

Tentative

Syllabus

Readings in Early Buddhist Texts:

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha

HR 8160 – online course

Fall 2014

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. Fronsdal 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.

Instructor:

Gil Fronsdal – Fronsdal@sbcglobal.net

Teaching Assistant:

Diana Clark – DianaClark2020@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 Nikaya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications) [listed as MN in assigned readings below]

Grading:

Nine 1-2 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 1 – Introduction

Readings:

1. Fronsdal, “Introduction to The Middle Length Discourses” by Gil Fronsdal (posted)
2. Bhikkhu Bodhi, “Introduction”, in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, p 19-58.
3. Analayo, Bhikkhu “Introduction”, in *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikaya*, pp. 1-11 (partial section of introduction) (posted)

Week of September 8 – Relating to the Teachings

Readings:

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

Due September 13: inquiry paper on Relating to Teachings readings

Week of September 15 – Faith

Readings:

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

Week of September 22 – The Path

Readings:

1. Bhikkhu Bodhi’s introduction to the The Middle Length Discourses, pp. 32-8
2. Introductory Study Guide to the topic
3. MN 70, 107, 125, 141, 117
4. Study guide
5. (optional: MN 24)

Due September 27: inquiry paper on Buddha readings

Week of September 29 - The Buddha

Readings:

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

Due October 11: inquiry paper on Faith and the Path readings

Week of October 6 – The Buddha, con't (Reading Week)

Readings:

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

Due October 18: inquiry paper on Karma readings

Week of October 13 – Karma

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 98, 61, 86, 60 45, 41
3. Study guides
4. (optional: MN 57, 60, 101, 129)

Week of October 20 - Karma, con't

Reading:

1. MN 41, 57, 135, 136, 130
2. Study guides
3. Piya Tan's study guide for MN 130
4. Optional: MN 129

Week of October 27 – Effort and Training

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 108 5, 8, 15, 21, 53, 78
3. Study guides

Due October 27: Mid-term paper

Due November 1: inquiry paper on Right Effort readings

Week of November 3 – Happiness, Sensuality, and the Bliss of Renunciation

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 45, 46, 59, 14, 13, 66, 75, 54
3. Study guides
4. (optional: 10.32, 45, 137, 139)

Due November 8: inquiry paper on Happiness readings

Week of November 10 – Mindfulness

Readings:

1. Introductory Study Guide
2. MN 62, 20, 10, 118, 119
3. Study guides
4. (optional: MN 128; Bhikkhu Bodhi's intro to the Majjhima, pp 38-41)

Due November 15: inquiry paper on Mindfulness readings

Week of November 17 – Concentration

Readings:

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

Due November 22: inquiry paper on Concentration readings

Week of November 24 – Wisdom

Readings:

1. Introductory study guide
2. MN 141, 2.5-11, 63, 28, 43, 146, 44, 1
3. Study guides

Due November 29: inquiry paper on Wisdom readings

Week of December 1 – Nirvana

Readings:

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

Week of December 8 – Nirvana, con't

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

Due December 10: Final Paper