogen), a medieval Korean Son teacher (Chinul), and one modern American Zen master (Robert Aitken).

1.1. The Indian Background

Chinese Buddhism drew primarily on various Indian Mahayana sutras. The school of Chinese Buddhism that evolved into what was eventually called the Ch'an school was first called the Lanka School, because the principal text studied was the Lankavatara Mahayana Sutra. Another key text was the Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita (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.

1.2. Chan in China

The most important of the early Chinese Chan writers was Huineng (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. Huineng had several disciples, one of whom was Mazi (Ma Tzu, died 788), in whose lineage came Huangbo (Huang Po, died around 850) a few generations later. Huangbo was the teacher in Linji (Lin Chi), whose lineage eventually found its way to Japan, where it was called the Rinzai Zen school.

1.3. Medieval Korean Son and Japanese Zen

The founder of the Son (Chan) movement in Korea was a remarkable monk named Chinul (1158–1210), whose teachings follow the tradition of the Chinese master Mazi. Meanwhile, the Kamakura period (12th and 13th centuries) was the time of greatest innovation in Japanese Buddhism. One of its most creative thinkers was Dogen (1200–1253), founder of the Soto school of Japanese Zen.

1.4. 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 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 American Zen masters, Roshi Robert Aitken (born in 1917), who follows the Sanbo-kyodan school, which blends teachings of the Rinzai and Soto schools of Japanese Buddhism.

2. Required Texts

Several books have been ordered at the UNM bookstore for this course, although you may find it less expensive to acquire them elsewhere. The order in which we will read the books is as follows:

- 1 Huineng. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Translated by John R. McRae. BDK English Tripitaka 73-II. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley, CA, 2000. (ISBN 1-886439-13-3)
- 2 Huang Po. *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of Mind*. Translated by John Blofeld. Grove Press, New York, 1958. (0-8021-5092-6)
- 3 Chinul. *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Way of Korean Zen*. Translated by Robert E. Buswell, Jr.. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2002. (0-82481-427-4)
- 4 Dogen. *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*. Translated by Norman Waddell and Masao Abe. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 2002. (0-7914-52425-8)
- 5 Aitken, Robert. *Original Dwelling Place: Zen Buddhist Essays*. Counterpoint, New York, 1997. (1-887178-41-4)

3. Assignments and Evaluation

Undergraduate Students

Students enrolled in PHIL 331 or RELG 331 will be required to complete the following assignments:

- 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.

The weight and due dates of assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Weight
Essay	February 29	30%
Book review Essay	April 25	35%
Final exam	May 16	35%
		<hr/> 100%

Graduate students

Students enrolled in PHIL 531 will be required to complete the following assignments:

- 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 weight and due dates of assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Weight
Class presentation	Depends on schedule	30%
Book review	March 21	30%
Final exam	May 9	40%
		100%

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 two 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.

4. Schedule of readings

Month	Day	Topic
January	23	Overview of course contents. Themes in the "Perfection of Wisdom" literature.
	25	Themes in "The Introduction of the True Dharma to Lanka"
	28	Chinese precursors of Chan Buddhism
	30	The legend of Bodhidharma
February	1	The first five Chan patriarchs
	4	<i>The Platform Sutra</i> , translator's introduction, Preface and Encomium [Huineng, 1-25]
	6	<i>Platform Sutra</i> , Numbers 1-4 [Huineng, 27-59]
	8	<i>Platform Sutra</i> , Numbers 5-7 [Huineng, 59-90]
	11	<i>Platform Sutra</i> , Numbers 8-10 [Huineng, 90-115]
	13	<i>Platform Sutra</i> , Appendices [Huineng, 117-134]
	15	<i>The Zen Teaching of Huang Po</i> , Translator's introduction and P'ei Hsiu's preface [Huangbo, 7-28]
	18	<i>Huang Po</i> , Part One, sections 1-19 [Huangbo, 29-47]
	20	<i>Huang Po</i> , Part One, sections 20-36 [Huangbo, 49-66]
	22	<i>Huang Po</i> , Part Two, sections 1-26 [Huangbo, 67-93]
	25	<i>Huang Po</i> , Part Two, sections 27-42 [Huangbo, 94-118]
	27	<i>Huang Po</i> , Part Two, sections 43-56 [Huangbo, 118-132]
	29	Buddhism in Korea

March	3	<i>Tracing Back the Radiance</i> , Chinul's thought [Chinul, 35–56]
	5	Chinul's approach to practice [Chinul, 57–72]
	7	“Secrets on cultivating the mind” [Chinul, 98–117]
	10	“Straight talk on the true mind” [Chinul, 118–149]
	12	Excerpts from the Dharma Collection [Chinul, 150–170]
	14	Chinul's exposition [Chinul, 170–187]
		<i>Spring break</i>
	24	Japanese Buddhism during the Kamakura Period
	26	Eisai and Dogen and the formation of the Rinzai and Soto schools
	28	“Instructions to the Chief Cook” [Kennett, 175–190]
	29	“Universal promotion of the principles of zazen” and “Negotiating the way” [Dogen, 1–30]
April	2	“One bright way” and “Manifesting Suchness” [Dogen, 31–45]
	4	“Being-Time” [Dogen, 47–58]
	7	First half of “Buddha-nature” [Dogen, 59–78 (to end of verses)]
	9	Remainder of “Buddha-nature” [Dogen, 78–98]
	11	“The King of Samadhis Samadhi,” “Birth and death” and “The Principles of zazen” [Dogen, 99–110]
	14	Issues in American Buddhism
	16	Ancestors [Aitken, 5–44]
	18	The Classical Discourses [Aitken, 47–75]
	21	“The way of Dogen Zenji” and “Ultimate reality and the experience of nirvana” [Aitken, 79–96]
	23	“Ritual and makkyo,” “Koans and their study,” and “Marriage as Sangha” [Aitken, 97–114]
	25	“Death: A Zen Buddhist perspective” [Aitken, 115–127]
	28	“The path beyond no-self” and “Envisioning the future” [Aitken, 131–152]
	30	“The experience of emptiness,” “Brahmadanda, intervention, and related considerations” and “About money” [Aitken, 153–175]
May	2	“Taking Pleasure in the Dharma” [Aitken, 179–203]

References

Aitken

Aitken, Robert. *Original Dwelling Place: Zen Buddhist Essays*. Counterpoint, New York, 1997.

Chen

Chen, Kenneth. *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1973.

Chinul

Chinul. *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Way of Korean Zen*. Translated by Robert E. Buswell, Jr.. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2002.

Dogen

Dogen. *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*. Translated by Norman Waddell and Masao Abe. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 2002.

Dumoulin

Dumoulin, Heinrich. *A History of Zen Buddhism*. Translated from the German by Paul Peachey. Pantheon, Boston, 1963.

Gregory

Gregory, Peter N., editor. *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1987.

Huangbo

Huang Po. *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of Mind*. Translated by John Blofeld. Grove Press, New York, 1958.

Huineng

Huineng. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Translated by John R. McRae. BDK English Tripitaka 73-II. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley, CA, 2000.

Kennett

Kennett, Jiyu. *Selling Water by the River: A Manual of Zen Training*. Pantheon, New York, 1972.

Loy

Loy, David R.. *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory*. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2003.