

Zen, HONR 152
Alfred University Spring 2013

Class meetings: Wed. 7-9 p.m. at Gothic Chapel and Kanakadea Hall

Professor: Dr. Wakoh Shannon Hickey

Office hours: 2nd floor, Kanakadea Hall

Tuesday & Thursday 5:30-6:30 p.m.; Wednesday 4-6 p.m., mornings by appointment.

Please note: The *worst* time to catch me is immediately before class, especially if you have significant questions or concerns. I will be focused on getting organized for class, and unable to give you adequate attention. Please come during office hours or make an appointment.

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OVERVIEW

In this class you'll get a taste of the history, literature, and practice of Zen. We'll learn how it developed in Asia and has changed in the United States. We'll read Zen texts, watch Zen films, listen to Zen chanting, ponder Zen stories, visit a Zen temple, eat Zen food, and practice Zen meditation.

Why This Class Matters

In this class, as in other academic classes in religious studies, you'll learn a lot of vocabulary, history, concepts, and stories. You'll be encouraged to think critically about those things. But this class also promotes other ways of learning and knowing; Zen is a "contemplative pedagogy." It cannot be learned solely from the neck up; it is a whole-body practice of recognizing one's own habits of mind as *habits of mind*, and questioning them. (This is also a goal of liberal-arts education.) It uses formal ritual behavior, which is often purposefully vexatious, to help one see how certain habits (clinging, aversion, ignorance) create suffering for oneself and others, and how their antidotes (generosity, kindness, wisdom) can liberate us from suffering. Ideally, it cultivates character and transforms the heart by promoting self-discipline, stability, serenity, vigor, confidence, integrity, humility, and service. You don't have to *believe* anything particular to learn something useful through Zen practice. Like other religious traditions, at its best, Zen can help people to "get over ourselves," to recognize that "self" and "other" are inextricably linked, to see how our habits and choices have consequences, and to inspire us to work for the benefit of all.

Methods

Students will engage in zazen and other contemplative disciplines, read primary and secondary literature, take notes on lectures, participate in classroom discussions, watch films, and complete writing assignments.

Required Texts

Jean Smith, *The Beginner's Guide to Zen Buddhism*

Soko Morinaga, *Novice to Master: An Ongoing Lesson in the Extent of my Own Stupidity*

James Ishmael Ford, *Zen Master Who? A Guide to the People and Stories of Zen*

Grace Schireson, *Zen Women*

Paula Arai, *Bringing Zen Home: The Healing Heart of Japanese Women's Rituals*

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:

Level 1, Remembering:

- Define or briefly describe key vocabulary terms, texts, people, concepts, ritual objects, and practices in Zen traditions (e.g., zazen, zafu, lineage, Dogen, Heart Sutra)
- Identify major sub-groups within each tradition.

Level 2, Understanding:

- Describe the geographic spread and historical development of Zen tradition
- Describe Buddhist modernism
- Describe differences and similarities between masculine and feminine approaches to Zen

Level 3, Applying:

- Reflect on the relationship between precepts and suffering or liberation
- Reflect on how one's personal history, cultural perspective, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc. can affect one's assumptions and attitudes about religions generally and Zen in particular.

Level 4, Analyzing:

- Explain how and why Zen has changed over time and as it has moved from place to place.
- Explain how it has been affected by modernization, colonialism, and globalization.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, and challenges facing Zen.

Level 5, Evaluating:

- Discuss whether you believe various Zen religious claims are persuasive, and why or why not.
- Examine ethical issues related to authority, authorization, personal boundaries, and uses and abuses of power.
- Assess your own learning: strengths, areas for improvement, and insights, and evaluate your own performance.

GRADING

Final grades are based on the following:

- Showing up: participating in class activities to the best of your ability, contributing actively and thoughtfully to class discussions: 22 percent of final grade.
- A midterm and a final paper, worth 15 percent each and 30 percent total of final grade.
- 24 journal or blog entries: 12 responses to class (after each class meeting except the last, reflecting on your experience of contemplative practice and on classroom lectures/discussions), and 12 reflections on the assigned readings, in preparation for each class meeting. 48 percent of final grade. **Class-response entries are due in Blackboard by 5 p.m. on Fridays; reading-response entries are due by 5 p.m. on Tuesdays.**

If you can't finish all the reading by that time, write on what you have been able to read. Journal entries are somewhat informal, but they must be clearly organized (e.g., in paragraphs with topic sentences and transitions) and use proper English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. So they should be drafted, revised, and proofread before they are posted.

