HRPH 4558: TURNING THE WHEEL OF THE DHARMA: TEACHING THE DHARMA IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

This course is meant to provide an introduction to the topic of how Buddhism has been taught in Theravada Buddhism. Important aspects of the teachings of Theravada Buddhism come into highlight through understanding the pedagogy of how the Dharma is taught. One focus of this class will be studying how the Buddha taught and how he was as a Dharma teacher. This will then provide a foundation for an introduction to the historical changes and developments in how the Dharma was taught after the Buddha died.

The last part of the class will focus on how Theravada Buddhism is taught in the contemporary Insight Meditation movement. This will include a study of the homiletics of the “Dharma talk”, the roles and ethics of the Dharma teacher, and other issues related to teaching the Dharma.

The aim of the class is for the students to have a greater understanding of issues related to teaching Buddhism including the mutually interactive relationship between what is taught and how Buddhists teach. Through a study of how the Buddha engaged in dialogue and related to questions, as well as critical analysis of class readings, the course also aims to sharpen student’s ability to question and analyze what they learn about Buddhism both in primary sources and in secondary literature.

Grading will be based on class participation through

- Discussion and short presentations (10%)
- 8-10 page mid-term essay (30%)
- Two 2-3 page book or article review relevant to the class topic (10%)
- Final 15 -20 page research paper (50%)

Class sessions will involve a combination of lectures and discussion.

Attendance policy: students may miss one class and still complete the course. In the event of a second absence students may make up the missed class by writing a research paper on an assigned topic related to the missed class.

Time: Mondays 9:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Office hours: Mondays 8:40 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.

Instructors:
Gil Fronsdal (Fronsdal@SBCGlobal.net)
Nona Olivia (SITBSDean@sati.org)
Books:
  • Thanissaro, *Skill in Questions* (Metta Forest Monastery: 2010) [Provided by instructors]
  • Thanissaro (trans.) *Handful of Leaves, Vol. I and V* [provided by instructors]
  • Flores, Ralph, *Buddhist Scriptures as Literature* (SUNY Press: 2008)

Additional readings will be given out as handouts or web postings.

HRPH 4558 – Syllabus (Preliminary)
Turning the Wheel of the Dharma

Jan. 30 - Introduction

Feb. 6 - Qualities of a Dharma teacher and of a student

Reading assignments:
- Book of Eights: Introduction and Suttas #5, 8, 12, and 13
- Middle Length Discourse 26
- Udana discourse 5.3, “The Leper Sutta"
- Introduction to *Skill in Questions*

Feb. 13 – The Buddha as a Teacher

Reading assignment:
- Chapter 2 in *Popularizing Buddhism*
- Stoesz, Willis “The Buddha as Teacher” (JAAR XLVI/2, pp. 139-158)
- Suttas from the Middle Length Discourse
- Chapters 1 and 2 in *Skill in Questions*

Feb. 27 – Teaching through Dialogue: Categorical questions

Reading assignments: Chapter 3 in *Skill in Questions*

March 5 – Teaching through Dialogue: Analytical Questions

Reading assignments: Chapter 4 in *Skill in Questions*

*Due: 2-3-page book or article review* (may be a critical review of a sutta)
March 12 – Teaching through Dialogue: Cross-questioning

Reading assignments: Chapter 5 and 6 in *Skill in Questions*

March 19 – Teaching through Dialogue: Questions to be put aside

Reading assignments: Chapter 7 and 8 in *Skill in Questions*

*Due: Mid-term paper*

April 2 – Teaching by Training:

Reading assignments:
- Selections from *The Buddhist Monastic Codes*
- “Toward an Action-Oriented Pedagogy: Buddhist Texts and Monastic Education in Contemporary Sri Lanka” by Jeffery Samuels
- Chapter 3 in *Popularizing Buddhism*

April 9 – Rhetorical Strategies and Goals

Reading assignments:
*Buddhist Scriptures as Literature* by Ralph Flores, pp 1-101

April 16 - Teaching by Preaching

Reading assignments:
Chapters 4-9 in *Popularizing Buddhism*

*Due: 2-3-page book or article review*

April 23 – Modern Theravada and the roles of Dharma teachers

Reading assignments:
Susan Elbaum Jootla, “Transmitting the Dhamma”
Jack Kornfield, “You Can’t Do it Alone: Finding and Working with a Teacher” from *A Path with Heart.*

April 30 – The Homiletics of the American Dharma talk

Listening assignments: Found at Dharmaseed.org
Jack Kornfield, “Poetry and Beauty” (2011-10-10)
May 7 - The Ethics of Dharma teachers

Reading assignments:
- Gil Fronsdal, “Virtues without Rules: Ethics in the Insight Meditation Movement”
- Spirit Rock, “Teachers Code of Ethics” and “Ethics and Reconciliation Council”

May 14 – What is Being Taught by how it is Taught?

Reading assignments:
Bhikkhu Bodhi, “Teaching Buddhism in the West” Insight Journal 2006

Due: Final paper