

Bergen Community College  
Division of Arts and Humanities  
Department of Philosophy and Religion

**Course Syllabus**

**PHR-127: The Buddhist Scriptures**

**Basic Information about Course and Instructor**

Semester and year:

Section Number:

Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:

Office Location:

Phone:

Departmental Secretary: [optional]

Office Hours:

Email Address:

**Course Description**

**PHR-127: The Buddhist Scriptures** is an introductory study of the origins, content, and meaning of the primary texts of Buddhism. In addition to its origins in India and the development of the Theravada and Mahayana schools, the course will also examine the development of Buddhism in Tibet and East Asia, including Pure Land and Zen Buddhism, and in the contemporary West.

3 lectures, 3 credits

Diversity Course

**Student Learning Objectives:** As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. describe and discuss, both orally and in writing, the historical, cultural, and religious background and development of Buddhism;
2. interpret and summarize the major teachings of the Buddha (and major lineage holders) and explain their historical, philosophical, ethical, psychological, and soteriological significance;
3. distinguish the various Buddhist schools (e.g., Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana) and explain the differences between them;
4. contrast Buddhism and other major religions, and explain the major differences between them;
5. explain the ways in which Buddhism has shaped the development of social, political, literary, and cultural institutions;
6. locate and integrate into written analyses other scholarly viewpoints found in academic journals and other secondary sources;
7. use logic and critical thinking to analyze and evaluate the major teachings of the Buddha;
8. participate actively in discussions of course-related ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-5, 7); and
9. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on course-related issues.

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of both primary and secondary texts on Buddhism; the basic principles and methods of critical thinking are introduced; students are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do substantial expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

## Learning Assessment

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Religion Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be evaluated through various means of assessment, such as the "Suggested Means of Assessment" listed below.

Student Learning Objective	Suggested Means of Assessment
1. describe and discuss, both orally and in writing, the historical, cultural, and religious background and development of Buddhism;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graded class discussions</li> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> </ul>
2. interpret and summarize the major teachings of the Buddha (and major lineage holders), and explain their historical, philosophical, ethical, psychological, and soteriological significance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
3. distinguish the various Buddhist schools (e.g., Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana), and explain the differences between them;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
4. contrast Buddhism and other major religions, and explain the major differences between them;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
5. explain the ways in which Buddhism has shaped the development of social, political, literary, and cultural institutions;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
6. locate and integrate into written analyses other scholarly viewpoints found in academic journals and other secondary sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and writing assignments*</li> </ul>
7. use logic and critical thinking to analyze and evaluate the major teachings of the Buddha;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
8. participate actively in discussions of course-related ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-5, 7); and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graded class discussions</li> </ul>
9. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on course-related issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> </ul>

\*Writing assignments for the purpose of assessing student success on SLO 6 will include research and writing projects, possibly including term papers, in which a student identifies an information need, accesses and evaluates appropriate resources, and uses the information effectively and ethically for a specific purpose.

## Course Content

As with all BCC Religion courses, PHR-127 The Buddhist Scriptures is designed to be an academic study of its subject matter and not to advocate particular sectarian views. The course should survey current scholarly opinion on the various Buddhist traditions and scriptural canons, as well as various ways in which these diverse traditions construe the authority and meaning of these sacred texts. The instructor should not hesitate to challenge the preconceptions of students in the course. By the same token, however, care should be taken never needlessly to affront the sensitivities of students, since such sensitivities may be keen and deeply held. If all goes well, the course will furnish students with many new

tools and much information to enrich any interest they may already have (or may gain) in the study of Buddhism. Just as important, through studying the diversity of social, cultural, ethical, and intellectual developments within Buddhism, the course ought to impart a firm sense of the plurality of perspectives and a new understanding and tolerance of perspectives other than one's own.

There are various ways in which the content in this course may be organized and presented. However the course is structured, the instructor should be mindful of the key stages in the historical development of the Buddhist traditions:

- I. The Origins of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia
  - A. The Life Story of the Buddha
  - B. The Development of the Sangha
  - C. The Dharma
    1. The Theravada Tradition
    2. The Development of the Mahayana
- II. Buddhism in Tibet
  - A. Buddhism and Bon
  - B. Tantra
- III. Buddhism in China
  - A. T'ien-T'ai
  - B. Pure Land
  - C. Ch'an
- IV. Buddhism in Japan
  - A. Zen
  - B. Pure Land
  - C. Nichiren
- V. Buddhism in the West

**Special Features of the Course** (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy and information literacy learning in the course; etc.

