

HRRS-4551
WESTERN THERAVĀDA

Instructor: Dr. Natalie Quli

Email: natalie@shin-ibs.edu

Room & Time: JSC 130, Tuesdays 9:40–12:30

Office hours: Mondays 9–12, by appointment

What roots, both Western and Asian, gave rise to Theravada as it exists in the West? What relationships exist with lineages in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian locales? What factors have shaped its expression, both historically and in the contemporary period? We will explore lineages and communities in the United States, including Vipassana/insight groups and their relationship to colonial-era Burmese reform movements; the Thai Forest traditions deriving from Ajahn Chah; and the origins of diaspora groups in the US. We will interrogate issues of identity, doctrine, praxis, continuity of tradition, textualization, Westernization, and the transformation of Theravada in a global context. Students will reflect critically on Western Theravada with regard to questions of postcolonialism, Orientalism, modernity/postmodernity/Buddhist Modernism, privilege, power, and authority. Lecture, discussion, and mandatory field visits. Field journal & short, bi-weekly essay assignments required.

Grading

50% participation & attendance, 25% field notes, 25% essay assignments

Field Sites

Insight Meditation Center, Redwood City

Wat Buddhanusorn, Fremont

Buddhi Vihara, Santa Clara

Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Woodacre

Berkeley Buddhist Monastery, Berkeley (Abhayagiri monastics)

Required Texts

Books are available in the Jodo Shinshu Center Bookstore.

Cadge, Wendy. *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Cheah, Joseph. *Race and Religion in American Buddhism: White Supremacy and Immigrant Adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Chaps. 1–3.

Kornfield, Jack. *Living Dharma: Teachings and Meditation Instructions from Twelve Theravada Masters*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996.

Numrich, Paul. *Old Wisdom in the New World Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples*. University of Tennessee Press, 1999.

Tweed, Thomas. *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Supplementary Readings

Electronic copies will be provided by the instructor.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Readings listed for each session should be completed before arriving for class.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 6 IBS Classroom

Readings:

Mitchell, Scott. "Theravada Traditions." Chapter 5 in *Buddhism in America: Global Religion, Local Contexts*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 13 IBS Classroom

Readings:

Insight Meditation Center. <http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org>. "About IMC," "Programs," "Community."

Tweed, Thomas. *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Intro, Chaps. 1–3.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20 Insight Meditation Center

Readings:

Tweed, *American Encounter with Buddhism*, Chaps. 4–6 & postscript

*Field Visit:

Tues., September 20, 9:30am–11:00am

Insight Meditation Center
108 Birch Street
Redwood City, CA 94062

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 27 IBS Classroom

Readings:

Wat Buddhanusorn. <http://www.watbuddha.org>. "About," "Events & Activities," "Thai Cultural Council."

Cadge, Wendy. *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2004. Chaps. 1–4.

Bring Field Notes to class.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 4**Wat Buddhanusorn**

Readings:

Cadge, *Heartwood*, Chaps. 5–8.

***Field Visit:**

Tues., October 4, 7–9pm.

Wat Buddhanusorn
36054 Niles Blvd.
Fremont, CA 94536

Remember to bring Field Notes to the wat.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 11**IBS Classroom**

Readings:

Numrich, Paul. *Old Wisdom in the New World Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples*. University of Tennessee Press, 1999. Intro, Chaps. 1–4.

Bring Field Notes to class.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 18**Buddhi Vihara**

Readings:

Buddhi Vihara. <http://www.buddhivihara.org>. “About Us,” “Dhamma Class,” “Events,” “Calendar.”

Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World*, Chaps. 5–8

***Field Visit:**

Friday, 8:30–10pm

Buddhi Vihara,
402 Knowles Ave.
Santa Clara, CA 95050

Remember to bring Field Notes to the vihara.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 25**Reading Week**

Enjoy the week.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 1**IBS Classroom**

Readings:

Clarke, J.J. "Orientalism: Some Conjectures." In *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought*. London & New York: Routledge, 1997.

Sharf, Robert. "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience." *Numen* 42 (1995): 228–233.

Bring Field Notes to class.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 8**Spirit Rock Meditation Center**

Readings:

Spirit Rock Meditation Center. <http://www.spiritrock.org>. "About: Welcome to Spirit Rock" (Mission, Founders' Vision, History).

Cheah, Joseph. *Race and Religion in American Buddhism: White Supremacy and Immigrant Adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Chaps. 1–3.

***Field Visit:**

Wednesday, November 8, 9–11am

Spirit Rock Meditation Center
5000 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard,
Woodacre, CA 94973

Remember to bring Field Notes to the center.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 15**IBS Classroom**

Readings:

Cheah, Joseph. *Race and Religion in American Buddhism: White Supremacy and Immigrant Adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Chaps. 4–6.

Bring Field Notes to class.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 22**Jhāna Video Buffet (view at home)**

Readings:

Kornfield, Jack. *Living Dharma: Teachings and Meditation Instructions from Twelve Theravada Masters*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996. Chaps. 1–8.

Videos:

Sujato, Ajahn. “Samatha vs Vipassana.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UarkCJSvLJQ>

Vimalaramsi, Bhante. “Commentaries Vs. the Suttas - Which is Right?”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LTORe5JxkU

Brahmavamso, Ajahn. “Samatha and Vipassana Meditations. Meditation retreat in Toronto 2012.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjeFZoQYTPs>

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 29**IBS Classroom**

Readings:

Kornfield, *Living Dharma*, Chaps. 9–17

Quli, Natalie. “Multiple Buddhist Modernisms: Jhāna in Convert Theravāda.” *Pacific World* 3 (2008).

WEEK OF DECEMBER 6**Berkeley Buddhist Monastery (Abhayagiri night)**

Readings:

Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery. www.abhayagiri.org. “About” (Purpose, A Typical Day, Origins of Abhayagiri, Thai Forest Tradition, Ajahn Chah, Western Sangha).

Schedneck, Brooke. “Theravāda Buddhism and the History of Modern Vipassanā” and “The Field of International Engagement with Thai Meditation Centers.” Chapters 2 & 3 in *Thailand’s International Meditation Centers: Tourism and the Global Commodification of Religious Practices*. London & New York: Routledge, 2015.

***Field Visit:**

Tuesday, December 6, 7:30pm–9:45pm

Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
2304 McKinley Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94703

Bring Field Notes to monastery.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 13**IBS Classroom: Wrap Up**
