SYLLABUS: GTU/INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST STUDIES - Spring, 2012
Instructor: Taigen Dan Leighton
Title: Topics in Buddhist Traditions of Japan: Teachings of Zen Master Dogen
Course number: HRHS 8454       Online course

Course Description: The writings of Dogen, 13th century Japanese Soto Zen founder, are a unique highpoint of Zen literature. Exploring profound Buddhist philosophical issues, Dogen creatively used poetic language and wordplay to evocatively express the meaning of practice/enlightenment and buddha nature, and to train his students who successfully established Soto Zen in Japan. We will do textual study of a selection of Dogen’s major writings, including teachings about meditation, nature mysticism, community life, koans (teaching stories), and Buddhist theories of temporality. After discussing background material on Dogen, and several of the essays from one of Dogen's major works, Shobogenzo (True Dharma Eye Treasury), we will focus on the short discourses to his students in Dogen's Extensive Record, which demonstrate his teaching style and humor. We will consider the impact of Dogen’s various background sources, including the Chinese koan tradition, the Japanese poetic and aesthetic tradition, the East Asian Buddhist monastic tradition, and Mahayana sutras and bodhisattva lore. We will also explore how Dogen’s challenging writings relate to modern spiritual issues.

Texts:
   Required:


   Waddell, Norman and Masao Abe. The Heart of Dogen’s Shobogenzo (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).


There will also be required Additional Commentary included in Moodle or available Online for each week, some written and some audio, also listed in the syllabus below. These will consist of articles or Dharma talks by the instructor, or others, available online, most directly relating to the assigned reading by or about Dogen, or in some cases related indirectly.

Optional, but Recommended:

NOTE: None of the following are required for this course, but are recommended for any who wish to read further.


   Leighton, Taigen Dan, Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Demonstrates Dogen’s grounding in the Mahayana bodhisattva tradition, especially with the Lotus Sutra. Also provides detailed discussion of Dogen’s exploration of issues of space and temporality, especially relevant for weeks 3 and 5.
Heine, Steven, *Did Dogen Go to China?: What He Wrote and When He Wrote It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). A very helpful, nuanced break-down of the phases of Dogen’s teaching career, debunking stereotypical views of “early” and “late” Dogen.

Leighton, Taigen & Shohaku Okumura, trans. *Dogen’s Pure Standards for the Zen Community* (State University of New York Press, 1996). Dogen’s primary writings on the monastic community practice and its meaning, some of which is surprisingly relevant to modern lay practice.

Heine, Steven, *Dogen and the Koan Tradition* (State University of New York Press, 1994). An extremely important, academic study on the way koan practice is elaborated by Dogen in his panoramic approach, different but equally valid as the more familiar huatou koan curriculum developed in Rinzai Zen.


Additional Assigned Readings may be provided for selected weeks online or through the Moodle system.

**Additional Research Bibliography [OPTIONAL]** at end of syllabus.

**Weekly Topics and Assignments:**

1. **Week of January 30**

   Introduction to Dogen’s practice teachings.
   Assignment:
   Additional Commentary [Audio]:
   “Dogen’s Four Basic Teachings”
   [sound file](http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20100124DT_ADZG_dogens_four_basic_teachings.mp3)
   Kaz Tanahashi, “My Life with Dogen”
   [sound file](http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20110710DT_ADZG_my_life_with_dogen.mp3)

2. **Week of February 6**

   Dogen’s Dharma teachings, and monastic practice.
   Assignment:
   Additional Commentary:
   “Dogen’s Approach to Training in Eihei Koroku”
   [website](http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/dogen_approach_training_eihei_koroku)
   [okay to skip the middle section, “Demonstrations of Practice Clarified in the Dawn Wind” -repeated in the Additional Commentary from *Zen Questions* for Week 11.]

3. **Week of Feb. 13**
Fukanzazengi “Universal Recommendations for Zazen” and Bendowa “Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way”
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, Fukanzazengi, pp. 532-535.
“Self-Fulfillment Samadhi” (Jijuyu Zammai)
<http://ancientdragon.org/dharma/chants/#the_self_fulfillment_samadhi>; and
Additional Commentary:
“Dogen's Cosmology of Space and the Practice of Self-Fulfillment”:
http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/dogens_cosmology_of_space

4. Week of Feb. 20

Genjokoan “Actualization of the Fundamental Point” and One Bright Pearl
Assignment:
Dogen’s “Actualizing the Fundamental Point” (Genjokoan):
<http://ancientdragon.org/dharma/chants/#genjo_koan>;
Additional Commentary [Audio]:
Shohaku Okumura, “Genjokoan: Realization and Delusion Defined”
http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20110326aDT_ADZG_genjokoan_3.mp3
Shohaku Okumura, “Genjokoan: Dropping Body-Mind”
http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20110326pDT_ADZG_genjokoan_4.mp3

5. Week of Feb. 27

Uji “Being Time” and Shoji “Birth and Death”
Additional Commentary:
“Dogen's Appropriation of Lotus Sutra Ground and Space” [especially note the section mid-article on the
Inconceivable Lifespan and Dogen Time]:
http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/dogens_appropriation_of_lotus_stura_ground_and_space

6. Week of March 5

Bussho “Buddha Nature”
Assignment:
Waddell and Abe, *The Heart of Dogen’s Shobogenzo*, pp. 59-98.
Additional Commentary [Audio]:
“Buddha Nature Wholeness”
http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20100726DT_ADZG_buddha_nature_wholeness.mp3

7. Week of March 12

Introduction to Eihei Koroku.
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 1-47.

