

# Chinese Buddhism | REL 3938, FALL 2021

Prof. Mario Poceski (Religion Dept., University of Florida)



## *Class Time*

Mon, Wed, and Fri, period 8 (3:00 – 3:50 pm), AND 013.

## *Office Hours*

Fri, 4:00 – 5:30, in 132 Anderson Hall, and by appointment. Appointments need to be made one day in advance. They will be primarily via Zoom, but there is also the option of F2F.

## *Contact Information*

email: [mpoceski@ufl.edu](mailto:mpoceski@ufl.edu); webpage: [www.clas.ufl.edu/users/mpoceski/](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/mpoceski/).

## *Course Description*

The course is a comprehensive survey of Chinese Buddhism. It explores the growth and transformation of the beliefs, doctrines, practices, and institutions that shaped the historical trajectories of Chinese Buddhism. It also considers the overall impact of Buddhism on Chinese religious, social, and cultural life. Additionally, students read and discuss some of the classical texts of Chinese Buddhism.

## *Prerequisites*

The class is open to students from all majors who are interested in learning about Chinese Buddhism. There are no formal prerequisites, and no knowledge of Asian languages is required.

## *Course Format*

This is a primarily a lecture course, but there will also be opportunities for discussion. Students are expected to ask questions, engage in class discussions, and critically reflect on the course materials.

## *Requirements*

- Reading of the assigned materials.
- Class attendance and participation.
- Three exams (65%).
- Paper abstract and bibliography (5%), due 11/8 (5 pm).
- Research paper (25%), due 12/8 (10 am).
- Class presentation (5%).

## *Textbook (required)*

- Burton Watson, *The Essential Lotus: Selections from the Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Available as an [e-book](#) from the UF library; the library also has Watson's complete translation of the scripture, titled *The Lotus Sutra*.

### ***Other Readings (required)***<sup>1</sup>

- Poceski, Mario. "Introduction: Past and Present Intersections." Mario Poceski, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.
- Poceski, Mario. "Buddhism: The Beginnings." Jacob Neusner, ed., *Introduction to World Religions: Communities and Cultures* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010): 181–96.
- Poceski, Mario. "Buddhism in Chinese History." Mario Poceski, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014: 40–62.
- Poceski, Mario. *Introducing Chinese Religions*. New York and London: Routledge, 2009: 138–62.
- Poceski, Mario. "The Creation of Monastic Codes and the Gradual Transformation of Medieval Chinese Buddhist Monasticism." Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen, and Cuilan Liu, eds. *Rules of Engagement: Medieval Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Regulations*. Bochum: Projektverlag, 2017: 163–96.
- Poceski, Mario. "Evolving Relationship between the Buddhist Monastic Order and the Imperial States of Medieval China." *Medieval Worlds* 6 (2017): 40–60.
- Yü, Chün-fang. *Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History*. University of Hawaii Press, 2020: 29–69.
- Poceski, Mario. "Disappearing Act: Calmness and Insight in Chinese Buddhism." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 48/1 (2020): 1–30.
- Poceski, Mario. *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 157–92.
- Poceski, Mario. "Contemporary Chinese Buddhist Traditions." Michael Jerryson, ed. *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: 79–99.
- Chandler, Stuart. "Chinese Buddhism in America." Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds. *The Faces of Buddhism in America*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998: 13–30.

### ***Encyclopedia Articles (required)***

Robert Buswell, ed. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (Macmillan Reference, 2003). Hereafter referred to as EB; available at the UF library, in hard copy and e-Book formats.

- Kawamura, "Bodhisattva(s)": 58–60; Cohen, "India": 352–60;
- Stone, "Lotus Sūtra": 471–77; Tweed, "United States": 864–70

### ***Books for reference and further study (recommended)***

- Yü, Chün-fang. *Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History*. University of Hawaii Press, 2020.
- Gethin, Rupert. *Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Buswell, Robert E., Jr., and Donald S. Lopez Jr. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. [Electronic Resource]. Princeton University Press, 2014.



