



AFFILIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Renison University College
Affiliated with the University of Waterloo
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Renison University College Land Acknowledgement

With gratitude, we acknowledge that Renison University College is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Hodinohsyó:ni, and Attawandaran (Neutral) Peoples, which is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River from mouth to source. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place in all corners of our campus through research, learning, teaching, community building and outreach. We are guided by the work of our Reconciliation and Restoring Steering Committee and Anti-Racism and Decolonization Spokesouncil, as well as the [University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations](#).

Winter 2024

Course Code: RS 204

Course Title: Buddhism

Class Times/Location: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:30am-12:50pm, REN 3106

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 1-2pm

Course Description

An introduction to Buddhist practices, common beliefs and philosophical presuppositions of Buddhist world-views, and the diversity of Buddhism in Asia and beyond.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes - (Upon completion of this course, students should be able to)

- A. Grasp the fundamentals of Buddhist thought and worldview
 - Comprehend central Buddhist ideas and concepts, such as interdependence, karma, and nirvana
 - Understand, the relationships between Buddhist beliefs and practices
- B. Distinguish between major forms of Buddhism
 - Understand key differences between Theravada, Vajrayana, Zen, and Pure Land Buddhism
 - Engage productively with primary sources from various forms of Buddhism
- C. Describe various common forms of Buddhist practice
 - Understand the importance of practices such as chanting, study, precepts, and meditation
 - Demonstrate insight into a variety of Buddhist lives and experiences

A Note About Content

Religion engages with, and reflects, the full range of human experience, behaviour, and attitude, including both the best and the ugliest parts of human life. Films, texts, and other media that we will view or read for this course contain a wide range of content, including things that may make individual students uncomfortable or upset. This may include physical or sexual violence, discrimination and prejudice, sexuality or nudity, frightening images and events, self-harm, religious, political, or cultural views at variance with your own, and other potentially disturbing content. Please speak with the instructor if you wish to receive more information about particular types of content.

Required Text

- *At Home in the World: Stories and Essential Teachings From a Monk's Life*, by Thich Nhat Hanh
- *In Love With the World: A Monk's Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying*, by Yongey Mingur Rinpoche
- *River of Fire, River of Water: An Introduction to the Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism*, by Taitetsu Unno

We will read three books this term. They have been selected because they are all available easily and cheaply online, including Kindle versions, and reflect a range of Buddhist experiences.

Readings Available on LEARN

- Weekly readings.
- Some materials will be accessed via other websites.

Course Requirements and Assessment

There are NO exams or quizzes in RS 204.

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Self-introduction	Monday, January 15	1%
Discussions	Monday nights, ongoing	48%
Exercise responses	Monday nights, ongoing	21%
Book responses	February 12, March 18, April 15	30%
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Total		100%

Introduction

Introduce yourself to the class in the Learn discussion forums. Further instructions are provided in the Forum.

Discussions

Participation in asynchronous discussions about course materials in the Learn discussion forums. Further instructions are provided in the folder Assignments, under Content, in Learn.

Exercise Responses

Students will write seven reflections upon experiential exercises (details of each exercise will be provided separately). Exercise responses should be at least 800 words in length, not including any bibliography (only necessary if works are cited). Reflections are due at 11:59pm on the day that each is assigned (as indicated under Course Requirements and Assessment). Upload them to the appropriate dropbox on Learn. They are experiential in nature but are not opinion pieces: don't just state "I hate this exercise" or "This is really cool." Examine your experience and describe it, provide any insights you received, and try to relate it to the other course content if possible. Some possible approaches to help get you started on writing your exercise responses: What did I do? Why did I do the assignment the way I did it? What was the experience like? Was it similar or different from other activities I've participated in? Was it hard or easy? What did I learn? What surprised me about the experience? How does this relate to our course content? If I repeated the exercise, how might it be different? Further instructions are available in the folder Assignments, under Content, in Learn.

Book Responses

Students will write three response papers to the required books that examine aspects of those readings in depth. Papers will be no shorter than 1,600 words in length, not including the required bibliography. They are due at 11:59pm on the day that each is assigned (as indicated under Course Requirements and Assessment). Upload them to the appropriate dropbox on Learn.

Recipe for successful book papers: Be focused. It is not possible to address all of the ideas in the assigned readings in a paper of this length. Briefly state some of the main points of the reading, then provide your response to them. Responses are up to you, but here are some suggestions that might help: What did you learn? Did you understand the main ideas in the text? How does the reading connect to readings, discussions, or exercises in this or other courses? What was most surprising or compelling to you? What do you wish you could've learned more about? Further instructions are available in the folder Assignments, under Content, in Learn.

