Tentative
Syllabus
Readings in Early Buddhist Texts:
_The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha_
HR 8160 – online course

This online course consists of extensive reading of selected discourses of the Buddha from the Middle Length Discourses, one of the most important collections of teachings from early Buddhism. Readings will be organized around themes found in the collection including the nature of the Buddha and the path of practice he taught, karma, sensuality and renunciation, the practice of mindfulness and concentration, Buddhist conceptions of wisdom and spiritual liberation. Written lectures and study guides will be provided to support a careful reading of each of the assigned discourses. Prof. Olivia will lead online question and discussion opportunities and will evaluate the assignments. The course is intended for M.A., M.Div, and M.B.S. students. Auditors with permission.

Instructors:
   Nona Olivia  ([SITBSDean@sati.org](mailto:SITBSDean@sati.org))
   Gil Fronsdal
Office Hours: by arrangement with Prof. Olivia

Textbook:

Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, _The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya_ (Boston: Wisdom Publications)

Grading:
Nine 2-3 page reflective essays and – 25%
Mid-term 10 page analytical essay – 25%
Final 15-20 page research paper– 50%

Supplemental material:

1. Alternative translations by Thanissaro Bhikkhu of many of the discourses assigned for the course can be found at Accesstoinsight.org by clicking MN under the _tipitaka_ box on the website’s home page.

2. Thirty Nine audio recordings of Gil Fronsdal’s lectures following the syllabus of the class is found at the Sati Center for Buddhist Studies website (sati.org) accessed on its ‘sutta study’ page.
Syllabus

**Week of September 4 – Introduction**

Reading:
1. Fronsdal, “Introduction to The Middle Length Discourses” by Gil Fronsdal

**Week of September 10 – Relating to the Teachings**

Readings:
1. MN 95, 58, 63, 22, 32, 100 including study guides to each

**Week of September 17 – The Buddha**

Readings:
1. Introductory Study Guide to section
2. MN 26, MN 26 Study guide and Jonathan Walters, “Suttas as History”
3. MN 4, 19, 36, 72
4. Study guides for MN 4, 36
5. (optional: MN 71, 77)

*Due: 2 page reflective essay on Relating to Teachings section*

**Week of September 24 – The Buddha, con’t**

Readings:
1. MN 12, 49, 91, 123
2. Study guides for MN 12, 49
3. (optional: MN 92)

**Week of October 1 – Faith and the Path**

Readings:
1. Introductory Study Guide
2. 85, 27, 70, 53 (paragraph 11)
3. Study guides for MN 85, 27, 70
4. (optional: MN 49, 89)

*Due: 2 page reflective essay on The Buddha section*

**Week of October 8 – Faith, con’t**

Readings:
1. MN 107, 125, 117, 24
2. Study guide for MN 117
3. (optional: MN 126, 56, 141)

**Week of October 15 - Karma**

Readings:
1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 98, 61, 45, 41
3. Study guide to MN 61
4. (optional: MN 57, 60, 101, 129)

*Due: 2 page reflective essay faith section*
Week of October 22 – Reading week
Reading:
1. MN 135, 136, 86, 130

Week of October 29 – Right Effort
Readings:
1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 78, 2, 5, 15, 21, 53
3. Study Guide to MN 78

Due: 2 page reflective essay on Karma section and Mid-term paper

Week of November 5 – Happiness, Sensuality, and Renunciation
Readings:
1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 46, 59, 13, 14, 66, 75, 54
3. Study guides to MN 46, 59, 13,
4. (optional: 10.32, 45, 137, 139)

Due: 2 page reflective essay on Right Effort section

Week of November 12 – Mindfulness
Readings:
1. Introductory Study Guide
2. MN 39, 62, 20, 10, 118, 119
4. (optional: MN 128)

Due: 2 page reflective essay on Happiness section

Week of November 19 – Concentration
Readings:
1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 11, 52, 128, 106, 121,
3. (optional: 140)

Due: 2 page reflective essay on Mindfulness section

Week of November 26 – Wisdom
Readings:
1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 141, 2.5-11, 63, 28, 43, 146, 44, 1
3. Study guides to MN 141, 63, 28

Due: 2 page reflective essay on Concentration section

Week of December 3 – Nirvana
Readings:
1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 131, 143, 138, 22.20-35, 22.40-41

Due: 2 page reflective essay on Wisdom section

Week of December 10 – Nirvana, Con’t
Readings:
1. MN 147, 64, 68.8-24, 73.7-12
2. (optional: 70.14-22, 76.51)

Final Paper