

Draft  
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 (*suttas*) 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 practices of mindfulness and concentration, and Buddhist conceptions of wisdom and spiritual liberation. Study guides and optional audio-files will be provided to support a careful reading of each of the assigned discourses. The course is intended for M.A., M.Div, and M.B.S. students. Auditors with permission.

Instructor:

Gil Fronsdal (Fronsdal@gmail.com)

Office Hours: by arrangement

Textbook:

Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005). (This textbook is referred to as “MN” in the assigned readings)

Grading:

Nine 1-2 page inquiry papers

Mid-term 8-page analytical paper

Final 15-page research paper

Supplemental material:

Alternative translations of many of the discourses assigned for the course can be found at [accesstoinsight.org](http://accesstoinsight.org) by clicking MN under the *tipitaka* box on the website's home page.

Thirty-nine audio recordings of Gil Fronsdal's lectures of the class is found at the Sati Center for Buddhist Studies website ([sati.org](http://sati.org)) accessed on its 'sutta study' page.

## Syllabus

**Week 1- Introduction**

Reading:

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

**Week 2- Relating to the Teachings**

Readings:

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

**Week 3 - 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)

**Week 4 - The Buddha, con't**

Readings:

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

**Week 5 - Faith and the Path**

Readings:

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

**Week 6 - Faith, con't**

Readings:

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

**Week 7- 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)

**Week 8 - Reading week**

Reading:

1. MN 135, 136, 86, 130

**Week 9 – Right Effort**

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 78, 2, 5, 15, 21, 53
3. Study Guide to MN 78

**Week 10– 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)

**Week 11– 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)

**Week 12– Concentration**

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 11, 52, 128, 106, 121,
3. (optional: 140)

**Week 13 – 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

**Week 15– Nirvana**

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 131, 143, 138, 22.20-35, 22.40-41

**Week 16 – Nirvana, Con't**

Readings:

1. MN 147, 64, 68.8-24, 73.7-12
2. (optional: 70.14-22, 76.51)