Course Outline

Most readings can be found on Learn.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings Due
1	Jan 8 – 12	Compassion	Week 1 readings
2	Jan 15 – 19	Suffering	Week 2 readings
3	Jan 22 – 26	Karma	Week 3 readings
4	Jan 29 – Feb 2	The Nature of Reality	Week 4 readings
5	Feb 5 – 9	Buddhas and Saints	Week 5 readings
6	Feb 12 – 16	Paths to Liberation	Week 6 readings
	Feb 19	Family Day	
	Feb 17 – 25	Reading Week	
7	Feb 26 – Mar 1	Monastics and Monasteries	Week 7 readings
8	Mar 4 – 8	Theravada Buddhism	Week 8 readings
9	Mar 11 – 15	Vajrayana Buddhism	Week 9 readings
10	Mar 18 – 22	Zen Buddhism	Week 10 readings
11	Mar 25 – 28	Pure Land Buddhism	Week 11 readings
	Mar 29	Good Friday	
12	Apr 1 – 5	Engaged Buddhism	Week 12 readings
	Apr 8	Engaged Buddhism	Week 12 readings continued

Late or Incomplete Work

Late work without an accommodation is not accepted. Contact the instructor before the due date (be sure to provide enough time for your request to be considered and answered) if an accommodation may be necessary.

Coursework Submission Policy

Students are expected to do all of the work assigned for this course, and to submit assignments using the Learn dropboxes or discussion forums (as appropriate). Students must do their own work, without help from others or so-called artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT).

Policy on Plagiarism

“Policy 71’s glossary defines plagiarism, in part, as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others (whether attributed or anonymous) as one’s own in any work submitted whether or not for grading purposes” ...

The Vice-President Academic and Dean has the authority to assess instances of plagiarism and the resultant penalties that are raised by an instructor. An instructor can propose a grade penalty to the Vice-President Academic and Dean, who will decide whether to accept the penalty or initiate a formal inquiry.”

For additional information on how plagiarism is dealt with at Renison, review the policy from where the above text is copied: [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#).

Students should also be aware that copyright laws in Canada prohibit reproducing more than 10% of any work without permission from its author, publisher, or other copyright holder. See Waterloo’s policy on [Fair Dealing](#). Violation of Canada’s Copyright Act is a punishable academic offence under [Policy 71 – Student Discipline](#).

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided if they wish to submit an alternate assignment.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

This course includes the independent development and practice of specific skills, such as reading comprehension, imaginative engagement, clear expression, and textual analysis. Therefore, the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) trained using large language models (LLM) or other methods to produce text, images, music, or code, like Chat GPT, DALL-E, or GitHub CoPilot, is not permitted in this class. Unauthorized use in this course, such as running course materials through GenAI or using GenAI to complete a course assessment is considered a violation of Policy 71 (plagiarism or unauthorized aids or assistance). Work produced with the assistance of AI tools does not represent the author's original work and is therefore in violation of the fundamental values of academic integrity including honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and courage (ICAI, n.d.).

You should be prepared to show your work. To demonstrate your learning, you should keep your rough notes, including research notes, brainstorming, and drafting notes. You may be asked to submit these notes along with earlier drafts of their work, either through saved drafts or saved versions of a document. If the use of GenAI is suspected where not permitted, you may be asked to meet with your instructor to provide explanations to support the submitted material as being your original work. Through this process, if you have not sufficiently supported your work, academic misconduct allegations may be brought to the Associate Dean.

In addition, you should be aware that the legal/copyright status of generative AI inputs and outputs is unclear. More information is available from the Copyright Advisory Committee: <https://uwaterloo.ca/copyright-at-waterloo/teaching/generative-artificial-intelligence>

Students are encouraged to reach out to campus supports if they need help with their coursework including:

- Student Success Office for help with skills like notetaking and time management
- Writing and Communication Centre for assignments with writing or presentations
- AccessAbility Services for documented accommodations
- Library for research-based assignments

Electronic Device Policy

Appropriate electronic devices are allowed in class, provided they do not disturb teaching or learning and are used for course-related activities, but cell phone use is not allowed (emergency exceptions may be allowed after consultation with the instructor). Students who violate this policy will have their final mark reduced.

Studies conclusively demonstrate that laptops, tablets, and similar devices cause excessive distraction for most students and their classmates, and that handwritten notes result in better comprehension and retention than electronic ones. Therefore, students are encouraged to minimize their use of any electronics in class. Use of devices to do non-class related work (such as watching YouTube, texting, etc) will result in penalties. All devices must be turned off during class viewings of films.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. There are two types of excusable absences. Anticipated excused absences include the following: 1) The student is away from campus representing an official university function, (e.g., as part of an athletic team). A note from a University faculty or staff member (such as your coach) must be provided prior to the absence. 2) Required court attendance. A note certified by the Court Clerk must be provided. 3) Religious observances. The student must notify the professor and obtain permission prior to the holiday. 4) Required military duty. A note from the student's commanding officer is required.