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<sup>1</sup> Available online, in pdf format.

## Course Schedule<sup>2</sup>

- W 1 | 8/23 **Introduction** | Poceski, “Introduction: Past and Present Intersections”
- W 2 | 8/30 **Early Buddhist History and Teachings** | Poceski, “Buddhism: The Beginnings”; EB: “India,” “Bodhisattva(s)”
- W 3 | 9/6 **Historical Overview of Buddhism in China** | Poceski, “Buddhism in Chinese History” | no class on Mon (holiday)
- W 4 | 9/13 **Traditions and Practices** | Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*
- W 5 | 9/20 **Exam 1** (Mon) & **Buddhism and Politics** | Poceski, “Evolving Relationship between the Buddhist Monastic Order and the Imperial States”
- W 6 | 9/27 **Chinese Buddhist Literature** | Yü, *Chinese Buddhism*
- W 7 | 10/4 **Monastic Institutions and Ideals** | Poceski, “The Creation of Monastic Codes” | no class on Fri (holiday)
- W 8 | 10/11 **Lotus Sutra I** | Watson, *Essential Lotus*, ch. 2 & ch. 3; EB: “Lotus Sūtra”
- W 9 | 10/18 **Lotus Sutra II** | Watson, *Essential Lotus*, ch. 12, ch. 16, & ch. 25 | no class on Fri—special lecture instead (details TBA)
- W 10 | 10/25 **Exam 2** (Mon) | **Chan Doctrine** | Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way*
- W 11 | 11/1 **Contemplative Practices** | Poceski, “Disappearing Act”
- W 12 | 11/8 **Buddhism in Modern China** | Poceski, “Contemporary Chinese Buddhist Traditions”
- W 13 | 11/15 **Chinese Buddhism in America** | Chandler, “Chinese Buddhism in America”; EB: “United States”
- W 14 | 11/22 Discussion (Mon) | no class on Wed & Fri (holiday)
- W 15 | 11/29 **Review** (Mon) | **Exam 3** (Wed) | **Student Presentations** (Fri)
- W 16 | 12/6 **Student Presentations & Final Discussion**



## Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- Acquiring general knowledge about the historical development, doctrines, and traditions of Chinese Buddhism.
- Introducing major themes and concepts in Buddhist studies.
- Expanding the students’ intellectual vision by exposure to non-Western traditions.
- Learning about select worldviews, values, and norms that characterize Asian civilizations, especially China.
- By reading, reflecting upon, and discussing a broad range of materials, as well as by conducting independent research, students receive training in critical thinking and effective analysis. They also develop writing and communication skills that enable them to intelligently discuss key issues from a multiplicity of perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup> Tentative and subject to change.

- The course facilitates students' enhanced understanding and appreciation of other cultures and societies, which can serve as constructive conceptual framework for reflecting on their own social mores and cultural norms.

### ***Online e-Learning System & email Communication***

- The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF's e-Learning system, using Canvas.
- Students should send all written communications to the instructor directly, using the email address given above.

### ***Grading***

- The final grades are solely based on each student's individual performance and his/her fulfillment of the course requirements, as stipulated in the syllabus.
- Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously, from the first day of classes. There are no opportunities to do additional work for an extra credit or a better grade.
- The same course rules and expectations apply equally to all students—no student is entitled to special consideration or unique treatment. Other extraneous or irrelevant factors, including individual student's desires or expectations about grades, are not considered.
- Students should not expect retroactive changes or other forms of grade modification at the end of the semester.
- No incomplete grades are given, except in very exceptional circumstances, in which case the student should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.
- Final grades are computed according to the standard grading scheme in Canvas.

