



REL 280/EAS 281

ZEN BUDDHISM

T TH 11:00–12:20, Bendheim C 103

How to Get in Touch

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Drop-in Hours: W 8:30–11:30 A.M.

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Books to Buy or Borrow

- *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (Platform Sutra)*
- *Readings of the Platform Sutra (RPS)*
- *Zen in the Art of Archery*
- *Journey in Search of the Way*

Above also on reserve in library.

All other readings on Blackboard.

Important Dates

2/10	Response Paper #1
2/13	Quiz #1
2/19	Response Paper #2
2/27	Quiz #2
3/4	Response Paper #3
3/10	Quiz #3
3/13	Midterm Paper
3/27	Proposal
4/2	Quiz #4
4/8	Response Paper #4
4/14	Quiz #5
4/22	Response Paper #5
4/28, 30	Presentation
5/12	Final Paper

Response papers due @ 9A.M.

What Is This Course?

Is Zen an onion? While this may sound like a pithy Zen saying aimed at evoking enlightenment—and perhaps it is—I intend it as a framing device to encourage reflection on how we think about religious traditions more broadly. Are Zen and other religions stable entities with identifiable essences? Or do they lack a core, gradually vanishing as each layer is peeled away? Do they take on different forms in relation to cultural and power configurations? Or can they themselves shape social and political structures? In order to understand these questions and to learn to ask better ones, we will examine Zen in diverse historical and geographic contexts, where it has been known as Chan, Thiền, and Sōn, to consider the tensions between romanticized ideals and practice on the ground. We will engage a variety of sources and methods to grapple with issues of defining and studying complex religious traditions with complicated and sometimes troubling histories.

What Skills Will We Learn?

By the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- **Identify** key texts, figures, and practices in the Zen tradition.
- **Differentiate** scholarly approaches including textual, historical, and ethnographic, and articulate the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- **Conduct research** using primary and secondary sources to craft original arguments.
- **Effectively participate** in a learning community and responsibly discuss difficult and sometimes controversial topics related to religion including race, imperialism, and abuse.
- **Understand** processes through which people construct religious traditions and how this relates to history and politics.

How Are We Evaluated?

Attendance/Participation: 20% (10% attendance, 10% participation)

Response papers: 10% (2% per response paper)

Quizzes: 10% (2% per quiz)

Midterm paper (4 double-spaced pages): 20%

Research project (8–10 double-spaced pages): 40%

(5% proposal and annotated bibliography, 5% presentation, 30% paper)

Responsibilities, Expectations, and Resources

Student and Teacher Responsibilities

Learning requires an effort by both the student and the teacher. Only if we both agree to the following can the above learning objectives be met:

- *To punctually attend and actively participate in class:* This class will include lectures, discussions, and assorted group activities. In the classroom, we will introduce materials and ideas not included in the readings. Students should attend all classes and **notify me by email if you expect to be absent** for any reason. I will similarly start and end class in a timely manner and provide diverse activities to meet a range of learning styles.
- *To complete all assignments by the date indicated:* Successful participation depends upon completing the readings by the start of class and **bringing them with you in hard or electronic copy. FORTY-EIGHT-hour notice is required for extensions on written work.** Extensions will be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Students will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each day late including weekends (e.g. a B+ will become a B if one day late, a B- if two days late, etc.). The instructor will return written work within ten days.
- *Critically engage the materials presented in the course:* Critical engagement is a two-way street: we should be open-minded enough to allow the assignments to challenge our assumptions but should also actively question the arguments and ideas advanced in the texts and class. This type of reflection is expected both in discussion and in written work for teachers and students alike. It should always take place in a respectful manner.

Evaluation

- *Attendance and active class participation:* An “A” for participation requires consistent contributions to class discussion and activities in a way that shows careful reflection on the assignments and an awareness of your relationship with your classmates, including respecting identities and viewpoints. One helpful/insightful comment or question is more valuable than frequently talking for talking’s sake. Sometimes a question can be more helpful than a comment. For attendance, you will simply receive a percentage grade for the classes attended (I take attendance at least once per week). Excused absences count as attending the class.
- *Response papers:* There are five response papers listed on the syllabus. Length ranges from a few sentences to a single page, as outlined with each prompt (distributed separately). These are graded as complete or incomplete. Complete assignments should show reflection and engagement with the materials. Late submissions receive a zero and cannot be made up.
- *Quizzes:* Five scheduled quizzes appear on the syllabus. Passing them requires a general understanding of the reading with particular attention to the main argument. They are short (typically no more than five questions) in multiple choice or short answer format.
- *Midterm paper:* Compare two Zen classics: one from the eighth century and one from the twentieth. A more detailed assignment and grading rubric will be distributed separately.
- *Research project:* Completed during the second half of the course on any topic that interests you. Must incorporate a primary source (images and films are acceptable sources) and secondary literature. To be completed in stages including a short one-page proposal and annotated bibliography, an in-class presentation, and a final product. The final product can take the form of a paper, a documentary video, or other digital project. A more detailed assignment as well as a grading rubric will be distributed separately.

