

SYLLABUS: GTU/INSTITUTE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES -Spring, 2017

Instructor: Taigen Dan Leighton

Title: **Topics in Zen Buddhist Thought: Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness**

Course number: HRPB-8488 [Online Course]

Course Description: We will explore teachings about Suchness from the Tang dynasty master Dongshan Liangjie (807–869), the legendary founder of the Caodong lineage of Chan Buddhism, transmitted to Japan as Sōtō Zen. The koans featuring Dongshan reveal the subtlety and depth of the nature of reality, the inner dynamics of non-self, and the immediacy of the path beyond stages. These colorful teaching stories and commentaries on them demonstrate the lively Zen expression of classic Buddhist doctrines. We will analyze Dongshan’s evocative long teaching poem “The Jewel Mirror Samadhi,” and the dialectical understanding of the particular and universal expressed in the teaching of the Five Degrees or Ranks initiated by Dongshan.

Prerequisite: Some Introductory course in Buddhism, including the Mahayana.

Course format: Online Discussion.

Evaluation method: final term paper, midterm exam, participation in online discussion.

15 students maximum.

Auditors with faculty permission

PIN code required

Texts:

[R] = On Reserve at GTU Library

Required:

Leighton, Taigen Dan, *Just This is It: Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness*. Boston: Shambhala, 2015. [R]

Cleary, Thomas, trans. *The Book of Serenity*. Boston: Shambhala, 1990. [R]

Powell, William F., trans. *The Record of Tung-shan*. Honolulu: Kuroda Institute, University of Hawai’i Press, 1986. [PDF attached on Moodle-Week 1] [R]

Optional, but Recommended:

Chang Chung-Yuan, trans. *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism: Selected from "Transmission of the Lamp."* New York: Vintage Books, 1971. [R]

Miurra, Isshu and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *The Zen Koan: Its History and Use in Rinzai Zen*. New York: Harvest Books, 1966.

Bolleter, Ross. *Dongshan’s Five Ranks: Keys to Enlightenment*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2014.

Heine, Steven. *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shōbōgenzō Texts*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Victor Sōgen Hori, “Kōan and Kenshō in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum”, pp. 280-312, in Steven Heine and Dale Wright, editors, *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

There are also Additional Commentaries from the Instructor or others by audio included for each week, also listed in the syllabus below, directly or indirectly relating to assigned reading on Dongshan or Suchness.

Additional Research Bibliography [OPTIONAL] is at end of syllabus.

Weekly Topics and Assignments:

1. Week of January 30:

Introduction Dongshan's Context. Dongshan's meeting his teacher, Nonsentient beings expounding the Dharma, Buddha nature teaching.

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Introduction and chapter 1, pp. 1-32.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 23-26.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: "Nonsentient" Beings Expound Dharma

<http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/dharma_talks_audio>

"Nonsentient" Beings Expound Dharma

ADZG 349: April 13, 2015 - ADZG Monday Night Dharma Talk

2. Week of February 6:

Depicting This Reality. It now is me; I now am not it. The pivot of studying the self.

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 2, pp. 33-48.

Cleary, *The Book of Serenity*, case 49, pp. 206-209.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 27-29.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: It Now is You; Practicing Suchness

<http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/dharma_talks_audio>

It Now Is You; Practicing Suchness

ADZG 348: April 5, 2015 - ADZG Sunday Morning Dharma Talk

3. Week of February 13:

Yunyan and Dongshan's Training. Yunyan as Zen Failure. The One who is Not Busy.

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 3, pp. 49-67.

Cleary, *The Book of Serenity*, case 69, 21, 37, 54; pp. 290-294, 91-94, 163-166, 229-232.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: Yunyan's Failure and the Varied Moons

<http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150420DT_ADZG_yunyan_failure_varied_moons.mp3>

4. Week of February 20:

No Grass for Ten Thousand Miles, Weeds outside and inside, grass as medicine and sanctuary.

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 4, pp. 71-82.
 Cleary, *The Book of Serenity*, case 89, pp. 382-384.
 Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, p. 48.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: Dongshan overview: Just This; the Mountaintop; and No Grass
 <http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/dharma_talks_audio>
 Dongshan Overview: Just This; The Mountaintop; and No Grass
 ADZG 350: April 19, 2015 - ADZG Sunday Morning Dharma Talk
 Taigen Leighton audio: Weeds Everywhere, The Body Always Close
 <http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/dharma_talks_audio>
 Weeds Everywhere: The Body Always Close
 ADZG 360: May 31, 2015 - ADZG Sunday Morning Dharma Talk

5. Week of February 27:

Beyond Heat or Cold, Extreme Climate, Emotional climate.

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 5, pp. 83-100.
 Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, p. 49.

