

INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

Fall Semester 2012

COURSE SYLLABUS

Title

“An Introduction to Shin Buddhist Thought,” HRPB 1614 (three units)

Description

This course will present a survey of the fundamental aspects of the Shin Buddhist tradition, its history, customs and thought. It will offer an introduction to the tradition's primary textual sources in English translation and examine the Shin perspective on the Pure Land Buddhist path. It will also look at features of the religious life ascribed to the Shin Buddhist follower, focusing on issues of practice, the mind, rituals, iconography and community.

Student Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to identify the primary features of Shin Buddhist doctrine, with particular emphasis on Shinran's Pure Land Buddhist path of enlightenment.
- Students will be able to discuss in broad outline the historical development of Pure Land Buddhist thought and practice, as well as Shinran's critical perspective on them.
- Students will be able to identify and discuss doctrinal issues, such as the treatment of Buddha-nature, Buddha-bodies and birth in the Pure Land in Shin Buddhist thought.
- Students will be able to consider the extent to which Shin Buddhist perspectives on Pure Land Buddhist notions such as Amida Buddha and the Pure Land are unique to the tradition or hold features in common with other religious traditions.
- Students will be able to discuss and examine possible Shin Buddhist perspectives on current religious and societal issues.

Classroom Meetings - Tuesday, 2:10 – 5:00 PM, Room 130 Jodo Shinshu Center

Course Format

This course will take place in a traditional classroom format with weekly class sessions. Each topic area will be addressed through reading assignments, instructor's notes, lectures and discussions, as well as periodic student presentations in class.

Course materials, schedules, assignments and the course reader will be distributed through the Moodle website for the course. (moodle.gtu.edu)

Topic Areas

Roots of the Shin Buddhist tradition

- Kamakura Buddhism
- The Pure Land tradition
- The life of Shinran
- Post-Shinran developments

Buddha—Shin Buddhist perspectives on transcendence

- Amida Buddha and Pure Land
- The Primal Vow
- Buddha-bodies and Buddha-lands
- Shinran's notion of *upaya*

Dharma—Shin Buddhist path of enlightenment

- Teaching: the question of truth and authenticity
 - Tradition and insight
- Practice: the nembutsu as P/practice
 - Dimensions of shinjin
 - Insight into the nature of human beings
 - Shin Buddhist perspectives on: dharma-ages, bodhi mind and buddha-nature

- Self-power and Other Power
- Realization: attainment or salvation?
 - Settlement of birth in this life
 - Significance of birth in the Pure Land

Sangha—Shin Buddhist religious life

- Shin Buddhist ethics?
- Perspectives on death-birth
- Customs, rituals
- Shin iconography, symbolism and art
- Institutions and worldwide dissemination
- Contemporary social issues
- Future of the Shin Buddhist sangha

Requirements

Students will be required to do the following:

1. Attend classroom lecture and discussion sessions;
2. Complete all reading assignments;
3. Participate fully in classroom discussions and presentations; and
4. Write one research paper of no more than ten (10) pages on a topic that is relevant to this course and approved by the instructor. It will be due one week after the final class session.

Instructor

David R. Matsumoto. Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, Suite 30, CA 94706; (510) 809-1448; drmatsumoto@shin-ibs.edu. Office hours by appointment.

Required Texts

Course reader - This will be distributed using the GTU Moodle website.

The Collected Works of Shinran, (Kyoto: Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, 1997)

Supplementary Texts (Not required)

Takamaro Shigaraki, *A Life of Awakening: The Heart of Shin Buddhism*, (Kyoto: Hozokan, 2005)

Yoshifumi Ueda & Dennis Hirota, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought*, (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989)

Ryukoku Translation Series, Vols. I - VIII (Kyoto: Ryukoku University)

Jodo Shinshu Seiten, Chushakuban, Vols. I & II (Kyoto: Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, 1988, 1997)

Shinshu Shogyo Zensho Hensanjo, Vols. I, II & III, (Kyoto: Oyagi Kobundo, 1941, repr. 1981)

Hisao Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1994)

_____. *Nagarjuna's Discourse of the Ten Stages*. (Kyoto: Ryukoku Gakkai, 1998)

_____. *T'an-Luan's Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse of the Pure Land*. (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1998)