

PHIL 388 (2017). Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain Philosophers in Interaction.
Tues & Thurs. 2:00-3:30pm. Frederic Lasserre 104.

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This course will examine selected topics from Indian philosophy from the early period of the *Upaniṣads* (c. 7th-5th centuries BCE) up to around the eighth century CE. Our focus will be on ideas about the nature of the self and liberation or awakening. From the Brahmanical (Hindu) tradition, we will examine the philosophical ideas of the *Upaniṣads*, the philosophy of the Yoga school, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and select ideas from the Nyāya school. From the Buddhist tradition, we will examine the philosophical thought of the Buddha, Theravāda Buddhist analyses of the person, and Mahayana Buddhist philosophy (the Madhyamaka or “Middle Way” school as presented by the philosophers Nāgārjuna and Śāntideva, and the Yogācāra or “Yoga Practice” school as presented by the philosopher Vasubandhu). (Despite the official UBC course title, unfortunately we will not have time to examine Jain philosophy.)

The objective of this course is to give you an opportunity to read closely and think intensively about some major works of Indian philosophy, and to discuss them with your classmates and me. All the reading assignments are from the original philosophical texts (in English translation). (Supplementary materials will be made available electronically.)

These are profound and powerful writings that can change your life if you study them with diligence and enthusiasm. You can return to them over and over again for new insights and inspiration throughout your life. All the required books for the course are primary philosophical texts and are essential additions to any philosophical library. They are books to keep for life.

The learning approach will be focused discussion of the readings. We will work through the readings together in class, so **you will be required to do the relevant class reading before each class meets**. There will be no lectures with slides. Instead, each class we will read and discuss the texts together. (Supplementary information will be available through Canvas.)

Given this objective and approach, attendance and participation are essential and will make up 25% of your final mark. You should not take this class if you cannot commit to regular attendance.

I recognize and acknowledge that some of you may feel uncomfortable speaking in class. For those who feel this way, I encourage you to email me with your thoughts and questions. This will let me know that you are engaged with the material, and will count toward the participation component of your mark. (See also the email policy below.)

Requirements

Class attendance and participation: 25%.

Take-home midterm quiz: 25%. Due Oct. 13 by 5pm.

One critical and reflective paper: 25%. Due Nov. 13 by 5pm.

Take-home final quiz: 25%. Due Dec. 8 by 5pm.

All written assignments should be sent electronically to ethompsonphilosophy@gmail.com

Cell phone and computer policy

Cell phones should be turned off or put in silent mode during class. You should not be sending messages. I encourage you to turn off your computers and to take handwritten notes. (If you need to use a computer, then it should be used only for taking notes.) There is now good evidence that you will learn better if you turn off your computer and take notes by hand. See the following articles:

<http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away> and

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/> and <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/take-notes-by-hand-for-better-long-term-comprehension.html#.WSRsxBPYu-E>

UBC Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.

For further information, please see the following link about academic misconduct:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILURE OF THE QUIZ OR PAPER, as well as possible further disciplinary action by the University.

Email Policy

The following guidelines apply to email communication during this course:

- I will make every effort to reply to legitimate email inquiries within 24 hours during weekdays but I may not respond to email during the weekend.
- Each email message should include in the Subject line the course identifier and a clear statement of purpose (e.g., PHIL 388: Question about Paper); otherwise, it may be deleted along with spam messages.
- Use evan.thompson@ubc.ca for all course-related questions; use ethompsonphilosophy@gmail.com only for submitting electronic copies of written assignments, as instructed above.

Required Books (available at the UBC bookstore)

Gavin Flood, *The Bhagavad Gita*. (One of the major religious and philosophical texts of Hinduism.)

John J. Holder, *Early Buddhist Discourses*. (Select translations of the early Pāli language texts known as the Nikāyas or the Sutta Piṭaka, which purport to record the words of the Buddha, as remembered by his disciples. These texts form part of the scriptural basis for Theravāda Buddhism.)

Patrick Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*. (One of the major religious and philosophical texts of Hinduism; the oldest texts date from around the 7th century BCE and are arguably the world's oldest philosophical texts.)

Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*. (One of the major works of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, dating from the 8th century CE. It is a long poem describing the path of the bodhisattva—one who renounces attaining her or his own awakening or enlightenment in order to help all sentient beings attain awakening or enlightenment.)

Swami Satchidananda, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. (The major text of the Yoga school describing the practice of yoga—how to still the fluctuations of the mind in order to realize pure awareness and attain liberation—translated and interpreted by an influential 20th century Indian teacher who brought yoga to the West.)

