

Buddhism and Psychotherapy REL 407/507 Fall 2025 CRN 16463/16464

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WED 2:00 - 4:50 p.m., PLC 184; Office Hours: Mon & Tues 1:00-1:45 p.m. Zoom <https://tinyurl.com/ysd98msx>

Overview

Both Buddhism and psychotherapy deal extensively with the mind although how it is construed differs significantly between them. The mind is a curious object of study: It is complex such that large portions remain hidden from view, and it is both the primary instrument for as well as the object of study. The more the mind tries to freeze and capture the mind, the more it tends to elude capture; thus, there is an element of mystery in this detective story. Buddhism and psychotherapy itself now constitutes a small but growing field, but the topic of this course can be construed as covering the fields of Buddhism, psychotherapy, their intersection, as well as the field of "Buddhism-and-psychotherapy." There is not time within the span of a ten-week course to cover all of the relevant ground; this course serves as an introduction to the topic that samples but does not survey the field. As a seminar, more in depth examination is emphasized over coverage.

Requirements

1. *Attendance*: Required. Students can have one unexcused absence without penalty. Each class missed thereafter without prior permission will result in 1-2 grade penalty for the course grade.
2. *Short exam*: There will be one short, in-class exam, based on materials from the readings, lectures, and course web site.
3. *Medium papers*: There will be two medium-length papers (2-3 pages) based on topics that will be provided by the instructor.
NOTE: There are two pathways to writing papers in the course: A & B. Please see the explanation on the course web site.
4. *Presentation*: Students will make a presentation on the readings for one of the section meetings. The presenter should *not* summarize the reading but should use the presentation to discuss key ideas-passages in question are important for understanding the reading. The primary purpose of these presentations is to *launch* the discussion, not to demonstrate breadth of knowledge or to lead the discussion. Each presenter will prepare a handout. Additional guidance is on the course web site.
5. *Brief research assignment*. 1-2 pages. Each student will either prepare a brief bibliography related to their final paper or submit an outline of their final paper, with a draft of the introductory paragraph.
6. *Final paper*: Each student will hand in a final paper of 8-10 pages double-spaced (A longer final paper of 12-14 pages will be required for those who have registered for REL507). Suggested topics will be provided. Students may choose to create their own topics with the consent of the instructor. In the case of the latter, a one-paragraph description of the topic must be submitted by email to the instructor four days prior to the due date for the peer review draft.
7. *Late policy on written assignments*: Three grace days total will be allotted excluding the final paper for which no extensions will be given. For the short papers, a cumulative total of three late days will be allowed without penalty. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.
8. See also: [University Course Policies: A Guide for Students](#)

Student Outcomes. In this course students will:

- A. Develop their paper writing skills through regular feedback on papers and an exam containing questions regarding the process and elements of writing university essays.
- B. Develop a sophisticated understanding of how diverse religions and philosophies define the dark or problematic dimensions of human existence.
- C. Acquire tools for the study of Buddhism and Psychotherapy through the examination of textual sources dealing with Buddhism, psychotherapy, and their intersection, including the use of case studies and secondary scholarly literature.
- D. Learn to identify and analyze thematic aspects of Buddhism and psychotherapy concerning diverse factors of human culture such as gender, sexuality, and international cultural difference.
- E. Have the above areas assessed through exams, papers, class presentation and discussion.

Grades (see Grading Criteria)

Short exam A 5% Presentation 10% Discussion 10% Brief Research 10%

Short paper I 15% Short paper II 15% Final paper 35%

Texts

1. Robert Akeret, *Tales from a Traveling Couch* (NY: Norton, 1996).

Case studies from the work of psychoanalyst Robert Akeret, who visited his early patients thirty years later to gauge the effect of his therapeutic work. Akeret studied under Erich Fromm, who was in turn influenced by both Freudian and Jungian streams as well as his encounters with Zen Buddhism.

