

PHIL/RELIG 442.002: Individual philosopher: Nāgārjuna		Spring 2005
Instructor: Dr. Richard P. Hayes	Classroom: HUM 518	
Office hours: Wed 1:30–3:00pm	Or by appointment	
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1 Course description

Nāgārjuna (ca. 150 C.E.) was arguably the most important Indian Buddhist thinker. Not only were his works studied for a millennium in India, but they also became the basis for important schools of thought in Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism. The scholastic curriculum in Tibetan Buddhism still features extensive study of Nāgārjuna’s works along with works of his commentator Candrakīrti (ca. 600 C.E.) and of various Tibetan scholastics. In China, scholars who wrote treatises based on Nāgārjuna’s works formed a school called the San Lun (Three Treatise) school, which eventually died out but generated ideas that were incorporated into Chan, Pure Land Buddhism and the various schools based on the Lotus Sūtra.

Our principal task in this course will be to read through and analyse Nāgārjuna’s most influential work, the Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā (MMK). For the sake of establishing context, reference will also be made from time to time to some of his works for a more general audience.

In addition to exerting a considerable influence on various Asian thinkers over the years, Nāgārjuna’s work has generated interest among a number of modern Western and Japanese authors. For this reason, in addition to studying Nāgārjuna’s works themselves, we’ll take a look at several modern assessments of the significance of his work.

2 Readings

On sale in the UNM bookstore are the principal translations that will be used in the course, namely, those by Jay L. Garfield (1995) and Stephen Batchelor (2000). From time to time comparisons will be made with other translations, notably those of Inada (1970), Kalupahana (1986) and McCagney (1997). Other pieces, which will be read toward the end of the course, will be made available on ereserves.unm.edu.

Supplemental readings that may prove useful while working on essays are Shcherbatskoi (1965), Streng (1967), Sprung (1973), Lindtner (1987), Tuck (1990) and Wood (1994). The full details of all these readings are given in the references section on the last page of this syllabus.

3 Schedule of lectures and discussions

Date	Topic
Jan	18 Nāgārjuna's place in Indian Buddhist philosophy
	25 MMK Chapter 1: Read Garfield (1995, 87–123)
Feb	1 Buddhist views of causation: Siderits (2004)
	8 MMK 2–4: Garfield (1995, 124–148) and Batchelor (2000, 84–89)
	15 MMK 5–7: Garfield (1995, 149–177) and Batchelor (2000, 90–93)
	22 MMK 8–11: Garfield (1995, 178–201) and Batchelor (2000, 94–100)
Mar	1 MMK 12–16: Garfield (1995, 202–230) and Batchelor (2000, 101–109)
	8 MMK 17–20: Garfield (1995, 231–266) and Batchelor (2000, 110–117)
	22 MMK 21–23: Garfield (1995, 267–293) and Batchelor (2000, 118–127)
	29 MMK 24–25: Garfield (1995, 294–334) and Batchelor (2000, 128–130)
Apr	5 MMK 26–27: Garfield (1995, 335–359) and Batchelor (2000, 131–136)
	12 Logical fallacies in Nāgārjuna? Hayes (1994)
	19 Mysticism and paradox: Taber (1998) and Garfield & Priest (2002)
	26 Nāgārjuna as seen by Nancy McCagney (1997, 53–135)
May	3 Madhyamaka as seen by Stephen Batchelor (2000, 3–80)

4 Assignments and evaluation

The final grade for the course will be based on four factors:

Journal At the beginning of each week each student will be required to hand in a brief (maximum 2 page) reflection on the reading for that week. This reflection should be written in full sentences and should end with a set of questions that you would like to see discussed in class.

Longer essay By the time of the first class in April, each student should prepare a 10–12 page essay consisting of a critical evaluation of some passage or set of passages in the MMK. This essay may be handed in at any time before April 5; essays will be evaluated and returned in the order in which they are received.

Shorter essay Due the last day of classes is a 4–5 page essay evaluating the arguments presented by one of the modern scholars read during the last four weeks of class.

Participation This will be an evaluation of the quality of participation in seminars.

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage
14 reflections	Each week	30
Critical analysis of MMK	April 5	30
Evaluation of modern scholar	May 3	25
Class participation	Weekly	15

References

- Batchelor, Stephen. 2000. *Verses From the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Garfield, Jay L. 1995. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garfield, Jay L. 2002. *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garfield, Jay L., & Priest, Graham. 2002. Nāgārjuna and the Limits of Thought. In: Garfield (2002).
- Hayes, Richard P. 1994. Nāgārjuna's Appeal. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, **22**, 299–378.
- Inada, Kenneth K. 1970. *Nāgārjuna: A translation of his Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā with an introductory essay*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press.
- Kalupahana, David J. 1986. *Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way*. SUNY series in Buddhist studies. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. Includes translation of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamādhyamikakārikā*, pp. 101–391.
- Lindtner, Christian. 1987. *Nāgārjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*. 1st Indian edn. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- McCagney, Nancy. 1997. *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Shcherbatskoi, F. I. 1965. *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*. Indo-Iranian reprints, no. 6. The Hague: Mouton. Reprint of first edition, 1927.
- Siderits, Mark. 2004. Causation and emptiness in early Madhyamaka. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 393–419.
- Sprung, Mervyn (ed). 1973. *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta*. Dordrecht; Boston: Reidel.
- Streng, Frederick J. 1967. *Emptiness: a Study in Religious Meaning*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Taber, John A. 1998. On Nāgārjuna's So-called Fallacies: A Comparative Approach. *Indo-Iranian Journal*, **41**, 213–244.
- Tuck, Andrew P. 1990. *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship: On the Western Interpretation of Nāgārjuna*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wood, Thomas E. 1994. *Nāgārjunian Disputations : A Philosophical Journey Through an Indian Looking-glass*. Society for Asian and Comparative philosophy, vol. 11. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.