Welcome to RELS 226-326
Mahāyāna Buddhism

Welcome to this paper on Mahāyāna Buddhism. This paper is offered on campus in Dunedin, and online for distance students. This course book is written with both groups of students in mind, but some sections will apply to only one of the two groups. As the paper is offered at both 200 and 300 levels, some sections are specific to students taking the paper at 200 or 300 levels, respectively.

Introduction

This paper examines the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, its spread to China, Japan and Tibet and its relationship to other forms of Buddhism. The paper begins with the early history of Buddhism and examines how it separated into many sects. We then explore the origins and development of the main Mahāyāna texts, such as the Perfection of Wisdom and Lotus sūtras and their influence on the Mahāyāna doctrines. We will study the main concepts in these sūtras with special reference to doctrines such as Dependent Origination, the Bodhisattva ideal, Buddha nature, the Three Bodies of the Buddha, the three vehicles and Nirvāṇa. The paper will also introduce the philosophies of the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools.

Learning Aims and Objectives

At 200 level

Knowledge:
  a) the origins and early development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India;
  b) the distinctive ideas and practices of Mahāyāna Buddhism; and
  c) the transmission of Mahāyāna to other parts of Asia.

Skills:
  a) the ability to analyse critically the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism;
  b) the ability to research topics using academic texts, journals and other media; and
  c) the ability to defend an argument using a variety of methods in writing.
At 300 level

Knowledge:
a) the origins and early development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India;
b) the distinctive ideas and practices of Mahāyāna Buddhism; and
c) the different phases in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Asia and the contribution it has made to the culture of the lands where it has developed.

Skills:
  a) the ability to critically analyse Mahāyāna Buddhist history and thought;
  b) the ability to research topics using academic texts, journals and other media; and
  c) the ability to defend an argument using a variety of methods in writing.

Course Structure

This course is divided into seven study units:

1. Early Indian Buddhism
2. Early Mahāyāna Buddhism in India
3. Early Mahāyāna Scriptures
4. Mahāyāna Schools in India
5. Transmission of Mahāyāna Buddhism to China
6. Later Mahāyāna Scriptures
7. Mahāyāna Devotionalism

Both on-campus and distance students will participate in the Online Tutorial Forum on Blackboard.

Students on campus will meet for lectures twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday, 2.00-2.50 pm). The dates listed below are the times when students on campus will meet for lectures and tutorials and they provide a guideline for distance students to plan their reading. Please ensure that you have read through the study unit and the appropriate section from the reader before the class meets (campus students) and before participating in the online tutorials.

Unit 1: Early Indian Buddhism
7 July Lecture 1: Introduction: the Buddha
9 July Lecture 2: The Buddhist Councils

Unit 2 Early Mahāyāna Buddhism in India
14 July Lecture 1: The origins of the Mahāyāna
16 July Lecture 2: The literature and language of Mahāyāna
21 July Lecture 3: The Bodhisattva ideal
23 July Online Tutorial 1 opens
30 July Online Tutorial 1 closes
Unit 3: Early Mahāyāna Scriptures
28 July  Lecture 1: The pāramitās
30 July  Lecture 2: The daśabhūmis
4 Aug    Lecture 3: The Prajñāpāramitā literature
6 Aug    Online Tutorial 2 opens
13 Aug   Online Tutorial 2 closes

Essay Outline due Friday 7 Aug at 5 pm

Unit 4: Mahāyāna Schools in India
11 Aug   Lecture 1: Mādhyamika
13 Aug   Lecture 2: Yogācāra
18 Aug   Lecture 3: The Tathāgatagarbha doctrine
20 Aug   Online Tutorial 3 opens
3 Sep    Online Tutorial 3 closes

24 – 28 Aug Mid-Semester break

Unit 5: Transmission of Mahāyāna Buddhism to China
1 Sep    Lecture 1: Mahayana Buddhism reaches China
3 Sep    Lecture 2: The Huayan school
8 Sep    Lecture 3: The Avatamsaka sūtra
10 Sep   Online Tutorial 4 opens
17 Sep   Online Tutorial 4 closes

Unit 6: Later Mahāyāna Scriptures
15 Sep   Lecture 1: The Lotus sūtra
17 Sep   Lecture 2: The Lotus sūtra in China and Japan
22 Sep   Lecture 3: The bodies of the Buddha
24 Sep   Online Tutorial 5 opens
1 Oct    Online Tutorial 5 closes

Essay due Friday 18 Sep at 5 pm

Unit 7 Mahāyāna Devotionalism
29 Sep   Lecture 1: Mahāyāna Buddhism reaches Tibet
1 Oct    Lecture 2: Cults of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
6 Oct    Lecture 3: Pure Land Buddhism
6 Oct    Online Tutorial 6 opens
8 Oct    Revision/Exam Preparation
9 Oct    Online Tutorial 6 closes

