Course Code
BUDS 5008

Course Title (both English and Chinese)
Buddhism and Contemporary Society 佛教與當代社會

Course Description (both English and Chinese)
This course examines the relationship between Buddhism and contemporary societies, focusing on but not limited to Han Chinese Buddhism. After two weeks of introductory materials and a third week presenting an overview of forms of Buddhism worldwide, we will study Buddhism in relation to various themes, i.e., topics such as meditation, ritual, politics, and globalization.

This course assumes that Buddhism as a set of beliefs and practices has always been evolving due to its inner dynamics and in response to broader social changes. We will assess how these processes have continued in recent years and into the present. This course will demonstrate how Buddhism and other components of society mutually transform one another. Through these studies, students will learn about the academic study of contemporary Buddhism and will gain training in analyzing scholarly arguments, giving oral presentations, and writing academic papers.

Course Syllabus

I. Introduction
   1. Society, Buddhism, and the Buddha
   2. Basic Buddhist Teachings
   3. Overview of Contemporary World Buddhism

II. Thematic Units
   1. Meditation/Buddhism as Therapy
   2. Diet/Vegetarianism and Relations with Non-Human Animals
   3. Ritual/Karma and Environmentalism
   4. Death/Changing Funerary Customs and Relationships to the Deceased
   5. Politics/Buddhist Institutions under Different Regimes
   6. Student Oral Presentations
   7. Syncretism/Buddhist Fusions with Local Culture
   8. Globalization/Transnational Networks of Buddhist Influence
   9. Hong Kong Buddhism/ Local Buddhism in Global Perspective

III. Conclusions and Synthesis
Learning Outcomes

Knowledge
1. To understand Buddhist attitudes toward and connections with society in various historical settings and contemporary contexts.
2. To examine in what ways Buddhism transforms contemporary society and culture, and vice versa.

Skills
3. Ability to engage in a critical analysis of academic writings, including to find and assess the main argument, evidence, implications, and unstated assumptions.
4. Ability to translate skills of critical reading into the related skills of speaking and writing persuasively.

Attitudes
5. To develop in students an appreciation for Buddhism as part of cultural heritage and as a set of potential resources in contemporary life.

Assessment Scheme

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Scheme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>In-class presentation:</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Term paper:</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Course Requirements

Students will be required to complete the following:

1. **Regular attendance, reading, and response papers.** Attend each class, participate in class discussions, complete the required readings each week, and submit to the class discussion board on Blackboard a brief (150-300 word) reflection on the main reading, with a potential question for class discussion included. Response papers will be due for the following weeks: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12. For credit, responses must be posted to the course Blackboard site (discussion board) by the day before class (Thursday) at midnight.

2. **In-class presentation.** Each student will make a formal, in-class presentation during week 9. This presentation will typically be related to the student’s term paper. More details (i.e., length of presentation, etc.) will be decided later.

3. **Term paper.** Each student will submit a term paper (4000-5000 words). Term paper topics should be related to the course theme and should be
discussed with the instructor. Term papers can be either synthetic (i.e.,
integrative review of secondary research on a certain topic), or research-
oriented (i.e., based on original research, using primary source documents,
interviews, participant observation, etc.).

Required readings will be provided as PDF documents.

A Note on Language
The primary medium of instruction for this course will be English. Most required
readings, particularly those which require a written response from students, are also in
English. However, Mandarin Chinese will be a secondary class language. Some class
discussion may be conducted in Mandarin, especially if initiated by students. In
addition, course assignments, including reading responses, oral presentations, and
final term papers, may also be presented/composed in standard, modern, Mandarin
Chinese.

Extra Credit
Students will be permitted to do one extra credit assignment for two points (i.e., two
percentage points added to the final course grade) during the semester. This extra
assignment consists in presenting to the class news about a contemporary Buddhist
development (usually from one more online media sources). It would consist of a 3-5-
minute informal presentation plus several minutes of class discussion. Interested
students should reserve a time and discuss their presentations with the instructor in
class at least one week before presenting.

Feedback for Evaluation
An end-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class.
Students’ comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting
with the instructor are always welcome.

Class Schedule

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<th>Topic and Readings</th>
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<td><strong>Week 1 (Jan. 11)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction: Society, Buddhism, and the Buddha</strong></td>
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<td>No required readings.</td>
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Recommended readings:
- *Buddhacarita* (佛所行贊), T. 192. (available on CBETA)

**Week 2 (Jan. 18)**

**Basic Buddhist Teachings and Worldview**

- 雑阿含經卷第十五, No. 379.

Recommended Reading:

- [https://fakebuddhaquotes.com/](https://fakebuddhaquotes.com/)

**Week 3 (Jan. 25)**

**The Contemporary Buddhist World**


Recommended Reading


**Week 4 (Feb. 1)**

**Mindfulness and Meditation**

- 念處經 (T. 26: 1.582b8—584b29) (get on CBETA)

Recommended Reading:


**Week 5 (Feb. 15)**

**Diet (Vegetarianism)**

**Recommended Readings:**
- Extract from the *Vinaya in Ten Recitation*, Scroll #37 (十誦律卷三十七).
- *Fanwang jing*, scroll #2, selection of brief passages on diet (梵網經卷二).

**Week 6 (Feb. 22)**

**Ritual**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 7 (March 1)**

**Death**
Recommended Readings:


**Week 8 (March 8)**

**Politics**

- Extracts from the Buddhist Association of China Website.

**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 9 (March 15)**

**In-Class Student Presentations**

**Week 10 (March 22)**

**Religious Syncretism and Relics**


**Recommended Readings:**

Week 11 (March 29)

Globalization


Recommended Readings:


Week 12 (April 12)

Buddhism in Hong Kong and Conclusion


Recommended Reading:

- Deng Jiazhou 鄧家宙. 2015. 香港佛教史.

Contact Details of Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professor/Lecturer/Instructor:</th>
<th>Professor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Prof. Douglas Gildow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Location:</td>
<td>Room 312, 3/F, Leung Kau Kui Building</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dmgildow@cuhk.edu.hk">dmgildow@cuhk.edu.hk</a></td>
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Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/).

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.
For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students’ uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

**Grade Descriptor:**

A   Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-  Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B   Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C   Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D   Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F   Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.