Additional Commentary:

Cleary and Cleary, *Blue Cliff Record*, case 43 [Moodle attachment]

6. Week of March 6:

The White Rabbit, The prodigal son and the dragon girl

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 6, pp. 101-110.
 Cleary, *The Book of Serenity*, case 56, pp. 237-240.
 Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 32-36.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audios: Two talks on the White Rabbit
 <http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150406DT_ADZG_The_White_Rabbit.mp3>
 <http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130408DT_ADZG_dongshan_white_rabbit.mp3>

7. Week of March 13:

The Bird's Path, reflections on the path

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 7, pp. 111-122.
 Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, p. 55.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: The Bird's Path and the Mountaintop
 <http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150316DT_ADZG_birds_path_mountaintop.mp3>

8. Week of March 20:

The Mountaintop, Sudden awakening and practice at the peak

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 8, pp. 123-134.

Cleary, *The Book of Serenity*, case 32, pp. 140-146.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 49, 39.

Additional Commentaries:

Taigen Leighton audio: Just This Is It and the Mountaintop

< <http://audio.ancientdragon.org/2015-03-21-cc-taigen-dan-leighton.mp3>>

Taigen Leighton audio: A Mountain Apart: Being Somewhere Else

<http://www.ancientdragon.org/dharma/dharma_talks_audio>

A Mountain Apart: Being Somewhere Else

ADZG 359: May 30, 2015 - ADZG Three Day Sesshin Dharma Talk

Midterm Exam Due

[NOTE: March 27-April 2 is GTU Spring Recess]

9. Week of April 3:

A Person of Suchness, Ten Suchnesses and no such thing as suchness

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 9, pp 135-144.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: Persons of Suchness

<http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150426DT_ADZG_persons_of_suchness.mp3>

10. Week of April 10:

Always Close, Buddha beyond categories, the ultimate intimacy

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 10, pp. 145-156.

Book of Serenity, cases 98, pp. 422-424.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, p. 56.

Additional Commentaries:

Taigen Leighton audio: Always Close

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150503DT_ADZG_always_close.mp3 >

Taigen Leighton audio: Just This is It, Always Close [at Green Gulch Zen Center]

< <http://audio.ancientdragon.org/2015-3-22-ggf-taigen-dan-leighton.mp3>>

11. Week of April 17:

Caring for the One Not Ill, Dongshan's passing

[I advise that you read ahead to the week 12 assignments]

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 11, pp. 157-163.

Book of Serenity, case 94, pp. 402-407.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 67-68.

Additional Commentaries:

Book of Serenity, case 38, pp. 167-170.

Taigen Leighton audio: Death and Life; Death and Love

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150215DT_ADZG_death_life_love.mp3>

Gyoshin Laurel Ross audio: The Gift of Dying

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20150720DT_ADZG_gift_dying.mp3>

12. Week of April 24:

The Jewel Mirror Samadhi, part 1

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 12, pp. 167-209.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 63-65.

Additional Commentary: [Not required to listen to all audios]

Book of Serenity, case 80, pp. 340-345.

Taigen Leighton audio: Snow in a Silver Bowl, Sameness and Difference

<[http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130422DT_ADZG_snow_silver_bowl_sameness_difference.m](http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130422DT_ADZG_snow_silver_bowl_sameness_difference.mp3)
p3>

Taigen Leighton audio: You Are Not Him; He Truly Is You: the Zen Teacher–Student Relationship

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130505DT_ADZG_you_not_him_he_you.mp3>

Taigen Leighton audio: Drumming and Singing Within the Real

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130513DT_ADZG_drumming_singing_real.mp3>

13. Week of May 1:

The Jewel Mirror Samadhi, part 2

Further discussions on the Jewel Mirror Samadhi

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 12, pp. 167-209.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 63-65.

Additional Commentary: [Not required to listen to all audios]

Taigen Leighton audio: Embrace the Territory with Respectfulness

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130517DT_ADZG_embrace_territory_respectfulness.mp3>

Taigen Leighton audio: Reality Constantly Flows; Affirming Mind Accords

<[http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130518DT_ADZG_reality_constantly_flows_affirming_mind.](http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130518DT_ADZG_reality_constantly_flows_affirming_mind.mp3)
mp3>

Taigen Leighton audio: Suchness and the Grieving Sages

< http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130401DT_ADZG_suchness_suffering.mp3>

14. Week of May 8:

The Five Degrees

Assignment:

Just This Is It, Chapter 13, pp. 211-238.

Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, pp. 60-63.

Additional Commentary:

Taigen Leighton audio: The Five Ranks in the Jewel Mirror Samadhi

<http://audio.ancientdragon.org/20130512DT_ADZG_five_ranks_jewel_mirror_samadhi.mp3>

15. Week of May 15:

Review; General Discussion. Major themes and issues revisited.

Assignment:

Work on Final Paper

FINAL PAPERS DUE May 26.

Course Objectives:

- 1) The class will explore the philosophical, pedagogical, and soteriological implications of spiritual teachings expressed in the stories about Dongshan, and in the Jewel Mirror Samadhi and Five Degrees teachings attributed to him.
- 2) We will discuss the practical applications of Dongshan's teachings as described or implied, and their relevance to contemporary spiritual concerns.
- 3) We will explore the dialectical dynamics of the five degree teachings directly and as included in the Jewel Mirror Samadhi.