Course Coordinator

Dr Chaisit Suwanvarangkul, BPharm (Chulalongkorn) MA (Kyoto) PhD (Delhi), is a Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religion. He teaches papers on Buddhism and Sanskrit. Dr Suwanvarangkul was born in
Thailand, and spent more than ten years as an ordained Theravada Buddhist monk, studying the Dhamma and Vinaya. He did his MA research on the Madhyāntavibhāga at Kyoto University in Japan and his PhD research at the University of Delhi in India on the Yogacara school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. He has taught meditation in Japan, and has taught both Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism at Wat Phra Dhammakaya in Pathum Thani near Bangkok, and at the Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University, Bangkok. He has also taught Japanese in Thailand for more than three years. He studied Sanskrit and Tibetan in Japan and India. His field of research is Buddhist studies, focusing on the original Teaching of Buddha.

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Email: chaisit.suwanvarangkul@otago.ac.nz
Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 1 to 2 pm (or by appointment)

Course Book and Essential Textbook

Access to a course book is required and students are expected to have read through the relevant study unit and readings.

Please see the Department's 'Essential Information' web page for important advice and guidance on Distance Learning. (We will assume that you have read and are familiar with this material):

http://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/courses/resources.html

Additionally, students are expected to read the textbook:


This book is available through the University library catalogue as an “E-Book.” A printed copy is also on close reserve in the Central Library, BQ7405.WQ16 2009.

For instructions on accessing E-Books available through the University Library please see the 'Essential Information' web page or the Library's website: http://www.otago.ac.nz/library/

It is also available from:

University Book Shop, 378 Great King Street, North Dunedin 9054
Telephone: 03 477 6976
Fax: 03 477 6571
Email: ubs@unibooks.co.nz

Note that books will not be posted to you until payment is made. You can do this by credit card when you order, or by cheque when you receive the pro forma invoice from the Book Shop that is sent following your order.
Using Blackboard

This course is taught using the web-based programme Blackboard. This is a widely used online learning environment that provides online resources and additional material for each week’s topic in addition to facilities for class discussion and other interaction.

If you are taking the course by distance, it is essential that you have reliable access to the Internet and a basic familiarity with computers for word processing, email, and Internet browsing. Students on campus are also required to use Blackboard to submit assignments and for online tutorials.

To access Blackboard go to http://blackboard.otago.ac.nz and login using your University Username and Password.

Your Student Username is printed on your Student ID card and your Password should have been sent to you as part of the enrolment process. If you do not know your password please phone the ITS Service Desk on 0800 479 888 (8.30am to 9.00pm Monday to Friday, 10:00am to 5:00pm Weekends) or email its.servicedesk@otago.ac.nz.

If you are correctly enrolled for the course it should be visible under ‘Courses’ as ‘Mahayana Buddhism’. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard please see the more detailed instructions on using Blackboard under “Blackboard” in the 'Essential Information' web page.

Please note: Blackboard uses your university email address. If you use another email address, you can arrange through PIMS to have your university email redirected to this address.

Online Tutorials Using Blackboard

Once you have logged into Blackboard and displayed the Home Page for this paper, click on Online Tutorial Forum in the menu. To contribute to the tutorial discussion:

• Locate the thread you are contributing to.
• Click on ‘Reply’.
• Write your comments.
• Click on ‘Submit’.

Your contribution will then be on the website along with the contributions of your fellow class members. Again, if you are unfamiliar with Blackboard please see the more detailed instructions on using Blackboard under “Blackboard” on the 'Essential Information' web page.

You may also wish to draft your contribution off-line and then cut and paste into Blackboard. This saves being online while you do research or think about an issue. It also ensures you have a copy of your contributions.
Assessment Overview

Please read carefully the information on 'Assessment' on the 'Essential Information' web page, which includes important advice on plagiarism and deadlines:  http://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/courses/resources.html

Distance students should also read the section on assessment in the handbook:  Distance Learning Information and Support 2015. A link to a PDF of the Handbook is provided below:

http://www.otago.ac.nz/courses/distance_study/otago085421.pdf

The assessment at 200 level comprises:

A 500-word outline of the essay (5%)
A 2500-word essay (35%)
5 online tutorials (10%)
A three-hour exam (50%)

The assessment at 300 level comprises:

A 750-word outline of the essay (10%)
A 3500-word essay (40%)
5 online tutorials (10%)
A two-hour exam (40%)

For Grading and Benchmark Criteria please see the information under “Grading” in the 'Essential Information' web page.

Examination

For RELS 230 students - 3 hour examination, worth 50% of final mark.

For RELS 330 students - 2 hour examination, worth 40% of final mark

The date and time of the examination will be available on E-vision toward the end of the course. If you have any questions about the exam venue, dates or time, please contact the Examination Officer (not the lecturer).

