

## **HIEA 135: HISTORY OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION IN CHINA: BUDDHISM**

Second Summer Session, 2006

Time: MW 2:00- 4:50

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Place: Solis Hall 109

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Office Hours: MW 5:00 – 6:00

or by appointment

### **Introduction**

This course introduces students to the history of Buddhism in China. We will look first at the origins of Buddhism in India, then examine the intellectual and religious context in China before Buddhism comes along the silk road. Next we will cover the arrival of Buddhism in China, its initial reception there, the growth and domestication of Buddhism, its maturity and acceptance, and its situation during late imperial times. We will also investigate Buddhism in China today. We will cover a period of time from roughly 500 BCE, when Buddhism begins in India, up to the present. We will study Buddhism not only as a set of doctrines and practices, but also as a human institution. We will investigate Buddhist beliefs and practices in their social and historical contexts. Our approach will be interdisciplinary: that is, we will use material from many different academic disciplines in order to examine Buddhism in China as thoroughly as we can. Disciplines include history, archaeology, religious studies, philology, literary history, anthropology, sociology, and critical gender studies. We will be reading both primary and secondary sources, and viewing art and film as well as texts.

### **Requirements**

There are no prerequisites. Each student is required to come to class with the reading for that day finished, to participate in discussions, and to complete all the required assignments. The first assignment is to bring something connected to Buddhism in China to share with the class (10% of your grade). There will be a midterm (30%), a book review or site-visit report due during the last week of classes (30%), and a final exam (30%). You will need to clear your book or site with me by the end of the third week. The midterm will be a one hour in-class exam and will consist of essays and identifications. The final exam will be a take-home exam, and will consist of essays covering material from after the midterm.

**Required Texts** (available at Groundworks Books: 858-452-9625)

They should also be available on reserve at Geisel Library

Arthur Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History (History)*

Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding (Heart)*

Burton Watson, *The Vimalakirti Sutra (Vimalakirti)*

Kathryn Ann Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns (Lives)*

John Kiesschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture (Material)*

## TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One     Starting Out

August 7     **I.     Introduction to Course:**

Aims, Issues, Definitions, Requirements

Assignment: Buy your books; first reading assignment due Wednesday

August 9     **II.     Buddhism in India: The Three Treasures**

**III. China Before Buddhism**

Assignment: Read *History*, Chapters One and Two

Week Two     **IV. Growth, Domestication, and Appropriation**

August 14     A. Initial Contact and Response,

B. Buddhism in the North and South

C. Maturity and Acceptance

Assignment: Read *History*, Chapters Three, Four, and Five

Video on Buddhist caves at Dunhuang

August 16     D. Buddhist Schools and Scriptures in China

E. Mahayana Scriptures I

Assignment: read *The Heart of Understanding*

Week Three

August 21    **Midterm**  
Movie: “A Chinese Ghost Story I”

August 23    F. Mahayana Scriptures II  
Assignment: read *The Vimalakirti Sutra*  
**Book or site proposal due**

Week Four    **V. Gender and Monasticism**

August 28    A. Women in Buddhism  
Assignment: read *Lives of the Nuns*

August 30    **VI. Material Culture and Buddhism in China**  
A. Defining Material Culture; Sacred Power and Symbolism  
Assignment: read *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*,  
Introduction and Chapters One and Two

Week Five

September 4    B. Examples: Merit and Accidents  
Assignment: read *The Impact of Buddhism on Material Culture in China*,  
Chapters Three and Four and Conclusion

September 6    **VII. Loose Ends and Review**  
Book review or site-visit report due  
**Final Exam handed out**

