Administrative Unit: History & Social Sciences

Course Prefix and Number: PHIL 390

Course Title: The Buddha and Buddhism

Number of: Credit Hours: 3 Lecture Hours: 3 Laboratory Hours: 0

Catalog Description: Introduction to the study of Buddhist philosophy and religious traditions, beginning with the life of Siddhartha Gautama, through the development of Buddhism in ancient India-Theravada and Mahayana-the spread of Buddhism to China, Tibet, and Japan. The course concludes with the examination of the coming of Buddhism to the West. Crosslisted as RELI 390.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): Junior standing or instructor’s permission.

Text(s): Most current editions of the following:

De Bary, W. T.  The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan.

Rahula, Walpola. What the Buddha Taught.

Mitchell, Donald W. Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience.


Buddhaghosa. The Path of Purification.


Akira, Hirakawa. A History of Indian Buddhism.

Dalai Lama. The World of Tibetan Buddhism.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. Emptiness in the Mind Only School of Buddhism.

Ch’en, Kenneth. Buddhism in China.


Fields, Rick. How the Swans Came to the Lake.
Course Objectives:
• To study Buddhist doctrine, philosophy, and religious practices in greater depth than world religions survey courses.
• To examine Buddhist philosophy through original texts.
• To examine Buddhism in the context of Asian cultures: India, China, Tibet, and Japan.
• To study the growth of Buddhism in the West, especially in the United States.

Measurable Learning Outcomes:
• Identify and define the major Buddhist schools and the philosophies of these schools.
• Analyze and describe in detail the most important doctrines and ideas of Buddhism.
• Describe the variations of Buddhism as they appear in different countries.
• Identify and describe Buddhist terms as they appear in different Asian languages.

Topical Outline (major areas of coverage):
• Vedic India (Historical Context)
• Life of Buddha
• Basic Doctrine (Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path)
• Karma and Rebirth
• Theravada
• Impermanence, Interdependent Origination, Anatta
• Meditation and Nirvana
• Rise of Mahayana in India
• Chinese Buddhism
• Ch’an
• Tibetan Buddhism
• Buddhism in Japan (Pure Land, Nichiren)
• Zen
• Buddhism in the West
• Contemporary Buddhism in the US

Recommended maximum class size for this course: 25

Library Resources: Online databases are available at http://www.ccis.edu/offices/library/resources.asp. You may access them from off-campus using your eServices login and password when prompted.

Prepared by: Anthony M. Alioto, Ph.D.

Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________

Date: April 3, 2006

NOTE: The intention of the master syllabus is to provide an outline of the contents of this course, as specified by the faculty of Columbia College, regardless of who teaches the course, when it is taught or where it is taught. Faculty members teaching this course for Columbia College are expected to facilitate learning pursuant to the course objectives and cover the subjects listed in the topical outline. However, instructors are also encouraged to cover additional topics of interest so long as those topics are relevant to the course’s subject. The master syllabus is, therefore, prescriptive in nature but also allows for a diversity of individual approaches to course material.