Examination Office:
Tel. 64 3 479 8347
Fax: +64  479 5490
Email: examinations@otago.ac.nz

Submitting Assignments

All assignments for this paper are to be submitted electronically via the “Assignment” feature on Blackboard by 5.00pm on the due dates notified. They are not to be given or emailed directly to your course coordinator.

Campus students must also submit a hard copy of their assignment, by placing it in the box outside the office at 4C10, Fourth Floor, Arts Building. (This should include a signed copy of the plagiarism declaration).
The assignments for this paper will be checked using Safe Assign.

For instructions on how to submit assignments via Blackboard please see the information under “Submitting Your Assignment” in the Essential Information web page.

Before you submit your essay, make a backup copy, either in electronic form or on paper, and keep it in a safe place. We try very hard to ensure that essays do not go missing, but catastrophes do occur. In the unlikely event that an essay is lost, we will assume you have another copy.

**Extensions and Late Submission**

Students have full responsibility for the prompt submission of assignments. For the Department’s policy on Assignment Extensions and Late Submission, please see the information under “Deadlines” in the 'Essential Information' web page.

**Plagiarism**

The University of Otago takes the issue of plagiarism – presenting someone else’s work as your own – very seriously. The University’s official policy on plagiarism can be found under “Plagiarism” in the Essential Information web page.

**Referencing System**

For essay writing, the Department requires that you use the 14th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and often recommended for theses in the Humanities.

The Department has prepared a Study and Style Guide, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Department’s web site www.otago.ac.nz/religion and also on Blackboard. Hard copies are available from the office at 4C10, Arts Building.

**More about the Online Tutorial Forum**

**Value: 10%**

The Online Tutorial Forum is a virtual tutorial in which you discuss the issues at hand with others in the class on Blackboard. There are five marked tutorials, and one unmarked tutorial. To receive full marks you need to:

1. consider two or more of the questions set for the tutorial
2. demonstrate that you have done the required readings
3. engage in the ongoing thread of discussion
4. respond to other students’ posts, or ask questions
Please note that contributions will be assessed for their quality of analysis, relevance to the discussion, reference to the required readings, and interaction with other students’ posts, but not for presentation style, formatting or citation. Your tutorial contribution should be informal and conversational, but should also engage seriously with the topics and make references to the readings if possible. (There is no need to footnote comments about the readings from the course book, but if you cite some other source, let us know what it is.) I will not respond to every post, but will occasionally weigh in with a comment or another question.

You are strongly advised to draft your posts off-line in a word processing software, so you can keep track of your word count; and then cut and paste into Blackboard. This saves being online while you do research or think about an issue. It also ensures you have your own copy of your contributions in case of “technology failure.”

Our tutorial discussions will be enhanced if we try to observe these rules of “netiquette:”

1. Keep your contribution relevant, focused and to the point; you don’t have to write everything you know about a topic, but you need to engage in a discussion with other participants.

2. Keep an open mind, and respect all contributions from your fellow students. Where you agree or disagree with a posting made by another participant, offer specific reasons for doing so, citing an academic reference in support of your view if possible.

3. Keep your ideas focused on the topics being discussed. If you want to write about a related, but different, subject start a new thread. Give your postings a specific title to help others to find your posts later on.

4. Try not to dominate the discussion, but give others space.

5. Electronic discussion is prone to misunderstanding, and it is reasonably easy to cause offence without intending to. So choose your words carefully and precisely, giving thought to how they might be received. Feel free to use emoticons – they are an important way of conveying tone. And don’t take offence too quickly – perceived slights may not be real or intended. If you don’t understand what someone has said online, ask them to clarify it.

6. If that doesn’t resolve the matter, contact your lecturer directly.

**Please note: your tutorial contributions should be between 300 – 500 words in length.**

**Online Tutorial Schedule and Questions**

**Tutorial 1 (Unit 1-2: this tutorial is marked and is open 23-30 July)**

a) **What are some differences between Mahāyāna and Theravāda attitudes towards the Buddhist Canon?**

b) **What is meant by the Bodhisattva ideal?**

c) **What is a stūpa cult and why is it important for the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism?**
Course Introduction

**(d)** What does Williams say about the origins of Mahāyāna?

**Tutorial 2 (Unit 3: this tutorial is marked and is open 6-13 Aug)**

a) What are the activities and aspirations of a Bodhisattva?

b) What stages, or steps does the Bodhisattva attain on the way to the final goal of nirvāṇa?

c) According to Williams (textbook) what are some of the claims made in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, or Perfection of Wisdom literature?

d) What is the relationship between Bodhisattva and Wisdom?

**Tutorial 3 (Unit 4: this tutorial is marked ans is open 20 Aug-3 Sep)**

(a) Who was Nāgārjuna, and why is he important for the development of Mahāyāna Buddhist thought?

