



RELS226/326

Mahayana Buddhism

Course Outline 2017

SEMESTER 2 2017

Lecturer:

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Course Coordinator:

Associate Professor Will Sweetman

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Welcome to this paper on Mahāyāna Buddhism. This paper is offered on campus in Dunedin, and online for distance students. This course outline 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.

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.

LECTURER'S INTRODUCTION

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.

University: Room 101, 1st Floor, 97 Albany St, Dunedin

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 1 to 2 pm (or by appointment)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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.

TEACHING

- Campus students: lectures twice a week, Tues & Thurs, 2.00-2.50 pm
- Campus and distance students: an online tutorial forum on Blackboard

RESOURCES

- This course outline and a course book
- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool;
- eReserve, a resource for extra readings, which you can access via Blackboard;

- The Department's "Study and Style Guide" which recommends students use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide when writing essays. It is available online at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>
- for Distance Students: the handbook *Distance Learning Information and Support 2017*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this course book and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).
- **An essential textbook:** Paul Williams. *Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 2009) available through the University Bookshop, eReserve, and in the Central Library: BQ7405.WQ16 2009.

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Please Note: You must have access to Blackboard and your University email address in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided only through Blackboard and your University email address, as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy, so you must check these emails regularly. eVision will also send important messages through your University email. If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved. You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Department's website. In particular, we require you to read the section called "Essential Student Information." You will find it here:

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

This page provides a number of useful resources such as the *Study and Style Guide* and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

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

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 11 July | Lecture 1: Introduction: the Buddha |
| 13 July | Lecture 2: The Buddhist Councils |

Unit 2 Early Mahāyāna Buddhism in India

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 18 July | Lecture 1: The origins of the Mahāyāna |
| 20 July | Lecture 2: The literature and language of Mahāyāna |
| 25 July | Lecture 3: The Bodhisattva ideal |
| 27 July | Tutorial |
| 27 Jul-3 Aug | Online discussion forum open |

Unit 3: Early Mahāyāna Scriptures

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 Aug | Lecture 1: The pāramitās |
| 3 Aug | Lecture 2: The daśabhūmis |
| 8 Aug | Lecture 3: The <i>Prajñāpāramitā</i> literature |
| 10 Aug | Tutorial |
| 10-17 Aug | Online discussion forum open |

Essay Outline due Friday 11 Aug at 5 pm

Unit 4: Mahāyāna Schools in India

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 15 Aug | Lecture 1: Mādhyamika |
| 17 Aug | Lecture 2: Yogācāra |
| 22 Aug | Lecture 3: The Tathāgatagarbha doctrine |
| 24 Aug | Tutorial |
| 24 Aug-7 Sep | Online discussion forum open |

28 Aug – 1 Sep Mid-Semester break

Unit 5: Transmission of Mahāyāna Buddhism to China

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 5 Sep | Lecture 1: Mahayana Buddhism reaches China |
| 7 Sep | Lecture 2: The Huayan school |
| 12 Sep | Lecture 3: The <i>Avataṃsaka sūtra</i> |
| 14 Sep | Tutorial |
| 14-21 Sep | Online discussion forum open |

Unit 6: Later Mahāyāna Scriptures

19 Sep	Lecture 1: The Lotus sūtra
21 Sep	Lecture 2: The Lotus sūtra in China and Japan
26 Sep	Lecture 3: The bodies of the Buddha
28 Sep	Tutorial
28 Sep-5 Oct	Online discussion forum open

Essay due Friday 22 Sep at 5 pm**Unit 7 Mahāyāna Devotionalism**

3 Oct	Lecture 1: Mahāyāna Buddhism reaches Tibet
5 Oct	Lecture 2: Cults of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
10 Oct	Lecture 3: Pure Land Buddhism
12 Oct	Overall Revision/ Exam Preparation
10-13 Oct	Online discussion forum open (This will not be marked.)

