

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)

Gil Fronsda

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 Fronsda'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

Readings:

1. Fronsdaal, "Introduction to The Middle Length Discourses" by Gil Fronsdaal
2. Bhikkhu Bodhi, "Introduction", in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, p 19-58.

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
3. Combined study guide for MN 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