Grades

Letter grades translate to the following numbers:

A+ 97–100	A 93–96.99	A– 90–92.99
B+ 87–89.99	B 83–86.99	B– 80–82.99
C+ 77–79.99	C 73–76.99	C– 70–72.99
D 60–69.99	F 59.9 and below	

Please note that grades do not round-up and are non-negotiable. A 92.99999 is still an A- without exception. I am happy to discuss the reasons you received a given grade, but I will not change your grade unless you found an obvious mistake (an answer that was correct but marked wrong). I also will not give any extra credit opportunities to boost your grade beyond the standards outlined above.

Honor Code

All academic work at Princeton is done under the [Honor System](#). Students may collaborate in preparation for class, but all written assignments are to be completed independently. Please be sure to provide proper citations in your papers. If you have any questions about citation practices or the honor code, please do not hesitate to ask.

Learning and Wellness Resources

Part of a college education is learning to learn. We can all get better at this. The [McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning](#) offers a number of resources to teach these skills. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of their services.

Moreover, you cannot learn if you do not take care of yourself. Don't overexert yourself—you will be a better student if you are rested. Sleep. If you are having any trouble at all, [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) located in the McCosh Health Center, is a valuable and confidential resource available to all students.

Accommodations

I am committed to creating an effective and welcoming environment for all. If you have any type of disability or require any accommodations, the University requires that those requests be made through the [Office of Disability Services](#).

Sensitive Topics

History is full of difficult topics, and throughout the course we will discuss religion as it intersects with race, gender, and sexuality. Week eight, which will deal with sexual abuse scandals in Zen as well as various forms of misogyny, is a particularly fraught part of the class. If you ever feel that a topic is too traumatic, you may be excused from that class.

Technology

I welcome you to use computers or tablets to take notes in class, but please know that some research suggests handwritten notes may be beneficial to learning. If you use technology, please only do so in a way that is relevant to class. Remember that we are in a communal learning environment, and we must be aware of how our technology use might affect others.

Schedule

Part One—A Classic Zen Text: *The Platform Sutra*

After a brief introduction to the way Zen appears in contemporary pop culture and a short overview of Buddhism and Chinese religions, we will engage in a close reading of the *Platform Sutra*, a foundational text to the Zen tradition. We will supplement our readings of this primary source with selected secondary scholarship on issues raised by the text. Through this work, we will gain an understanding of fundamental debates, doctrines, and practices in Zen Buddhism, while also considering the ways historical, political, and institutional contexts shaped the ideas presented in the text.

Week 1	Readings	Assignment
Feb 4 Introduction	None	None
Feb 6 Buddhism Crash Course	Robert Sharf (trans.), “Scripture in Forty-two Sections”	Response Paper #1 (Due Monday, Feb 10 at 9 AM)
Week 2	Readings	Assignment
Feb 11 Zen in Popular Culture/ Zen in Context	<i>Platform Sutra</i> , 125–134 Morten Schlütter, “Introduction: The <i>Platform Sutra</i> , Buddhism, and Chinese Religion” (<i>RPS</i>)	None
Feb 13 Hagiography and Transmission	John Jorgensen, “The Figure of Huineng” (<i>RPS</i>) Wendi Adamek, “Transmitting Notions of Transmission” (<i>RPS</i>)	Quiz #1 on Buddhism and Chinese Religions
Week 3	Readings	Assignment
Feb 18 Sudden and Gradual	<i>Platform Sutra</i> (finish, but focus on 135–162) Peter Gregory, “The <i>Platform Sutra</i> as the Sudden Teaching”	Response Paper #2 (Due Wednesday, Feb 19 at 9 AM)
Feb 20 Rulemakers and Rulebreakers	Paul Groner, “Ordination and Precepts in the Platform Sutra” Wendi Adamek, “Radical Aspects of Wuzhu’s Teachings”	None

Part Two—Modern Classics: *Zen in the Art of Archery* and *Zen and Japanese Culture*

Zen is now as much a religion of the Western world as it is an Asian tradition. How did Zen spread to the west and what form did it take there? Who were the main figures promoting it? How did they change the religion and how do these transformations relate to orientalism, imperialism, and modernism? We will first look at two classic readings by Eugen Herrigel and D.T. Suzuki that helped popularize Zen to address these questions and then turn to debates over the modern mindfulness revolution.