Mark Siderits and Shoryu Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way*. (One of the most influential and important philosophical texts of Mahayana Buddhism.)

Recommended book (available at the UBC bookstore)

Sue Hamilton, *Indian Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*. (This is not required reading but provides a very useful short overview of Indian philosophy.)

Additional Resources

There is an excellent series of short podcasts covering many periods, figures, and schools of Indian philosophy at the “History of Philosophy *without any gaps*” homepage:

<https://historyofphilosophy.net/india> Each episode is approximately 20 minutes. I highly recommend them.

UBC Asian Studies Professor Adheesh Sathaye has produced an outstanding video lecture series on the history of Indian civilization:

A Journey through Ancient Indian Cultural History

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj5WpqFRmbAUR1tWCwlcO7srnsXBMABup>

A Tour through the Mahabharata Museum (very helpful for understanding the larger background of the *Bhagavad-gītā*) <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj5WpqFRmbAVGVbc58u9IJZu2mRsibySZ>

The Indian Philosophy Blog: <http://indianphilosophyblog.org/>

Articles on Indian Philosophy from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

Daniel Arnold, “Kumārila,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kumaarila/>

Piotr Balcerowicz, “Jayarāśi,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/jayaraasi/>

James Blumenthal, “Śāntarakṣita,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/saantarak-sita/>

Monima Chadha, “Perceptual Experience and Concepts in Classical Indian Philosophy,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perception-india/>

Amita Chatterjee, “Naturalism in Classical Indian Philosophy,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism-india/>

Christian Coseru, “Mind in Indian Buddhist Philosophy,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mind-indian-buddhism/>

Madhav Deshpande, “Language and Testimony in Classical Indian Philosophy,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/language-india/>

Brendon Gillon, “Logic in Classical Indian Philosophy,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-india/>

Jonardon Ganeri, “Analytic Philosophy in Early Modern India,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/early-modern-india/>

Jonathan C. Gold, “Vasubandhu,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vasubandhu/>

Charles Goodman, “Ethics in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-indian-buddhism/>

Charles Goodman, “Śāntideva,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/shantideva/>

Richard Hayes, “Madhyamaka,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/madhyamaka/>

Matthew Keating, “The Literal-Nonliteral Distinction in Classical Indian Philosophy,”

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/literal-nonliteral-india/>

Stephen Phillips, “Epistemology in Classical Indian Philosophy,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-india/>

Noa Ronkin, “Abhidharma,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abhidharma/>

Mark Siderits, “Buddha,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddha/>

Sonam Thakchoe, “The Theory of Two Truths in India,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/twotruths-india/>

Tom Tillemans, “Dharmakīrti,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dharmakiirti/>

Joerg Tuske, “The Concept of Emotion in Classical Indian Philosophy,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/concept-emotion-india/>

Jan Westerhoff, "Nāgārjuna," <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nagarjuna/>

Schedule

Note: The majority of these texts were composed by men for a male audience, and thus privilege the male voice and role. Nevertheless, female characters and their voices appear in some of the texts, where they play a central role—and one that may challenge aspects of the male narrative in which they figure. Pay special attention to the female characters Gārgi and Maitreyī in the *Upaniṣads*. The Buddhist texts, "Verses of Sister Vajirā" (*Early Buddhist Discourses*, pp. 86-88) and Kisagotami" (from the *Therīgāthā*, arguably the earliest collection of women's writing) present themselves as composed and spoken by women. The significance of gender and its relationship to the philosophical ideas presented in these texts is an important issue for you to think about as you read and for us to talk about in class.

Week 1: Sept. 5 & 7. Introduction and the Rig Veda

Sept 5. No class (Imagine UBC Day).

Sept 7. Introduction to the course. Read the Rig Veda 1.1, Hymn to Agni, at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/rv01001.htm> and Rig Veda 10.129, Creation, at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/rv10129.htm>

Strongly recommended: the documentary film, "Altar of Fire," viewable at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYvkYk7GvJ0>

Week 2: Sept. 12 & 14. Upaniṣads

Sept 12. *Upaniṣads*, pp. 28-30, 34-52, 58-71, 171-175.

Sept 14. *Upaniṣads*, pp. 227-228, 232-247, 289-290.

Week 3: Sept. 19 & 21. Yoga

Sept 19. *Yoga Sūtras*. Read all the numbered verses of Books One and Two, and consult the commentaries as you like for verses of particular interest to you.

Sept 21. *Yoga Sūtras*. Read all the numbered verses of Books Three and Four, and consult the commentaries as you like for verses of particular interest to you.

