TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Philosophy/Religion PR326 — Dr. Joel R. Smith
Spring, 2010 — Skidmore College

A study of classical and contemporary Tibetan thinkers who see philosophy as intertwined with religious practice. The course focuses on the Vajrayana form of Mahayana Buddhism that is the central element in the culture of Tibet, as well as its Mahayana Buddhist background in India. Emphasis is on the central ideas of wisdom, compassion, emptiness, and dependent arising.

Texts:

1. -----, The Dhammapada: The Path of Truth, tr. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1995).
2. Gyamtso, Khenpo Tsultrim, Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness, tr. Shenpen Hookham (Auckland, New XZealand: Zhyl-sil Cho-kyi Gha-tsal Publications, 2001).
3. Keown, Damien, Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
4. Lopez, Donald S., Jr. Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999). [Lopez (PS) on the schedule of readings below]
5. Lopez, Donald S., Jr. (ed.), Religions of Tibet in Practice, Abridged Edition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007). [Lopez (RT) below]
6. Powers, John, Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism, Revised Edition (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2007).
7. Santideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Bodhicaryavatara), tr. Vesna A. Wallace & B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1997).
8. Tsering, Geshe Tashi, Emptiness (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009).
9. Yeshe, Lama Thubten, Introduction to Tantra: The Transformation of Desire (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001).

I will be delighted to talk with you outside of class. Make an appointment to see me or come by during my office hours.

Office: Ladd 217. Email: jsmith@skidmore.edu
Office phone: 580-5407. (Please do not call me at home.)

Office hours: Monday through Friday: 1:30-2:30
(other times by appointment)

THE BUDDHIST BACKGROUND IN INDIA: THERAVADA AND MAHAYANA

Jan 26: Introduction to the course;
film: "Buddhism: Footprint of the Buddha."
28: Powers, Buddhism in India (Ch. 1).

30: Optional one day retreat at Karma Triyana Dharmachakra.

Feb 2: Keown, Buddhism & Elephants--The Buddha--Karma & Rebirth--
The Four Noble Truths (Ch. 1-4). DF1.1
4: Powers, Some Important Buddhist Doctrines--Meditation
(Ch. 2-3); DF1.2
Keown, Meditation (Ch. 7); DF1.3
Hall, "Is Buddhism Good for your Health?" (handout).

5-7: Optional retreat at Zen Mountain Monastery.

9: -----, The Dhammapada (Ch. 1-26: all of it); DF1.4
Gyamtso, Stage One: Shravaka (9-25); DF1.5
Keown, Ethics (Ch. 8);
Batchelor/Thurman, "Reincarnation: A Debate" (handout).
11: Powers, Mahayana (Ch. 4); DF1.6
Keown, Mahayana--in Asia--In the West (Ch. 5, 6, 9).

16: Santideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life DF1.7
(Preface & Introduction & Ch. I, II, III, IV, V).
18: Santideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life
(Ch. VI, VII, VIII, X; browse in Ch. IX) DF1.8

22(Monday): Annotated Bibliography due, 10:00 sharp in Ladd 217

23: Gyamtso, Comings & Goings (ix-xi) & Introduction (1-8);
Tsering, The Revolution of Selflessness (Ch. 1); DF1.9
Tsering, Prerequisites for Understanding Selflessness(Ch2)
25: Tsering, Concepts of Selfhood (35-55 only); DF1.10
Gyamtso, Stage Two: Cittamatra (27-43). DF2.1

Mar 2: Gyamtso, Stage Three: Svatantrika (45-53); DF2.2
Tsering, Selflessness in Svatantrika Madyamkika (55-59);
Tsering, Differences between Svantanrika & Prasangika
(Ch. 4). DF2.3
4: Gyamtso, Stage Four: Prasangika (55-63); DF2.4
Tsering, Prasangika's Unique Presentation of Emptiness
(Ch. 5). DF2.5

9: Tsering, Emptiness & Dependent Arising (Ch. 7); DF2.6

-----, "The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra" (Tsering, Appendix: 131-133). DF2.7

11: Tsering, Establishing Emptiness (Ch. 6). DF2.8

16 Spring
18 break

23: Gyamtso, Stage Five: Shentong (65-79); DF2.9
Powers, The Four Orders (Ch. 11);
Williams, The Tathagatagarbha (handout). DF2.10

VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM IN TIBET

25: Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra (Preface & Ch. 1-4). DF3.1

30: Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra (Ch. 5-8). DF3.2
Apr 1: Powers, Introduction (21-27) & Tibetan Religious History (Ch. 5); DF3.3
Lopez (RT), Introduction (1-36). DF3.4

5 (Monday): Essay due, 10:00 sharp in Ladd 217.

6: Powers, The Twentieth Century--Festivals and Holy Days--Geography and Architecture (Ch. 6-8).
8: Powers, Tantra (Ch. 9); DF3.5
Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra, Ch. 9-12 & Afterword DF3.6

13: Lopez (RT), Rites and Techniques (153-220 only): DF3.7
a. A Rite of Empowerment (Ch. 9);
b. The Horseback Consecration Ritual (Ch. 10);
c. An Offering of Torma (Ch. 11);
d. An Avalokiteshvara Sadhana (Ch. 12);
e. A Fasting Ritual (Ch. 13);
Presentation 1 : Sacred Site _____.
15: Powers, Bon: A Heterodox System (Ch. 16); DF3.8
Lopez (PS), The Art (Ch. 5); DF3.9
Presentation 2 : Sand Mandala _____;
Presentation 3 : Five Buddha Families _____.