Week 4	Readings	Assignment
Feb 25 Archery and Mysticism	Eugen Herrigel, <i>Zen in the Art of Archery</i>	None
Feb 27 Archery and Nazism	Yamada Shōji, “The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery”	Quiz #2 on Yamada
Week 5	Readings	Assignment
Mar 3 Zen in Japanese Culture	D.T. Suzuki, “Love of Nature”	Response Paper #3 (Due Wednesday, Mar 4 at 9 AM)
Mar 5 Zen in Japanese Nationalism	Robert Sharf, “The Zen of Japanese Nationalism”	None
Week 6	Readings	Assignment
Mar 10 The Meditation Wars in Premodern East Asia	Dōgen, “Fukanzazengi: Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen” Morten Schlütter, “Silent Illumination and the Caodong Tradition”	Quiz #3 on Schlütter Schedule consultation for final paper for week 6 or week 7
Mar 12 The Mindfulness Wars in Contemporary U.S.	Jon Kabat-Zinn, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Medicine and Psychiatry” Ann Gleig, “From the Mindfulness Revolution to the Mindfulness Wars”	Midterm Paper (Due Friday, March 13 at 5 PM) (Spring Recess: Mar 14–22)

Part Three—Zen’s Alive! Zen as a Lived Religion

Zen is not only a religion of texts. It is also a lived religion. In contrast with the first half of the course, which focused primarily on classic works both traditional and modern, we will pay more attention to religion as practiced on the ground in the second half. We will still read some canonical texts, but we will also consider ethnographic and historical data to explore institutions, ritual practice, and everyday experience. In doing so, we will encounter a number of figures and ideas absent from our elite male-centric narratives in the first half of the course. We will also encounter Zen ideals alongside controversies and crises.

Week 7	Readings	Assignment
Mar 24 The Zen Monastery	Chinul, “Admonitions to Neophytes” Robert Buswell, “Zen Monasticism and the Context of Belief” Paula Arai, “The Monastic Practices of Zen Nuns”	None
Mar 26 No Class	No class (I will be traveling for a conference); Spend class time working on your proposal	Proposal (Due Friday, March 27 at 5 PM)

Week 8	Readings	Assignment
Mar 31 Sexual Abuse in Zen	Mark Oppenheimer, “The Zen Predator of the Upper East Side” Ann Gleig, “Sex, Scandal, and the Shadow of the Rōshi” *Ann Gleig Guest Lecture in Class	None
Apr 2 Ritual and Resistance	Barbara Ambros, “A Rite of their Own”	Quiz #4 on Ambros

Week 9	Readings	Assignment
Apr 7 Death and Healing	Duncan Williams (trans.), <i>The Origins of the Blood Pool Hell Sutra for Women’s Salvation</i> Paula Arai, “Personal Buddhas Living with Loss and Grief”	Response Paper #4 (Due Wednesday, Apr 8 at 9 AM)
Apr 9 Death and Connection	Mark Rowe, “Limitless Connections—Tōchōji”	None

Week 10	Readings	Assignment
Apr 14 Zen at War and Anti-War	Brian Victoria, “The Emergence of Imperial-State Zen and Soldier Zen” Thich Nhat Hanh, “In Search of the Enemy of Man” and “A Proposal for Peace: 1 June, 1966”	Quiz #5
Apr 16 Zen in Internment	Duncan Williams, <i>American Sutra</i> , Prologue and Chapter 1 angel Kyodo williams, <i>Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace</i> , Introduction, Chapter 4, and 10	None

Week 11	Readings	Assignment
Apr 21 Satomi Myōdō’s Journey I	Satomi Myōdō, <i>Journey in Search of the Way</i> , chapters 1–10	None
Apr 23 Satomi Myōdō’s Journey II	Satomi Myōdō, <i>Journey in Search of the Way</i> , chapters 11–epilogue	Response Paper #5 (Due Wednesday, Apr 22 at 9 AM)

Week 12	Readings	Assignment
Apr 28 Student 3-minute Lightning Talks	None	Presentation
Apr 30 Student 3-minute Lightning Talks And Wrap-up	None	Presentation Final paper due on Dean’s Date May 12 at 11:59 PM