Week 4: Sept. 26 & 28.

Sept. 26. *The Bhagavad Gīta*, Chapters 1-8.

Sept. 28. *The Bhagavad Gīta*, Chapters 9-16.

Week 5. Oct. 3 & 5. The Buddha

Oct. 3. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, "Discourse on the Noble Quest."

Oct. 5. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, "Discourse to the Kālāmas."

Recommended: Mark Siderits, "Buddha," <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddha/>

Week 6. Oct 10 & 12. The Buddha

Oct. 10. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, "The Greater Discourse on Cause."

Oct. 12. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, "The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness."

Week 7. Oct 17 & 19. The Buddha

Oct. 17. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, "Discourse of the Honeyball" & "Short Discourses from the *Samyutta Nikāya*."

Oct. 19. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, "The Greater Discourse on the Destruction of Craving," "The Shorter Discourse to Māluṅkyaputta," & "Discourse to Vacchagotta on Fire."

Week 8. Oct 24 & 26 Theravāda Buddhism

Oct. 24. *Early Buddhist Discourses*, “Discourse to Poṭṭhapāda”. “Kisagotami” (from the *Therīgāthā*, supplied electronically)

Oct 26. *The Debate of King Milinda*, chapters 1 & 2, at http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/milinda.pdf

Week 9. Oct 31 & Nov 2. Abhidharma

Oct. 31 & Nov. 2. Matthew Kapstein, “Vasubandhu and the Nyāya Philosophers on Personal Identity” (supplied electronically).

Recommended: Noa Ronkin, “Abhidharma,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abhidharma/>

Week 10. Nov 7 & 9. Mahayana Buddhism (Madhyamaka): Nāgārjuna

Nov. 7. *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*, “1. An Analysis of Conditions” & “2. An Analysis of the Traversed, the Not Yet Traversed, and the Presently Being Traversed”

Nov. 9. *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*, “13. An Analysis of the Composite” & “15. An Analysis of Intrinsic Nature.”

Recommended: Jan Westerhoff, “Nāgārjuna,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nagarjuna/>

Recommended: Richard Hayes, “Madhyamaka,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/madhyamaka/>

Week 11. Nov 14 & 16. Mahayana Buddhism (Madhyamaka): Nāgārjuna

Nov. 14. *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*, “18. An Analysis of the Self” & “22. An Analysis of the Tathāgata”

Nov. 16. *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*, “24. An Analysis of the Four Noble Truths,” “25. An Analysis of Nirvāna,” & “27. An Analysis of Views.”

Recommended: Sonam Thakchoe, “The Theory of Two Truths in India,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/twotruths-india/>

Week 12. Nov 21 & 23. Mahayana Buddhism (Madhyamaka): Śāntideva.

Nov. 21. *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, chapters 1-5.

Nov. 23. *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, chapters 6-10.

Recommended: Charles Goodman, “Śāntideva,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/shantideva/>

Recommended: Charles Goodman, “Ethics in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism,”

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-indian-buddhism/>

Week 13. Nov 28 & 30. Mahayana Buddhism (Yogācāra): Vasubandhu

Nov. 28 & 30. Jay Garfield, “Vasubandhu’s *Treatise on the Three Natures*: A Translation and Commentary” (supplied electronically).

Recommended: Jonathan C. Gold, “Vasubandhu,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vasubandhu/>

Guidelines for Speaking in Class

“Bhikkhus, possessing five factors, speech is well spoken, not badly spoken; it is blameless and beyond reproach by the wise. What five? It is spoken at the proper time; what is said is true; it is spoken gently; what is said is beneficial; it is spoken with a mind of loving-kindness. Possessing these five factors, speech is well spoken, not badly spoken; it is blameless and beyond reproach by the wise.” -- The Buddha, *Āṅguttara Nikāya V*: 198. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Āṅguttara Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), p. 816.

Our aim in this class is to examine and discuss some classic texts of the Indian philosophical tradition. In our conversations with each other, I ask that you try always to follow the above guidelines for “right speech.” In other words, try to (i) speak when it is appropriate to do so; (ii) say what you believe to be true; (iii) speak gently; (iv) say what you believe is beneficial; and (v) speak with a mind of loving-kindness.

Following these guidelines doesn't mean giving up your own viewpoint or religion to become a Buddhist. It doesn't mean that you can't express disagreement with me or your classmates. And it doesn't mean that you can't be critical. It means that disagreements and criticisms should be expressed at the right time, you should believe them to be true, you should express them gently, you should believe them to be beneficial, and you should express them with a mind of loving-kindness.

I pledge to do the same.