**Additional Commentary:**
“The Lotus Sutra as a Source for Dogen’s Discourse Style” [includes comments on Dharma Hall Discourses 69, 70, 24, 88, & 123 from vol. 1; and on 229 from vol. 3]:
[http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/lotus_sutra_and_dogen](http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/lotus_sutra_and_dogen)

8. Week of March 19

Eihei Koroku vol.1
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 75-150.

**Additional Commentary:**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

[NOTE: March 26-30 is GTU Spring Recess]

9. Week of April 2

Eihei Koroku vol. 8: Informal Meetings and Dharma Words
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 473-532.

**Additional Commentary:**

10. Week of April 9

Eihei Koroku vol. 2-3
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 151-251.

**Additional Commentary:**

11. Week of April 16

Eihei Koroku vol. 4
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 253-310.

**Additional Commentary:**

12. Week of April 23
Eihei Koroku vol. 5
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 311-369.
Additional Commentary:
“Dogen’s Zazen as Other-Power Practice”:
http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/articles/dogens_zazen_as_other_power_practice

13. Week of April 30

Eihei Koroku vol. 6
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 371-420.
Additional Commentary:
Leighton, *Zen Questions*, “Readying the Ox,” pp. 143-154. [comment on Dharma Hall Discourses 131, 423]

14. Week of May 7

Eihei Koroku vol. 7
Assignment:
Leighton and Okumura, *Dogen’s Extensive Record*, pp. 421-472.
Additional Commentary:

15. Week of May 14
Review; General Discussion
Assignment: Work on Final Paper

**FINAL PAPERS DUE  May 27.**

**Course Objectives:**
1) The class will do a close reading of the teachings of Zen master Dogen as well as modern commentaries on Dogen, and students will gain familiarity with major issues and approaches in Dogen’s Zen teaching.
2) We will consider the philosophical and soteriological implications of spiritual teachings proposed by Dogen.
3) We will discuss the practical applications of Zen approaches described, and their relevance to contemporary spiritual concerns.

**Grading:** Your final grade will be based:
1) 35% on participation in online class discussion.
2) 30% on the 6 page midterm exam, due by end of week 8.
3) 35% on a 10 page final research paper, due by the end of the week following week 15, i.e. by May 27.
Auditors: Auditors are welcome to this course. Auditors are expected to participate fully in the online discussion each week, but will not do the midterm exam or final paper. Auditors are expected to have some Buddhist studies or practice background, as for enrolled students. Consult IBS registrar for details on auditing fees and registration.

Note on Reading Dogen: When trying to read Dogen, I recommend first just reading through the material, not trying to understand in first reading, but letting his discourse wash over you like a hot bath or a symphony. Please note the places that especially catch you, that are evocative, challenging, unsettling, or inspiring. Go back to those passages and spend time with them. This will especially be necessary when reading through the many short Dharma hall discourses in Eihei Koroku, but also for the more elaborated Shobogenzo essays. Find and consider the sections that interest you, and write about those in your postings to the online discussion.

Participation in online discussion: Each student will contribute at least two postings and no more than five postings each week on the class material for that week. Each posting should be no more than 3 paragraphs or one page long. These maximum limitations of size and numbers of postings are intended to encourage you to consider carefully your inquiries or responses, and to express digested reflection. Please try to write as clearly as possible. Go back and read your posting before submitting it, to make sure it is clear. These suggested limitations may be shifted during the course at the instructor's discretion. Feel free to respond also to the material provided in the “Additional Commentaries,” along with responses to the basic readings. These may sometimes directly concern the assigned reading from Dogen, and sometimes address tangentially related material. Your messages can include questions or comments about material in the reading, or responses to other students’ questions or comments. It is encouraged to express varying viewpoints, but please do so with respectfulness to all other participants. As instructor I will respond to comments and questions at least two or three times each week. You may separately send questions about class procedures or protocols, either in the Moodle venue, or individually to the instructor at: <taigen108@gmail.com>.

Midterm Test: This will consist of three two-page essay responses to be selected from five questions.

Final Research Paper: Your essays should express your critical response or inquiry into a particular, focused aspect of the material presented in the class texts, clearly articulating your point of view. Comparative papers are welcome, but should focus a clear majority of comment on the material from the class. It is not required that you consult any other than the required reading in the syllabus, but an additional research Bibliography is provided for those interested. Papers should be 10 pages double-spaced, plus conventional forms of notes and bibliography.

FINAL PAPERS DUE MAY 27.

NOTE: PREREQUISITE FOR THIS CLASS IS SOME BACKGROUND IN BUDDHIST STUDIES OR PRACTICE. I am available for consultation, and can be reached via e-mail at: taigen108@gmail.com

* * *
Additional Research Bibliography [OPTIONAL]:

{NOTE: Some of the below works are out of print in the editions cited, but may have been reprinted, especially by Shambhala or Wisdom Publications. Check Amazon or other listings for possible newer editions.}


