

RLST 23900 / SALC 23903
Buddhist Thought in India & Tibet

Spring term 2016
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30-11:50
Psychology / Green Hall 101

Instructor: Dan Arnold (d-arnold@uchicago.edu)

Office hours: Swift Hall 401A (702-8276), Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 (or by arrangement);
for appointments during regular office hours, contact instructor's secretary, Julia Ivory-
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Course objectives: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the range of philosophical thought and doctrine that have developed within the Buddhist traditions of India and Tibet, and to engage in philosophical thinking with respect to this material. To choose to focus on philosophy and doctrine is already significantly to narrow the reference of the term "Buddhist," which can be (and is) used to describe a wide variety of phenomena (historical, ritual, linguistic, political, and otherwise) spanning numerous Asian civilizational complexes. It is important thus to narrow the focus so that, while appreciating something of the breadth of phenomena characterized as "Buddhist," we might also come (in ten short weeks) to appreciate some aspect in sufficient depth that we can also develop some meaningful *interpretation* and *understanding* with respect to this material.

Even having narrowed the topic to address only "Buddhist thought," however, one might well be struck by the vast range of philosophical approaches attested by the tradition, and might wonder how (or even whether) they all relate to one another. Our attempt to contend with this situation will be based, therefore, on a single hypothesis (one provided by the tradition itself): the various Buddhist philosophical approaches can all be seen to represent logical and intelligible developments of the cardinal doctrine that persons are "without self" (*anātmavāda*). Accordingly, the course will start by encouraging an understanding of this basic doctrine, against its relevant Indian background. After a few weeks spent developing this understanding, the course will be loosely structured according to a typical Tibetan presentation of the main philosophical schools of thought; according to this schema, the many and various philosophical developments of the Indian Buddhist tradition crystalize around four principal schools of thought, which are traditionally represented in an ascending hierarchy that culminates with one styled *Madhyamaka* (the "middle way" school), which most Tibetan Buddhists agree in taking to represent the pinnacle Buddhist thought. (Available translations of Tibetan monastic textbooks that exemplify this schema are particularly hard to use, but an example of one will be available on reserve at Regenstein: Geshe Lhundup Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, trans., *Cutting Through Appearances: Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism*.)

Over the course of the term, it is hoped that students will develop both a rudimentary understanding of recurrent Buddhist insights and tropes, and a sense of the complexity and diversity of the tradition. That is, the course will encourage recognition of some of the insights that are widely shared across the range of the Indian Buddhist tradition, while at the same time encouraging the appreciation that the tradition attests a wide variety of ways to approach and systematize these insights.

Required Readings:

All readings are available on reserve at Regenstein Library; all non-book-length readings can be found electronically on Chalk (chalk.uchicago.edu), where they are to be found under “Library Course Reserves.” The following books are (or will soon be) available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore; students found to have purchased them instead on Amazon may be subjected to stern rebuke.

- Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*
- Patrick Olivelle, trans., *Upaniṣads*
- Kate Crosby & Andrew Skilton, trans., *Bodhicaryāvatāra*
- Mark Siderits & Shoryu Katsura, trans., *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*
- The Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom*

Course Requirements:

In addition to exemplifying regular attendance and spirited participation in discussion, students will be required to submit a paper of moderate length (12-20 pages), on a topic to be developed in consultation with the instructor. Papers will be DUE FRIDAY, JUNE 10TH.

Schedule of Topics & Readings:

WEEK 1: Tuesday, March 29: Course Introduction.

Thursday, March 31: The earliest Indian religious literature: selections from the *R̥g Veda*. **Readings:** Selected hymns from Stephanie Jamison and Joel Brereton, trans., *The R̥gveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*. (The selections available on Chalk include the following hymns: 1.1, 1.22, 1.50, 1.154, 1.162, 1.164, 3.62, 7.89, 8.48, 10.18, 10.71, 10.90, 10.119, 10.129, 10.154. *Recommended background readings:* Michael Witzel, “Vedas and Upaniṣads”; selections from Jamison and Brereton’s lengthy “Introduction” to their complete translation.)

WEEK 2: More on the Indian background to Buddhism: The *śramaṇera* movement and the *Upaniṣads*. **Readings for Tuesday, April 5:** Patrick Olivelle, trans., *Upaniṣads*, pp.xxix-xxxvi, xlix-lvi, 34-71, 148-156, 171-76

Thursday, April 7: *Upaniṣads*, continued: Olivelle, pp.231-265; Matthew Kapstein, “Indra’s Search for the Self and the Beginnings of Philosophical Perplexity in India”

WEEK 3: Enter the Buddhists, who rejoin by saying: There is no “self”! **Readings for Tuesday, April 12:** Selections from I. B. Horner, trans., *Milinda’s Questions*

Readings for Thursday, April 14: *Milinda’s Questions*, continued; Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, pp.15-68. *Recommended:* Matthew Kapstein, “Missing Persons: The Inapprehensible ‘I’”

WEEK 4: Excursus: The possibility and nature of *ethics* without a self. **Readings for Tuesday, April 19:** Crosby and Skilton, trans., *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, pp.75-104

Readings for Thursday, April 21: Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, pp.69-84

WEEK 5: The *reductionist* philosophical project of the Abhidharma literature: The *Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika* schools of thought. **Readings for Tuesday, April 26:** Bruce Cameron Hall, trans., *Vasubandhu on 'Aggregates, Spheres, and Components'* (= chapter 1 of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*).

Readings for Thursday, April 28: Vasubandhu, continued; Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, pp.105-37. *Recommended:* Paul Williams, "On the Abhidharma Ontology"

WEEK 6: Buddhist epistemology: Further developments in the *Sautrāntika* school of thought. **Readings for Tuesday, May 3:** Th. Stcherbatsky, trans., *Buddhist Logic*, vol. II, pp.1-46 (= chapter 1 of Dharmakīrti's *Nyāyabindu*)

Readings for Thursday, May 5: Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, pp.208-30; Dan Arnold, "Dharmakīrti and Dharmottara on the Intentionality of Perception"

WEEK 7: Buddhist idealism: Dharmakīrti's proof of rebirth, the *Yogācāra* Philosophy of Vasubandhu. **Readings For Tuesday, May 10:** Richard Hayes, "Dharmakīrti on Rebirth"; Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, pp.138-79

Readings for Thursday, May 12: Vasubandhu, "A Proof, in Twenty Verses, of there Being Nothing but Mental Events" (Arnold, translation)

WEEK 8: The pinnacle of Buddhist philosophy: *Madhyamaka*, Nāgārjuna's "middle way." **Readings for Tuesday, May 17:** Siderits and Katsura, trans., *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way*, selections

Readings for Thursday, May 19: Siderits and Katsura, continued; Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, pp.180-207

WEEK 9: More arguments from *Madhyamaka*: Back to Śāntideva. **Readings for Tuesday, May 24:** Crosby and Skilton, trans., *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, pp.105-32

Reading for Thursday, May 26: The Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom* (begin)

WEEK 10: Conclusion: The Buddhism of Tibet and the 14th Dalai Lama. **Reading for Tuesday, May 31:** The Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, continued

FINAL PAPERS DUE FRIDAY, JUNE 10!