20: Lopez(RT), Food, Clothes, Dreams, & Karmic Propensities (Ch. 14); DF3.10
Powers, Nyingma (Ch. 12); DF4.1
Lopez (PS), The Name (Ch.1); DF4.2
Presentation 4 : Mantra _____;
Presentation 5 : Ecology _____.
22: Powers, Death & Dying in Tibetan Buddhism (Ch. 10); DF4.3
Lopez (RT), Dying, Death & Other Opportunities (Ch. 23); DF4.4

Presentation 6 : Manjushri & Vajrabhairava _____;

27: Lopez (RT), Mindfulness of Death (Ch. 22);
Lopez (PS), The Book (Ch. 2); DF4.5
Powers, Kagyu (Ch. 13); DF4.6
Presentation 7 : Tulku _____.

29: Lopez (RT), Dealing w/ Death & Other Demons (377-414 only)
a. Returning from Hell (Ch. 25);
b. Turning Back Gossip (Ch. 26); DF4.7
c. Hail Protection (Ch. 27);
d. A Prayer Flag for Tara (Ch. 28);
Powers, Sakya (Ch. 14); DF4.8
Presentation 8 : Tara _____;
Presentation 9 : Vajrayogini _____.

May 4: Powers, Geluk (Ch. 15); DF4.9
Lopez (PS), Introduction (1-13) & The Prison (Ch. 7) DF4.10
Presentation 10 : Dorje Shugden _____.

18 (Monday): Research paper due, 10:00 a.m. sharp in Ladd 217.

Course requirements:

(1) <u>Participation</u> (20%): Participation will count 20% of your final course grade. Participation in discussion is essential to your learning in this course, so I urge you to participate fully and actively in our class discussions.

(a) ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AT <u>ALL</u> CLASSES (unless you have a certified medical excuse). I will grade your attendance and contribution to discussion as follows:

A or A- = attend all classes and make useful contributions to discussion in nearly every class.
B+ or B = attend all classes and make regular contributions.
B- = attend all classes but seldom speak.
C, D, F = one or more absences no matter how much you talk.

Please do not arrive in class late. Please do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely necessary. (Leaving class unnecessarily is rude and distracts me and other students. It also suggests a lack of concentration or lack of interest on your part.)

Please turn off your cell phone!

Since learning during class depends directly on the reading and writing assignments, all assignments must be completed on time. Your understanding of class discussions, and the quality of class discussion itself, depend on how well you have prepared the reading assignments, so read the assignments carefully and critically. Take notes or outline the reading so you are well prepared for class discussion.

The Skidmore College guideline is that students should study two hours outside of class for every hour of class time. Note that this course earns four, not three, credits, so this course involves considerable more work than a three credit course. Compared to a three credit course, this course has an additional 30 minutes of class time each Tuesday and Thursday, and also an additional hour of work outside of class for each Tuesday and Thursday class. Since each class is 1 hour and 50 minutes long, I expect you to spend about 3 1/2 hours preparing for each of our classes, and I have assigned work based on that expectation. I suggest that you work out a study schedule that sets aside a regular study period to prepare for each class. Use the full study time--if you finish the reading quickly, go back to reflect on the reading more deeply by re-reading, by underlining, by taking notes, etc.

(b) Discussion focus: Four times during the semester you and a partner will meet together outside of class to discuss what to focus on. Choose a passage in the reading and focus our class discussion on it by raising questions or criticisms, by connecting it to other things in the course, or by developing it further. The task is not to summarize the reading, but to focus our discussion on a specific issue that you find important. These are marked **DF** on the schedule of assignments above.

(c) Study guides: Brief written assignments on the reading will be assigned regularly. These will be graded pass/fail. They will be due at the beginning of class, and normally late study guides will not be accepted for credit.

The combination of (a) your attendance and the quantity and quality of your class discussion, (b) the discussion foci, and (c) the study guides will count 20% of your final course grade.

(2) <u>Annotated Bibliography</u> (20%): An Annotated Bibliography for your research project [see (4) below] is due in my office at 10:00 a.m. sharp on Monday, February 22. I will provide detailed instructions well in advance.

(3) <u>Essay</u> (20%): An essay of about 8 typed pages is due in my office at 10:00 a.m. sharp on Monday, April 5. I will provide detailed instructions well in advance.

(4) <u>Research project</u> (40%): You and a partner will be assigned the same general topic. As you do your research during the semester, you will work with me and your partner to focus the general topic more specifically. I will provide more detailed instructions later. The research project will culminate in two events:

(a) Class presentation: During one of the last seven classes, you and your partner will have 30 minutes to discuss your research project. Present your research for about 20 minutes, then allow about 10 minutes for discussion.

(b) Paper: A paper of about 15 typed (double-spaced) pages will be due on the first day of exam week at 10:00 a.m. sharp on Monday, May 6. The grade on the paper (including the class presentation) will count 40% of your final course grade.