

Philosophy 486E/AAAS 482P: Buddhist Metaphysics Spring 2014

Prof. Charles Goodman

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15 – 2:30 pm, in LT 1214 on the twelfth floor of the Library Tower

Course Description:

We will study philosophical theories about reality, and about our knowledge of reality, developed by Buddhists in India and Tibet. First, we will examine the ontology and metaphysics of early Buddhism and of Abhidharma texts, and compare their ideas with those of contemporary analytic philosophers. We will then use both primary and secondary sources to investigate Nāgārjuna's radical critique of all philosophical views. In particular, we will give detailed examination to the interpretation of Nāgārjuna offered by the Tibetan philosopher Tsong kha pa. During class discussions, we will critically investigate Buddhist arguments and analyze their strengths and weaknesses. Among the issues we will discuss are time and change, causation, personal identity, and the nature of knowledge.

Prerequisites: Two courses in philosophy.

Course Requirements:

Attendance in class is expected, and since this is a seminar, active participation in class is essential. Students will be evaluated on the quantity and quality of class participation. There will be two papers, 6-8 pages in length. Each of these two papers must be revised and handed back in. There will also be a final seminar paper, 8-12 pages long. Late papers will lose one-third of a grade per day. At each class, a question about the reading for the next session will be provided. Five times during the semester, there will be an unannounced, one-page in-class writing assignment on the reading question.

Grading Policy:

Grades in Philosophy 486E/AAAS 482P will be based on the following factors:

Attendance and Participation	15%
In-class Writing Assignments	5%
First Paper	15%
First Paper Revision	10%
Second Paper	15%
Second Paper Revision	10%
Final Seminar Paper	30%

Plagiarism:

As it is a type of academic dishonesty, plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated in this course. You may, however, discuss issues about Buddhist philosophy with your fellow students, as long as the papers you turn in are substantially your own work. If you do commit plagiarism on any assignment, you will receive a grade of F for that assignment, and additional measures may be taken at the discretion of the instructor.

Learning Objectives:

- To become familiar with the major forms of Buddhist philosophy and the differences between them.
- To learn the principal arguments for the doctrine of no self.
- To develop some skill in comparing Asian and Western philosophical ideas.
- To develop greater proficiency in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical arguments.
- To improve writing skills and critical thinking abilities.

This course fulfills the H general education requirement:

Students in H courses will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.

Required Readings:

Edelglass, William, and Garfield, Jay L., eds. *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Siderits, Mark, and Katsura, Shōryū, trans. *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2013.

Tsong kha pa. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. 3. Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, trans. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2002.

Van Inwagen, Peter. *Material Beings*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press, 1995.

List of Readings and Discussion Topics:

1/28: **Why Buddhist Philosophy?**

1/30: **Introduction to Buddhism**

Goodman, "Fundamental Buddhist Teachings," available on the Blackboard website

2/4: **The Worldview of the Abhidharma**

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 1, 23

2/6: Why There Is No Soul (I)

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 26

2/11: Why There Is No Soul (II)

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 28

2/13: A Question about Composition

van Inwagen, ch. 1-3 and 6, pp. 1-37 and 56-60

2/18: Some Radical Answers

van Inwagen, ch. 8-11, pp. 72-114

2/20: Identity and Modality

van Inwagen ch. 12-14, pp. 115-168

2/25: Subjects of Experience

van Inwagen ch. 15-16, pp. 169-212

2/27: No-Self, Metaphor and Approximation

Goodman, "Vaibhāṣika Metaphoricalism," available on Blackboard
First Paper Topics made available

3/4: The Great Way

"The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva," available on Blackboard

3/6: The Philosophy of Idealism

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 3

First Paper due

3/11: A Critique of Causation

Siderits and Katsura, "Dedicatory Verse" and ch. 1-6

3/13: No Fire, No Fuel

Siderits and Katsura ch. 7-13

3/18: Against Intrinsic Nature

Siderits and Katsura ch. 14-21

3/20: Conventional and Ultimate

Siderits and Katsura ch. 22-27

First Paper Revision due

3/25: Pragmatism

Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," <http://www.peirce.org/writings/p119.html>

Second Paper topics made available

3/27: Neopragmatism

Putnam, “Realism with a Human Face” and “Objectivity and the Science-Ethics Distinction,” available on Blackboard

4/1: Buddhist Epistemology

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 9, 16, 17

4/3: The Madhyamaka Critique of Epistemology

Siderits, available on Blackboard
Second Paper due

4/8: Zen Buddhism

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 7, 13, 22

4/10: Buddhism in Tibet

Tsong kha pa ch. 1, 6

4/22: Identifying the Object of Negation

Tsong kha pa ch. 9-11

4/24: The Status of the Conventional

Tsong kha pa ch. 12-14
Second Paper Revision due

4/29: Emptiness and Causation

Tsong kha pa ch. 15-16
Final Paper Topic Suggestions made available

5/1: Guest Lecture: Kant’s Metaphysics

5/6: What to Negate

Tsong kha pa ch. 17-19

5/8: How to Live the View

Edelglass and Garfield ch. 36-37

5/12, at 4pm: Final Paper due