RS 321: Women in Buddhism: A Global Perspective

Class days: Tuesday/Thursday

Time: 1PM to 1:20 PM

Instructor: Mavis Fenn

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Office Hours: 11:30 AM-12:30 P.M. Tues., 2:30-3:30 P.M. Thurs. or by appointment. Students are advised to make an appointment as, due to unavoidable meetings, occasionally office hours may have to be cancelled.

Course Description

An introduction to the roles of women, lay and ordained, within the Buddhist tradition. An examination of views about women found in Indian culture at the time Buddhism arose and the impact that had on the foundation of a nuns’ order in Buddhism and subsequently. As well as the development of Buddhism in India and the role women played in its foundation, we will examine Buddhism in China, Japan and the West, including Canada.

Course Objectives: by the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Identify and explain the important role women have played in Buddhism
2. Identify and explain the challenges women have faced to become ordained
3. Identify and explain the ongoing challenges faced by Buddhist nuns
4. Identify and explain the way Buddhist nuns have responded to these challenges
5. Identify changes in the gender structure of Buddhism in the modern period and in its transmission to the West.
6. Identify some major female Buddhists within the tradition
7. Become familiar with the many women who are currently shaping Buddhism in Canada

Required texts: There is no text for this course.

Course Requirements

1. The focus of this course is on the articles and discussion of them and the ideas they raise. Students will read the article(s) for the class and place a summary—not a blow by blow summary—of 3 points that are being made in the article and of 2-3 questions that the article raised in the student’s mind. These summaries are worth 36% of the final grade.

   The objectives of these summaries are to:
   a. Help students with reading comprehension
   b. Help students to learn how to extract the core elements of an article/argument
   c. Help students contextualize what they read
   d. Help students develop key points for discussion
e. Help students become aware of issues in the study of women in religion

The length of the summary should be about 2-3 pages per article, typed, double-spaced. The student response should pay proper attention to grammar, punctuation and spelling so that the marker can assess the student’s level of writing skills and make suggestions for improvement. Student comments on the material should demonstrate their understanding of it. Students may not use internet materials for these assignments. Opinions should be informed by their readings, the text and lectures. These summaries will form the basis of class discussion so the students should bring a copy of their summary to class. Assignments are due by 11:30 AM on the date of the lecture for that day. No assignments will be accepted after the drop box closes. Students should ensure they have sufficient time as clocks vary in time and the drop box cut off time may not correspond to your clock. Further, students should be aware that all submissions to any drop box are time-stamped. Thus, depositing it in the incorrect drop box by ‘mistake’ will not help if the time-stamp is after the box closes.

2. In class discussion (14%). Students will discuss the questions and issues raised in their reading of the article(s). Students are encouraged to share their ideas based upon their academic readings in any areas they have studied that may prove helpful to the group. The focus is collaborative. The professor will contribute as well but should be seen primarily as a resource for information and current scholarly understanding of information or issues raised. 10 minutes or so before class ends, students will write a short reflection on the discussion or any conclusions made by the group and their perspective on it to be handed in.

3. Research workshop. Students will do research on an area of their choice. An appointment to discuss this research topic should be made with the professor for some time in the first six weeks of the course. An outline will be prepared for the professor’s approval (10%). The student will describe their thesis and research to the group which will provide feedback in terms of suggestions, issues to think about and possible ways of proceeding (20%). Workshops are considered to be part of the discussion requirements and students are expected to attend and support their colleagues.

4. On the last day of class students will submit an academic paper based upon their research and workshop feedback (20%). The paper should be in proper academic form and submitted via dropbox no later than 11:30PM on the due date (Nov. 29th). Students should review the materials on Academic Dishonesty and Policy 71.

Students are allowed to miss 1 summary and 1 discussion without penalty. Any additional absences must be supported by medical documentation or documentation regarding an emergency situation. Students who do not supply documentation will lose the value of the assignment.

There are no ‘extra assignments’ that may be done as a substitute for a poor performance.

Please note the following important information:
**Academic Integrity**: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

**Grievance**: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infos ec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline**: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take Responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

**Appeals**: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Poli cies/policy72.htm.

**Note for Students with Disabilities**: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.
Class Schedule

I will try to follow the schedule as noted below. However, sometimes adjustment is necessary for pedagogical reasons, practical reasons or unforeseen circumstances.

Sept.

11th  Introduction: Course Outline


Oct.


4th  Kim Gutschow, Kim. “Yeshe’s Tibetan Pilgrimage and the Founding of a Himalayan Nunnery”. Available online at http://www.znuns.org/documents/Gutschow-Yeshes_Tibetan_Pilgrimage.pdf If this link is too long, it can be found listed at the bottom of http://www.gadenrelief.org/chu-gutschow.html


25th Bivens (above)

Nov.

1st Workshop.


8th Workshop


15th Workshop


22nd “Catch up” or Study day 

27th Concluding discussion: revisiting course objectives

29th Final Essay due.
List of Articles

A. Foundations

B. Tibet

C. China
D. Japan


E. Buddhism in the West


