

Phil 393G.01 - Seminar: Eastern Philosophy (3 credits)

Tue/Thu: 4:00 - 5:15 PM

South College E245

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Course Overview

Course Description: This course introduces students to certain aspects of Zen (Chan) Buddhist metaphysics and ethics. There is much more to Zen Buddhist philosophy than can be fruitfully covered in one course. Our focus will be on the development of core aspects of Zen Buddhist metaphysics and practice in its important predecessors (the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, Nāgārjuna, Daoism, and the Huayan School), and the very distinctive metaphysical picture that emerges in Zen (Chan) Buddhism, most notably in Dōgen. We will cover core Buddhist metaphysical views such as (i) emptiness, (ii) nonbeing, (iii) no-self, (iv) and interdependence, and discuss the practical ethics of zazen and engaged buddhism.

This course will combine the emphasis in Zen Buddhism on experiential, non-discursive practices with the rigor of an analytic philosophy course. Through class participation and coursework, students will critically engage with Zen metaphysical views through reading comprehension, critical thinking, philosophical writing, and embodied practice.

Course Objectives: The student learning objectives of this course are the following. The first is to introduce students to certain core metaphysical and ethical views of Zen Buddhist philosophy. The second is to develop students' philosophical skills, their engagement with Non-Western philosophies, and their capacity for mindfulness and compassionate engagement with themselves, others, and the world.

Assignments/Grades

Embodied Reflections (<1 pg, single or double-spaced)	15%	(1.66% each; <u>9</u> total)
Paper 1 (2-4 pgs, double-spaced)	10%	
Paper 2 (4-6 pgs, double-spaced)	15%	
Final Paper (8-10 pgs, double-spaced)	25%	
Reading Quizzes	15%	(2.5% each; <u>6</u> total)
Attendance and Participation	20%	

Grading Scale		
A		92.6+ %
A-		90-92.5%
B+		87.6-89.9%
B		82.6-87.5%
B-		80-82.5%

C+	77.6-79.9%
C	72.6-77.5%
C-	70-72.5%
D+	67.6-69.9%
D	62.6-67.5%
D-	60-62.5%
F	<59.9%

Weekly Embodied Reflection Journal:

- **Frequency:** Each week on which a paper is not due, you will write *an embodied reflection journal*. There are eleven weeks in which a paper is not due. You can miss two (2) weeks for free, viz. you must turn in nine (9) reflection journal entries.
- **Length:** less than one page (double spaced; ~200 words).
- **Instructions:** Zen emphasizes the non-duality of the body and the mind. So we will engage these together. First, you must engage in some sort of embodied contemplative practice for 15 - 30 minutes, e.g. meditation, breath work, walking, yoga, dancing, etc. Afterward, think about a concept or idea from that week. Finally, write a brief reflection connecting that embodied experience to that concept or idea. (For example, go on a walk and then ask yourself 'how does the Huayan notion of interdependence arise in your experience while walking?')
- **Submission/Grading:** As a .pdf or .doc (.docx), submit your journal entries on Canvas. **Journal entries are due at the end of the week by Sunday at 11:59 pm.** Weekly entries will be graded on a minus, plus/minus, or plus scale, without comments.

Papers: You will **write three papers** during the course of the semester. The **lengths and requirements** of the papers will increase over the course of the semester (see overview above). I will post instructions for each paper one week prior to their due date. The point of the staggered-approach to the papers is to gradually develop your skills at writing longer, more complicated philosophical papers. I will give detailed comments on papers.

Reading Quizzes: There will be **six (6) short reading quizzes** over the course of the semester at the end of each major topic. These reading quizzes are designed to keep you on track and to make sure that you have a sufficient grasp of all of the major topics in the course. Each quiz is worth 2.5% of your grade.

Attendance and Participation: Your participation grade is based on the extent to which you complete in-class activities, attend class, and participate in discussion. Late attendance gets half-credit unless otherwise excused. You can miss up to three (3) classes without it affecting your attendance grade, after that you will lose 5% of your attendance grade for every unexcused absence. You must email me with a legitimate reason to have your absence excused.

Additional Information

Course Materials: All readings are available on Canvas. If you get alternative copies, make sure they are the **same editions** as those available on Canvas.

Office Hours: I have office hours Wednesdays from 2:30 - 3:30 or *by appointment* (also meeting on Zoom is fine).

Communication: If you need to contact me outside of office hours, you can reach me by email. You must use your UMass email when emailing me. During the week, I will respond to emails within 24 hours and try to reply to emails sent during business hours the same day. If you send me an email outside of business hours, do not expect a same-day response.