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:

- consider two or more of the questions set for the tutorial
- demonstrate that you have done the required readings
- engage in the ongoing thread of discussion
- 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:"

- 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.
- 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.
- c) 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.
 - d) Try not to dominate the discussion, but give others space.
 - e) 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.
 - f) If that doesn't resolve the matter, contact your lecturer directly.

Please note: your tutorial contributions should be between 300 – 400 words in length.

To obtain an assessment on your contribution, please collate your responses of each unit into one document and submit it online through Blackboard's "Assignment" feature.

The due date for Tutorial 1 (unit 1 & 2) is 5 pm Friday 4 Aug 2017.

The due date for Tutorial 2 (unit 3) is 5 pm Friday 18 Aug 2017.

The due date for Tutorial 3 (unit 4) is 5 pm Friday 8 Sep 2017.

The due date for Tutorial 4 (unit 5) is 5 pm Friday 22 Sep 2017.

The due date for Tutorial 5 (unit 6) is 5 pm Friday 6 Oct 2017.

Online Tutorial Schedule and Questions

Tutorial 1 (Unit 1-2: this tutorial is marked and is open 27 July-3 Aug)

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

Tutorial 2 (Unit 3: this tutorial is marked and is open 10-17 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 and is open 24 Aug-7 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 14-21 Sep)

- a) What does dharma-dhātu mean?
- b) How did the Avataṃsaka 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 28 Sep-5 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 "dharmakāya"
- d) What does Williams say about the system of bodies developed by Yogācāra?

Tutorial 6 (Unit 7: this tutorial is not marked, and is open 10-13 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?

ASSESSMENT

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 2017*. 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

Details of your examination will be posted on your eVision calendar as soon as they are set by the Examinations Office. All enquiries regarding exams should be directed to the Examinations Office: examinations@otago.ac.nz ph: 64 3 479 8347.

Distance students must ensure that their **Semester Address details in eVision are up to date** as these will be used to arrange the venue for Distance exams.

SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

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 lecturer.

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.

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Department requires that you use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is 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 "Student Resources and Information" page: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/courses/resources.html>

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments for RELS 226 Students

1. Essay Outline (5%)

Deadline: 5pm on Friday, 11 August 2017

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, 22 September 2017

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) Is the Mahāyāna best described as a development of existing ideas or as an innovation?
- b) Why is the practice of the ten pāramitās essential for a Bodhisattva to make progress in the ten bhūmis?
- c) To what extent is the Hua-Yan tradition a product of Chinese culture?
- d) The Sadharmapundarika-sūtra, or "Lotus Sūtra of the True Dharma" is one of the best known and most influential of the Mahāyāna scriptures. Discuss some of the reasons for its enduring popularity.
- e) What is the difference between a Bodhisattva and a Buddha in Mahāyāna doctrine?

Assignments for RELS 326 Students

1. Essay Outline (10%)

Deadline: 5pm on Friday, 11 August 2017

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, 22 September 2017

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 relationship between the shift from oral to written scriptures and the emergence of Mahāyāna ideas in Indian Buddhism.
- b) Outline and evaluate some reasons which have been offered for the development of the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna Buddhism.
- c) Discuss the role of Ālayavijñāna in Yogācāra thought.
- d) Outline the origins of the Huayan School and explains why the Huayan School became so popular in China.
- e) Outline the origins and development of the Sadharmapundarika-sūtra and its relationship to the wider Buddhist tradition.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else's misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University's Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy

and learn more, please visit the University's Academic Integrity website at www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

STUDENT SUPPORT

The “**Essential Information**” web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library's resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative enquiries**, please contact:

The Administrative Assistant for Theology and Religion.

Email: religion@otago.ac.nz

Phone: 03 479 8516

For all **distance learning enquiries**, please contact:

Katherine Rae, Administrative Assistant for Theology and Religion.

Email: katherine.rae@otago.ac.nz

Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Department as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

www.otago.ac.nz/religion