2. Ann Ulanov, *Madness and Creativity* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Univ Press, 2013).

Based on C. G. Jung's *Red Book*, therapist Ann Ulanov presents themes of Individuation as found in Jung's Analytical Psychology. She examines how awareness and integration of 'madness' at the individual & social levels can lead to a life of creativity, psychologically and religiously.

3. Mark Unno, ed., *Buddhism and Psychotherapy Across Cultures* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006).

Anthology of conference papers from scholars, psychotherapists, Buddhist teachers, and various combinations thereof.

4. Marsha Linehan, *Building a Life Worth Living* (New York: Random House, 2021).

A memoir by the founder of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, including her own account of Borderline Personality Disorder

5. *Course Reader REL 407-507 Buddhism and Psychotherapy* (online in Canvas).

Course Reader, REL 407/507 Buddhism and Psychotherapy

The Field of Buddhism and Psychotherapy

1. Jeremy Safran, "Introduction: Psychoanalysis and Buddhism as Cultural Institutions," *Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 1-33.

The meeting, similarities, and differences between psychoanalytic and Buddhist culture.

2. Jack Engler, "Chapter 1: Being Somebody and Being Nobody," *Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, 35-79.

Self and No-self in North American Buddhism and Psychotherapy by a leading psychiatrist and Vipassana practitioner.

3. Robin Hertz, "Science-ing Mindfulness: The Influence of Psychological Science in the Production of Modern Mindfulness," REL 605 directed reading final paper, 1-7.

Critical examination of the "mindfulness" boom in North America.

C. G. Jung's Archetypal Psychology and the Shadow Side of the Self

4. Radmila Moacanin, "Chapter 2: C. G. Jung," *Jung's Psychology and Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 24-41.

Overview of Jung's archetypal psychology.

5. Connie Zweig, "Prologue; Connie Zweig & Jeremiah Abrams, "Introduction: The Shadow Side of Everyday Life," *Meeting the Shadow* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1990), xiv-xxv

Exploring the dark side of the self

6. Katy Butler, "29. Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America," *Meeting the Shadow*, 136-147.

The cases of Richard Baker at San Francisco Zen Center and Chogyam Trungpa at Naropa Institute/University.

Tibetan Buddhism and Psychotherapy

7. C. G. Jung, "Psychological Commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," *Psychology and the East*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 103-137.

Jung's explication of this Tibetan Buddhist work, comparing and contrasting it's view of mind with his own psychological model.

8. Karen Wegela, "Hearing More than the Words: The Phenomenon of 'Exchange,'" *Brilliant Sanity: Buddhist Approaches to Psychotherapy*, ed. Francis Kaklauskas (Colorado Springs, CO: University of the Rockies, 2008), 25-37.

'Exchanging' or putting oneself in the other's place as the heart of Contemplative Psychotherapy.

Zen Buddhism, Shin Buddhism, and Psychotherapy

9. Mark Unno, "The Original Buddhist Rebel - Shinran," *Tricycle* (Winter 2017), 1-16.

The heart of Shin Buddhism according to the founder Shinran.

10. Henry Shukman, "Light and Dark: Koans and Dreams," *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture*, vol. 89, 15-23.

Transformative power of the narrative of awakening.

11. Anne Spencer, "The Flowers Scatter," pre-publication draft, pre-publication draft, 1-5

Shin Buddhism and genetic counseling.

Beyond the Box

12. Shoko Sugao, "An Abortion's Influence on a Woman: Confrontation with Death," pre-publication draft, 1-5.

Japanese practice of *mizuko kuyo*, offerings to an unborn fetus, examined within a psychological framework.

13. Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars* (New York: Random House, 1996), 244-295.

Oliver Sack's account of Temple Grandin, professor and activist in the field of animal husbandry, and also autistic.

14. Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism* (NY: Random House), 191-206.

Temple Grandin's own account focusing on her views on religion including Zen Buddhism.

15. Marsha Linehan, *Building a Life Worth Living* (NY: Random House, 2020), 13-18, 38-45, 66-74, 140-147, 167-173, 247-263.

Marsha Linehan's own account of her Borderline Personality Disorder and creation of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy.