Accommodation: If you find the course in any way inaccessible, please let me know. If you need academic accommodation, please contact [Disability Services](#). The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism (including the use of AI). The use of AI tools is strongly prohibited in this course for any aspect of your work. This includes drafting, editing, or assisting in any part of writing or completing assignments. Submitting work generated through AI tools will be treated as a violation of the university's academic honesty policy. UMass has a zero tolerance policy for academic dishonesty. If you have any questions, look [here](#) or ask me. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent

Title IX Policy: In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students, free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation. This includes interactions in person or online through digital platforms and social media. Title IX also protects against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, including recovery. There are resources here on campus to support you. A summary of the available Title IX resources (confidential and non-confidential) can be found at the following link: <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/resources>. You do not need to make a formal report to access them. If you need immediate support, you are not alone. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year at the SASA Hotline 413-545-0800.

***Note: The syllabus/schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.**

Readings and Assignments Schedule

***Note:** if there are no sections/pages listed, the entire article/chapter is assigned.

Week	Date	Topic	Assigned Reading	Pages / Sections	Notes
1	Tue, Sep 2	Course Introduction	Syllabus + <i>Priest (2018), "General Background"</i>	Ch. 1; pp. 3 - 15	
	Thu, Sep 4	Heart Sutra	<i>The Heart Sutra (Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya)</i>	full	
2	Tue, Sep 9	Emptiness	Kasulis (1981), <i>Zen Action/Zen Person</i>	Ch. 2; pp. 16 - 28	
	Thu, Sep 11	Nāgārjuna	Garfield (1995), <i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>	pp. 14 - 15; 33 - 34	
3	Tue, Sep 16	Nāgārjuna	Priest (2013), "Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyakamakārikā"	pp. 129 - 134	
	Thu, Sep 18	Nāgārjuna	Garfield (1995), <i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>	pp. 67 - 76	
4	Tue, Sep 23	Nāgārjuna	Garfield (1995), <i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>	pp. 293 - 308	
	Thu, Sep 25	Nāgārjuna	Garfield (1995), <i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>	pp. 309 - 321	Paper #1, due Sep 28 (by midnight)
5	Tue, Sep 30	Nonbeing	Kasulis (1981), <i>Zen Action/Zen Person</i>	Ch. 3; pp. 29 - 38	
	Thu, Oct 2	<i>Daodejing</i>	Liu (2006) "Laozi"	Ch. 6; pp. 131 - 141	
6	Tue, Oct 7	<i>Daodejing</i>	Liu (2006) "Laozi"	Ch. 6; pp. 142 - 151	
	Thu, Oct 9	Zhuangzi	Liu (2006) "Zhuangzi"	Ch. 7; pp 152 - 161	
7	Tue, Oct 14	Zhuangzi	Liu (2006) "Zhuangzi"	Ch. 7; pp 162 - 173	
	Thu, Oct 16	Zhuangzi	Liu (2006) "Zhuangzi"	Ch. 7; pp. 174 - 180	
8	Tue, Oct 21	Interdependence	Priest (2018), "The Golden Lion"	Ch. 8; pp. 108 - 124	
	Thu, Oct 23	Huayan	Chan (1969), "The One-and-All Philosophy"	Ch. 25; pp. 406 - 413	
9	Tue, Oct 28	Huayan	Chan (1969), "The One-and-All Philosophy"	Ch. 25; pp. 413 - 424	
	Thu, Oct 30	Zazen	Kasulis (1981), <i>Zen Action/Zen Person</i>	Ch. 6; pp. 65 - 86	Paper #2, due Nov 2 (by midnight)

10	Tue, Nov 4	Zen	Kasulis (1981), Zen Action/Zen Person	(finish)	✗ No Class Tue, Nov 4 (Election Day)
	Thu, Nov 6	Zen	<i>The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch</i>	Ch. 1; pp. 17 - 27	
11	Tue, Nov 11	Zen	Kasulis (1981), Zen Action/Zen Person	Ch. 7; pp. 87 - 93	✗ No Class Tue, Nov 11 (Veterans Day)
	Thu, Nov 13	Dōgen	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i>	Chs. 1 & 4; pp. 1 - 6; 39 - 46	
12	Tue, Nov 18	Dōgen	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i>	Ch. 6; pp. 60 - 77	
	Thu, Nov 20	Dōgen	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i>	Ch. 6; 77 - 96	
13	Nov 24 - 30	✗ No Class (Thanksgiving Break)			
14	Tue, Dec 2	Engaged Buddhism	Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>No Death, No Fear</i>	Ch. 2; pp. 19 - 28	
	Thu, Dec 4	Engaged Buddhism	Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>No Death, No Fear</i>	Ch. 3; pp. 39 - 55	
15	Tue, Dec 9	Engaged Buddhism	Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>No Death, No Fear</i>	Ch. 6; pp. 105 - 118	Last Class (optional "Afterword": Ch. 8)
					Paper #3, due Dec 14 (by midnight)