Grading: Your final grade will be based:

- 1) 35% on participation in online class discussion.
- 2) 30% on 6 page midterm exam, due by end of week 8.
- 3) 35% on a 10 page final research paper, due by the end of the week following week 15, i.e. by May 26.

Participation in online discussion:

Each student will contribute at least two postings and no more than six postings each week on the class material for that week. Each posting should be no more than 3 paragraphs or one page long. These maximum limitations of size and numbers of postings are intended to encourage you to consider carefully your inquiries or responses, and to express digested reflection. These suggested limitations may be shifted during the course at the instructor's discretion. Please try to write as clearly as possible. Feel free to respond to the material provided in the "Additional Commentaries," as well as the main readings.

Your messages can include questions or comments about material in the reading, or responses to other students' questions or comments. Expressing varied viewpoints is encouraged, but please do so with respectfulness to all other participants. As instructor I will respond to comments and questions at least 2 or 3 times each week.

You may separately send questions about class procedures or protocols, either in the Moodle venue, or individually to the instructor at: <taigen108@gmail.com>.

Midterm Test: This will consist of three two-page essay responses to be selected from three of five questions.

Final Research Paper:

Your essays should express your critical response or inquiry into a particular, focused aspect of the material presented in the class texts, clearly articulating your point of view. Comparative papers are welcome, but should focus a significant majority of comment on the material from the class. It is not required that you consult any other than the required reading in the syllabus, but an additional research Bibliography is provided for those interested. Please consult with teacher about paper topics before writing the paper. Papers should be 10 pages typed and double-spaced, plus conventional forms of notes and bibliography.

FINAL PAPERS DUE MAY 26.

Note: Prerequisite for this class is some background in Buddhist Studies or Practice.

I am available for consultation via e-mail at: taigen108@gmail.com

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Additional Research Bibliography [Optional]:

- Aitken, Robert. trans. with commentary. *The Gateless Barrier: The Wu-men Kuan (Mumonkan)*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990.
- Cleary, Thomas. *Entry into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism*. Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1983.
- _____. trans. *The Five Houses of Zen*. Boston: Shambhala, 1997.
- _____. *Timeless Spring: A Soto Zen Anthology*. Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1980.
- _____. trans. and commentary. *Unlocking the Zen Koan, A New Translation of the Wumenguan*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1997.
- Cleary, Thomas, and J. C. Cleary, trans. *The Blue Cliff Record*. 3 vols. Boulder, Colo.: Shambhala, 1977.
- Dumoulin, Heinrich. *Zen Buddhism: A History India and China*. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter, trans. volume one. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990.
- Dylan, Bob. *Lyrics 1962–2001*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Ferguson, Andy. *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.
- Foster, Nelson, and Jack Shoemaker, eds. *The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader*. Hopewell, N.J.: The Ecco Press, 1996.
- Fowlie, Wallace, trans. *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Heine, Steven and Dale Wright, editors, *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Heine, Steven. *Opening a Mountain: Koans of the Zen Masters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- _____. *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Koan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.
- King, Sallie. *Buddha Nature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Kirchner, Thomas Yuho, editor, *The Record of Linji*, trans. and commentary by Ruth Fuller Sasaki. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.
- Leighton, Taigen Dan with Yi Wu, trans. *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi*. Boston: Tuttle and Co., 2000.
- Leighton, Taigen Dan. *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, revised edition 2012.
- _____. *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dōgen and the Lotus Sutra*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Lu K'uan Yü [Charles Luk]. *Ch'an and Zen Teaching, Series Two*. London: Rider & Company, 1961.
- Miura, Isshu and Sasaki, Ruth Fuller. *Zen Dust: the History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzai (Lin-chi) Zen*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1966. Later republished, although without the

- voluminously comprehensive and invaluable footnotes, as *The Zen Koan: Its History and Use in Rinzai Zen*.
- Ogata, Sohaku, trans. *The Transmission of the Lamp: Early Masters; Compiled by Tao Yuan, a Ch'an Monk of the Sung Dynasty*. Durango, Colo.: Longwood Academic, 1990.
- Sasaki, Ruth Fuller, Yoshitaka Iriya, and Dana R. Fraser, trans. *The Recorded Sayings of Layman P'ang: A Ninth-Century Zen Classic*. New York: Weatherhill, 1971.
- Sharf, Robert. *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.
- . "How to Think with Chan Gong'an" in Charlotte Furth, Judith Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung, ed. *Thinking With Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007, 213-214.
- Shibayama, Zenkei. *The Gateless Barrier: Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*. Boston: Shambhala, 2000.
- Snyder, Gary. *The Practice of the Wild*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1990.
- Verdu, Alfonso. *Dialectical Aspects in Buddhist Thought: Studies in Sino-Japanese Mahāyāna Idealism*. Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1974.
- Wu, John C.H. *The Golden Age of Zen*. Taipei, Taiwan: United Publishing Center, 1975.
- Wu, Yi. *The Mind of Chinese Ch'an (Zen): The Ch'an School Masters and their Kung-ans*. San Francisco: Great Learning Publishing Company, 1989.
- Yamada, Koun. trans. and commentary. *Gateless Gate*. Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1979.