Weekly Schedule REL407-507 Buddhism and Psychotherapy

(Reading assignments are to be completed by the date under which they are listed.)

CR = Course Reader; RT = Required Text. Focus Readings indicated with an asterisk*

Week 1 (10/1) INTRODUCTION: Course Syllabus, basic outlines of relevant developments in Buddhism, psychotherapy, as well as Buddhism and psychotherapy. Sign up for presentations.

Week 2 (10/8) Buddhism and Psychotherapy as a Field I

Jeremy Safran, "Introduction: Psychoanalysis and Buddhism as Cultural Institutions" (CR1).*

Jack Engler, "Chapter 1: Being Somebody and Being Nobody" (CR2).*

Robin Hertz, "Science-ing Mindfulness: The Influence of Psychological Science in the Production of Modern Mindfulness" (CR3).*

Richard Payne, "Individuation and Awakening: Romantic Narrative and the Psychological Interpretation of Buddhism," *Buddhism and Psychotherapy Across Cultures* (RT), also (CR3a).

Week 3 (10/15) Jung's Archetypal Psychology: I. Shadow Self; II. Tibetan Buddhism

Radmila Moacanin, "Chapter 2: C. G. Jung" (CR4).*

Connie Zweig, "Prologue"; Connie Zweig, Jeremiah Abrams, "Introduction: The Shadow Side of Everyday Life" (CR5).*

Katy Butler, "29. Encountering the Shadow in Buddhist America" (CR6).*

C. G. Jung, "Psychological Commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation" (CR7).*

Anne Carolyn Klein, "Psychology, the Sacred, and Energetic Sensing," *B and P Across Cultures* (RT).

Week 4 (10/22) Jung's Analytical Psychology and Individuation **Exam A in class 10/22/2023.**

Ann Ulanov, *Madness and Creativity* (RT).*

Week 5 (10/29) Buddhism and Psychotherapy as a Field II **Paper 1 due on Canvas by 10/31/2023.**

Jack Engler, "Promises and Perils of the Spiritual Path," *Buddhism and Psychotherapy Across Cultures* (RT).

Jeremy Safran, "Cross-Cultural Dialogue and the Resonance of Narrative Strands," *B and P Across Cultures* (RT).*

Harvey Aronson, "Buddhist Practice in Relation to Self-Representation: A Cross-Cultural Dialogue," *B and P Across Cultures* (RT).*

Week 6 (11/5) Buddhist-based Views of Self and Psychology: Tibetan, Pure Land

Mark Unno, "The Original Buddhist Rebel - Shinran," 1-16 (CR9).*

Julie Hanada-Lee, "Shan-dao's Verses on Guiding Others and Healing the Heart," *B and P Across Cultures* (RT).*

Mark Unno, "The Borderline between Buddhism and Psychotherapy," *B and P Across Cultures* (RT).

Karen Kissel Wegela, "Hearing More than the Words" (CR8).

Week 7 (11/12) Pure Land and Zen Buddhism Intersecting with Psychotherapy **Paper 2 due on Canvas by 11/14/2023.**

Marsha Linehan, *Building a Life Worth Living* (RT).*

Henry Shukman, "Light and Dark: Koans and Dreams" (CR10).*

Mark Unno, "Discipleship, Fellowship, and the Therapeutic Alliance," AAR 2015 Annual Meeting ([PDF download](#))

Anne Spencer, "The Flowers Scatter" (CR11).*

Week 8 (11/19) Robert Akeret and the Art of the Unexpected **Brief Research Assignment due on Canvas by 11/21/23.**

Robert Akeret, *Tales from a Traveling Couch* (RT).*

Week 9 (11/26) Beyond the Box

Shoko Sugao, "An Abortion's Influence on a Woman: Confrontation with Death," 1-15 (CR12).*

Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, 244-295 (CR13); Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures*, 191-206 (CR14).*

Week 10 (12/3) Conclusions and Beginnings: Wrap-up lecture, student presentations, discussion. **Final paper due on Canvas by 12/05/2023.**