Emergency absences include the following: 1) Serious illness or injury. A Verification of Illness form (<https://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness>) must be provided. 2) Death or serious illnesses in the family when documented appropriately. An attempt to verify deaths or serious illness may be made by the instructor. In all cases the reason for the unexpected absence must be reported to the instructor within one week of the student's return to class.

Communication Policy

Email, using the uWaterloo provided email address, is the approved method of communication for Renison. The Office 365 email that you use to login using your WatIAM login and password is secure and confidential. Take caution when forwarding your WatIAM email to an external email service as confidential information forwarded to a third-party provider could be a data security breach and violation of FIPPA (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act) under which all students, staff, and faculty are bound by law.

Final Examination Policy

There is no final exam in this course.

Accommodation for Illness or Unforeseen Circumstances

The instructor follows the practices of the University of Waterloo in accommodating students who have documented reasons for missing quizzes or exams. See [Accommodation due to illness](#).

Accommodation Due to Religious Observances

The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may seek accommodations on religious grounds. Accordingly, students must consult with their instructor(s) within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which accommodation is being sought. Failure to provide a timely request will decrease the likelihood of providing an accommodation. [See Request for accommodation on religious grounds](#).

Academic Integrity, Grievance, Discipline, Appeals and Note for Students with Disabilities

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity](#) websites for more information.

Renison University College is committed to the view that when a problem or disagreement arises between a faculty member and a student every effort should be made to resolve the problem through mutual and respectful negotiation. Most issues are resolved by a student/faculty meeting to discuss differences of opinion. It is only after this stage, when a common understanding or agreement is not obtained that further actions listed below could be taken.

Discipline: Every student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their own actions. [Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) website for more information.] 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 professor or academic advisor. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties are imposed under the University of Waterloo [Policy 71 – Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the Department's administrative assistant, or Academic Advisor, who will provide further assistance.

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 they have a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals](#).

Academic Integrity Office (UWaterloo): The website can be found at uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

[AccessAbility Services](#) is located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, and 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

Students are encouraged to register with AccessAbility Services (AAS) at the start of each term if they require accommodations due to a disability. However, some students not connected to AAS may require accommodations later in the term. In that case, you should immediately consult with your instructor and/or your Academic Advisor.

Intellectual Property

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of the instructor, which can include:

- lecture handouts and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint slides)
- lecture content, both spoken and written (and any audio or video recording thereof)
- questions from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams)
- work protected by copyright (i.e., any work authored by the instructor)

Making available the intellectual property of instructors without their express written consent (e.g., uploading lecture notes or assignments to an online repository) is considered theft of intellectual property and subject to disciplinary sanctions as described in [Policy 71 – Student Discipline](#). Students who become aware of the availability of what may be their instructor’s intellectual property in online repositories are encouraged to alert the instructor.

Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health supports if they are needed.

On Campus

- [Counselling Services](#): counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4096
- [MATES](#): one-to-one peer support program offered by the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Counselling Services
- [Health Services](#) – Student Medical Clinic: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off Campus, 24/7

- [Good2Talk](#): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- [Empower Me](#): Confidential, multilingual, culturally sensitive, faith inclusive mental health and wellness service.
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 844-437-3247
- [Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- [OK2BME](#): set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning teens in Waterloo. Email: ok2bme@caminowellbeing.ca Phone: 519-884-0000

Full details can be found online at the [Faculty of ARTS](#) website.

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe](#) app to your phone to quickly access mental health support information.

A Respectful Living and Learning Environment for All

Everyone living, learning, and working at Renison University College is expected to contribute to creating a respectful environment free from harassment and discrimination.

Harassment is unwanted attention in the form of disrespectful comments, unwanted text messages or images, degrading jokes, rude gestures, unwanted touching, or other behaviours meant to intimidate.

According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, discrimination means unequal or different treatment causing harm, whether intentional or not, because of race, disability, citizenship, ethnic origin, colour, age, creed, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, or other personal characteristic.

If you feel that you are experiencing the above from any member of the Renison community (students, staff, or faculty), you may contact Melissa Knox, Renison's external anti-harassment and anti-discrimination officer, by email (mnknox@uwaterloo.ca) or by phone or text (226-753-5669). Melissa is an employment and human rights lawyer and part-time Assistant Crown Attorney for the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General. Melissa is experienced in case management, discipline and complaints processes, and works with organizations across Canada to foster safe, respectful, and inclusive work and learning environments through policy development, educational workshops, conflict mediation and dispute resolution, and organizational culture audits.

For additional information see Renison's [Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse](#) policy.