(b) What are some of the differences between the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra conceptions of śūnyatā?

(c) Why have some scholars argued that the doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha is ‘not Buddhist’?

(d) What does Williams say about the dispute between gzhan stong and rang stong in Tibet?

**Tutorial 4 (Unit 5: this tutorial is marked and is open 10-17 Sep)**

(a) What does dharma-dhātu mean?

(b) How did the *Avatamsaka sūtra* get from India to China?

(c) What are the origins of the Huayan School and why did the Huayan School become so popular in China?

(d) What does Williams say about Huayan practice and tradition in China?

**Tutorial 5 (Unit 6: this tutorial is marked and is open 24 Sep-1 Oct)**

(a) The *Lotus Sūtra* uses the concept of ekayāna, “one vehicle.” What does this term mean, and why is it important?

(b) What does the term the “two bodies of the Buddha” mean?

(c) Find synonyms and meaning of “dharma-kāya”

(d) What does Williams say about the system of bodies developed by Yogācāra?
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Tutorial 6 (Unit 7: this tutorial is not marked, and is open 6 - 9 Oct)

(a) According to Williams, what does bodhicitta mean, and what is it equal to?

(b) Is Maitreya a mortal Bodhisattva or a celestial Bodhisattva?

(c) In which direction is the Pure Land of Akṣobhya, who is allowed to dwell there, and for how long?

(d) What does Williams say about Compassion and the Bodhicitta?

Assignments for RELS 226 Students

1. **Essay Outline (5%)**
   **Deadline: 5pm on Friday, 7 August 2015**

   The first component of assessment for this course is a one-page (max. 500 word) outline and bibliography of your essay for the course. The outline should include:

   a) A brief presentation of your selected topic.

   b) Headings and subheadings, to show what you will cover.

   c) A list of at least three secondary sources you intend to consult.

   The outline is intended to assist you in the process of writing a good essay. Your final essay need not be identical with what you present on your outline if you choose (or if I suggest) another approach to the topic.

2. **Essay (35%)**
   **Deadline: 5pm on Friday, 18 September 2015**

   The second component of assessment for this course is one 2,500 word essay. Please choose one of the following five options as the title for your essay:

   a) Discuss the Bodhisattva ideal and the unique characteristics of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

   b) Discuss the difference between the absence of Self in persons (pudgala-nairātmya) and the absence of Self in dharmas (dharmanairātmya).

   c) Discuss the role of Ālayavijñāna in Yogācāra thought.

   d) Outline the origins of the Huayan School and explain why the Huayan School became so popular in China.

   e) What is a Pure Land? Why has Pure Land Buddhism become so popular in Japan?
Assignments for RELS 326 Students

1. Essay Outline (10%)
   Deadline: 5pm on Friday, 7 August 2015

   The first component of assessment for this course is a one- to two-page (max. 750 word) outline and bibliography of your essay for the course. The outline should include:

   a) A brief presentation of your selected topic.
   b) Headings and subheadings, to show what you will cover.
   c) A list of at least five secondary sources you intend to consult.

   The outline is intended to assist you in the process of writing a good essay. Your final essay need not be identical with what you present on your outline if you choose (or if I suggest) another approach to the topic.

2. Essay (40%)
   Deadline: 5pm on Friday, 18 September 2015

   The second component of assessment for this course is one 3,500 word essay. Please choose one of the following five options as the title for your essay:

   a) Discuss the role of laypeople in the rise of Mahāyāna and the development of the Mahāyāna sūtras.
   b) Discuss the three natures (trisvabhāva) and identify some of the main points of disagreement between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra.
   c) Discuss the principal doctrine of the Tathāgatagarbha, and explain its place in Mahāyāna Scriptures.
   d) Outline the origins and development of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra and its relationship to the wider Buddhist tradition.
   e) Outline the doctrine of the three bodies (trikāya), and explain its place in Mahāyāna thought regarding the Buddha.

   A Study and Style Guide for writing essays is available from the Theology and Religion office, or as a pdf file on Blackboard, where you can also find further advice on study skills, including the University’s policies on plagiarism and advice on how to avoid it.
Bibliography

This bibliography is intended to supplement the course book and to guide your further private study for the essay and preparation for the examination. It is not an exhaustive list, even of works available in the library here. You are not expected to read everything on this list, nor are you expected to limit your reading to these works. Specific suggestions for further reading will be found in the notes for each unit. The codes following each article or book indicate the call number in the library. Note that you do not need to provide these codes on your assignment bibliography (but otherwise you may wish to take the references here as a guide to how your bibliography should appear).


Tuck, Andrew P., *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship on the Western Interpretation of Nāgārjuna*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. BQ7604.TH58