### **Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials**

The instructor should strike a balance between exploring major traditions and studying common key doctrines of the religion. Organization may either be historical or topical. *At a minimum, the course should include the study of some of the major discourses from the Pali Canon and some of the major Mahayana sutras in English translation.* Specific editions are to be designated by the instructor.

### **Multi-Tradition Anthologies (current editions):**

- Burt, E.A. *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha.*  
Conze, Edward. *Buddhist Scriptures.*  
DeBary, Theodore. *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan.*  
Goddard, Dwight. *A Buddhist Bible.*  
Kornfield, Jack. *Teachings of the Buddha.*  
Lopez, Donald. *Buddhist Scriptures.*  
Strong, John S. *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations.*  
Thich Nhat Hanh. *Awakening of the Heart: Essential Buddhist Sutras and Commentaries.*

**Pali Canon Anthologies (current editions):**

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (trans.) *In the Buddha's Words*.  
Holder, John (trans.). *Early Buddhist Discourses*.  
Wallis, Glen (trans.). *Basic Teachings of the Buddha*.

**Websites containing Primary Sources:**

Access to Insight: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org> (Pali Canon only)  
BuddhaNet: <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/sutras.htm>  
The Internet Sacred Text Archive: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/index.htm>

**Secondary Sources (current editions):**

Armstrong, Karen. *Buddha*.  
Coleman, James W. *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition*.  
Collins, Steven. *Selfless Persons*.  
Gethin, Rupert. *Foundations of Buddhism*.  
Gombrich, Richard. *What the Buddha Thought*.  
Guenther, Herbert. *Tibetan Buddhism in Western Perspective*.  
Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism*.  
Lopez, Donald. *The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History and Teachings*.  
Robinson, Johnson, and Thanissaro *Buddhist Religions: A Concise Introduction*  
Skilton, Andrew. *A Concise History of Buddhism*.  
Suzuki, D.T. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*.  
Walpola, Rahula. *What the Buddha Taught*.  
Williams, Paul *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*.

**Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)**

PHR-127 requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

**Grading Policy**

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

**Attendance Policy**

**BCC Attendance Policy:**

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

**Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

**Attendance Policy in this Course:** [To be designated by the instructor]

**Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements** [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u>                  Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.                  ADA statement.                  Sexual Harassment statement.                  Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.                  Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>
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**Student and Faculty Support Services** [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

**Student and Faculty Support Services**

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 <a href="mailto:psimms@bergen.edu">psimms@bergen.edu</a>
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx</a>
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx</a>
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx</a>
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/oss">http://www.bergen.edu/oss</a>
BCC Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

### Special Note on the Tutoring Center

**The Henry and Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center** encompasses the Tutoring Center, the English Language Resource Center, and the Writing Center. The website of the Learning Assistance Center is located at [www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp](http://www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp). Tutoring services are available for this course in the Tutoring Center. I strongly recommend that you make use of those services as we progress through the course. As listed above, the Tutoring Center is located in Room L-125, and its phone number is 201-447-7908.

### Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

#### Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the Philosophy & Religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Professor Jennifer Lyden (L-326, 201-493-3540, [jlyden@bergen.edu](mailto:jlyden@bergen.edu)). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

### Include a Course Outline and Calendar [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")
- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

#### Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topics & Assignments	Learning Objectives
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

Departmental Policy Syllabus  
8/1/13; revised, 12/12/13; updated, 1/18/14, 2/7/14

10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

**See the Sample Course Outline and Calendar below.**

**SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR**

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic/Activity/Assignments</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>
1	Introduction: the Historical, Cultural, and Religious Background and Development of Buddhism	1, 3-5
2	The Life of Siddhartha Gautama, and Implications: Ariyapariyesana Sutta	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8
3	Knowledge and Skepticism: Kalama Sutta and Cula-Malunkya Sutta	1-2, 4, 7, 8
4	Dependent Origination: Mahanidana Sutta and Anatta-lakkhana Sutta	2, 4, 7, 8
5	Foundations of Mindfulness: Mahasatipatthana Sutta	2, 4, 5, 7, 8
6	The Religious Life: Selections from the Sutta-nipata	2, 4, 5, 7, 8
7	Mid-Term Examination	1-5, 9
8	Heart Sutra	2, 3, 7, 8
9	Diamond Sutra	2, 3, 7, 8
10	The Platform Sutra of Hui-neng	2-5, 7, 8
11	Lankavatara Sutra	2-5, 7, 8
12	Lotus Sutra	2-5, 7, 8
13	Selections from Shantideva's "A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life"	2-5, 7, 8
14	Selections from Joseph Goldstein's <i>One Dharma</i> Research Paper Due	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
15	Final Examination	1-5, 9