### ***Attendance and Participation***

- **Attendance** is expected of all students, starting with the first day of classes. Students who have problems with class attendance or punctuality should think twice before enrolling in the course. (For more on the university's attendance policies, see the Undergraduate Catalog).
- Students are advised to take extensive **notes** in class, and to use them prudently in their preparation for the exams. The exams are primarily based on the lectures, along with the readings.
- Student with exceptional **participation** performance may be awarded up to 3 **bonus** points (3% of the final grade). This bonus is entirely based on the instructor's discretion, and the final assessment considers both the quantity and quality of student's participation in classroom discussions, as well as other elements of coursework.

### ***Exams***

- The exams are taken online, via Canvas, during regular class hours. They are proctored.
- The exams are primarily based on the materials presented in the class lectures, plus the readings. They are not cumulative (i.e., Exam 2 will cover the materials studied after Exam 1).

- Exams primarily consist of multiple-choice and short Q&A; there might also be a single short essay (a few paragraphs, and not more than one per exam).
- No make-up exams are given, except in documented instances of illness or other emergency, in which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam, if feasible, or as soon as possible.
- If any student has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor in person and make suitable arrangements at least one week before the examination. Failure to act in accord with these instructions leads to a failing grade.

### *Written Assignments*

- The **abstract** and **bibliography** must clearly state the topic and provide provisional title of the final paper. It should contain a short—200 words—abstract of the paper and at least 5 titles of academic publications pertinent to the student’s research topic, each of them annotated with a short (one or two sentences) summary of contents that indicates how it is relevant to the stated topic.
- The final paper should be 2,000 words, inclusive of notes and citations.
- The **final paper** should take the form of a study/report based on field research that involves [participant observation](#), undertaken at a Chinese Buddhist group or institution in Florida. Researching a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Gainesville is an acceptable alternative for students unable to travel.
- The written assignments must be submitted in MS **Word** and must follow standard academic format. Use standard font, such as Calibri 12, with 1.5 spacing and 1” margins. Do not forget to include paper title, course name, instructor title and name, date, and page numbers.
- The written assignments must be **submitted digitally**, via e-Learning, before the final deadline.
- **No late submissions** will be accepted under any circumstances. Students are encouraged to avoid procrastination and make early submissions, well before the deadline.
- Students are welcome to ask for feedback/advice about their papers, during the office hours.

### *Class presentation*

- Each student needs to deliver in person a short class presentation on the final paper, towards the end of the course.
- The class presentation needs to be accompanied with a polished and informative PowerPoint presentation.

### *Classroom Conduct*

- All students are required to join the class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive and disrespectful.
- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful, abstaining from disruptive behavior that adversely affects others and is contrary to the pursuit of knowledge. Examples of such behavior include talking with someone, and displaying active disinterest in the class (e.g., dozing or

inappropriate computer use), or putting down others. Phones should be turned off during class. Offending students will be asked to leave.

### ***Office Hours and Communication***

- Students are encouraged to come to or schedule office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with the course materials.
- The instructor is glad to assist students with their pursuit of knowledge and facilitate their success with the course.
- The instructor is also willing to discuss relevant academic topics that, due to time constraints, are not covered in class in much detail.
- Any questions about the course requirements or any aspect of the coursework should be resolved by consulting the instructor directly, preferably during office hours. Pleading ignorance or lack of common sense are not valid excuses for failures to fulfill requirements or abide by course policies.

### ***Plagiarism and Cheating***

- Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade and other serious penalties.
- For more information, see the “Academic Honesty—Student Guide” brochure (posted online by the Dean of Students Office).

### ***Disability***

- A student who has a documented disability that may require some modification of testing or other class requirements should consult the instructor in person at the beginning of the course so that appropriate arrangements may be made.
- The student is responsible for communicating his/her needs to the instructor, as early as possible. All arrangements for changes pertaining to the quizzes and the exams must be made at least one week in advance.



### ***Other Notices***

- Registration in the course implies that each student enters a contractual agreement with the instructor, whereas he/she is accountable for fulfilling all course requirements and adhering to the course policies.
- Students are responsible for knowing and following all schedules and instructions contained in this syllabus, as well as any other instructions given in class (remember, attendance is not optional).