The History of Buddhism

This course offers a comprehensive study of the various religious traditions of India from ancient times to the present. It explores not only the basic theological content of these religious beliefs but also how the context of residing in the complex theological world of India transforms these many religious traditions both from within and without. Exploring religion through myth, ritual, philosophy, literature, poetry, art, and performance this course presents a rich cultural tapestry. But it also traces in detail the historical, social and political factors that have shaped and reshaped the vast cultural landscape of religion in India.

Dr. Layne R. Little
Email: anjaneya11@gmail.com (please use only this email address for all communication)
Office Hours: M 4:30-6:00 PM; Mendocino 2022; ext. 278-5331.

Departmental Course Description:
Examines in cultural and historical perspective, drawing on both ancient and contemporary sources, the key practices and ideas of Buddhist traditions in India, China,
Southeast Asia, Tibet, Japan, and other surrounding regions; as well as the more recent spread of these practices and ideas to Europe, North America, and Australia. 3 units.

Learning Objectives:
Students will gain a comprehensive knowledge of the essential doctrines and beliefs of the major sects of Buddhism, as well as the important history, myth, ritual, spiritual practice, literature, art, and sacred geography associated with each of these traditions. Students will gain a keen understanding of the diversity of Buddhism belief systems and practices, and the complex social and political forces that have effected religious change across time in addition to the social forces influencing Buddhism today.

Required Texts:

Assignments & Grading:
All readings and assignments must be completed before the date assigned in the schedule below. Grades are determined by 4 exams and one short research paper. Three of the exams will be in class and the fourth during finals. NOTE: If you do not attend class you will miss crucial information that will be on the exams. The research paper will be 5 pages in length, double spaced, in a 12 point font, and should have proper MLA or Chicago style citations. Each paper must have an original argument or thesis statement. Each student must choose a topic themselves that reflects a specific aspect of one of the religious traditions studied in this class that is of personal interest to them. At least two academic sources (not included among course readings) must be cited.

Grade Breakdown:

- Exam 1: 20%
- Exam 2: 20%
- Exam 3: 20%
- Exam 4: 20%
- Research Paper: 20%

**Week One: Introduction (1/26/15)**

**Week Two: Background to Buddhism (2/2/15)**

**Week Three: The Buddha (2/9/15)**
Reading: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 25-41.
Watch at Home: *The Buddha* – PBS Documentary (Narrated by Richard Gere), 1:54. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfXlfYnYOw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfXlfYnYOw)

**Week Four: The Dhamma (2/16/15)**

**Week Five: The Buddhist Sangha (2/23/15)**

Exams
Week Six: *Buddhism in India* (3/2/15)
Reading: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 75-96.
In class film:

Week Seven: *Mahāyāna* (3/9/15)
Reading: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 97-118.
In class film:

Week Eight: *Meditation* (3/16/15)
Reading: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 119-142.
In class film:

Week Nine: *Buddhism in South-east Asia* (3/23/15)
Reading: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 143-162.
Exams 2

Week Ten: *Buddhism in East Asia* (3/30/15)
Reading: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 163-185.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIIXIfsbY0w

Week Eleven: *Buddhism in Tibet* (4/6/15)
Watch at home:

Week Twelve: *Buddhism in the Western World* (4/13/15)
Watch at home: *Little Buddha* (Netflix).
Exams 3
Paper Abstract & Bibliography Due

Week Thirteen: *Socially Engaged Buddhism* (4/20/15)
In class film: *Dhamma Brothers*

Week Fourteen: *Spring Break* (4/27/15)

Week Fifteen: *Ethics* (5/4/15)
In class film:

Reader: *Introducing Buddhism*, pp. 256-274.

Finals Week: *Exam 4 & Research Paper Due* (5/18/15)