COURSE POLICIES

Academic or Other Difficulties: If you are having academic or personal difficulties that affect your ability to do your work, and/or need information about support services available on campus, please see the professor right away. She will help you find appropriate resources on campus.

Disability: If you have a disability and need an accommodation to help you succeed in class, please let the professor know right away. All such information will be treated as confidential.

A Note from Special Academic Services re: Students with Disabilities:

Alfred University is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact Dr. Aubrey Elmore at the Office of Special Academic Services located in Crandall Hall, or call (607) 871-2148. Any information regarding your disability will remain confidential. Many accommodations require early planning; therefore requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible. Any requests for accommodations will be reviewed in a timely manner to determine their appropriateness to this setting.

Tutor Services/Requests:

The office of Special Academic Services offers personalized help in the form of individual and group tutoring. Please contact Beth Niles at (607) 871-2148 for more information. Also, contact your instructor for additional support.

Writing Help: Whether you are having trouble getting started on a writing assignment or need a little help with editing along the way, the Writing Center offers individual assistance to meet your needs. To make an appointment, go to my.alfred.edu/writing and click on the link “sign up here.”

Religious Concerns: Students who need to miss class in order to participate in the religious observances of their own traditions may do so, but they must make arrangements with the professor *in advance* to make up any required work. This class does require participation in contemplative practice, which is guaranteed to be uncomfortable at times, but *agreement with or acceptance of Buddhist worldviews is absolutely NOT required*. Furthermore, *no one should or will be required to do anything that violates one’s conscience or that risks one’s physical or psychological wellbeing*. You are responsible for making any limitations you may have clear, and for honoring them yourself. If problems or conflicts arise, the class should do its best to decide collectively how to address them in ways that respect the needs of everyone involved.

Athletes: Students who must miss class to participate in athletic events must notify the professor at the beginning of the semester *and* by e-mail at least one week before each class to be missed, and must make arrangements to get notes from class, contribute to class teamwork, and submit assignments timely. The one-week requirement will be waived in case of unscheduled playoff, but you should let the professor know as soon as possible of an expected absence.

Lateness and Absences: You are expected to arrive in class on time and attend all class meetings. If unforeseen circumstances will make you late, please make every effort to notify the professor before class, or ask a fellow student to do so. After the first week of class, you will be allowed **ONE** unexcused absence. After that, every unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by one full letter, e.g., from a B to a C. *It is possible to do all the work and still fail the course because of unexcused absences*. If you know in advance that you must miss a class, notify the professor by phone or e-mail at least 48 hours in advance. Prearranged absences will not affect your grade (but you should ask classmates or the professor to inform you about class discussions, and complete assigned work timely). If you are ill, contact the professor by phone or e-mail as soon as you know you are too ill to attend class. Do not attend if you have a fever or are contagious.

Mobile Phone: Turn volume off and put it away before class begins. If you send text messages or otherwise use your phone without permission during class, the professor will collect and hold it until the end of class.

Reading Schedule: Complete the assigned readings *before* we begin discussing it in class.

Ground Rules for Class Discussion: The classroom must be a productive and respectful environment for everyone, and religion can be difficult to discuss. Participants hold a wide variety of religious, moral, and political beliefs. In both the academy and society at large, human knowledge and community depend upon our ability to engage in civil discussions of such differences. You should be able to argue for your own positions on the basis of evidence and reason. You are *encouraged* to question or disagree with one another and the professor, respectfully. Insulting others’ character, beliefs, or practices is not acceptable.

Because personal integrity is fundamental to both good scholarship and good citizenship, you are also expected to uphold the university's standards for academic and personal integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, or harassment of any kind *will not be tolerated*.

All reference sources must be completely and correctly cited. If you have questions about how to cite a particular type of source, please ask. You may be asked to submit the midterm and final papers to www.turnitin.com before they are submitted to the instructor.

First violations of the Academic Dishonesty policy will result in a failing grade on the assignment. If the violation is severe, or if there is a second violation, it will be reported formally, in writing, to your dean and the University Provost, and will become part of your permanent academic record (unless you appeal and are exonerated). If your dean and the provost receive two formal, written reports of academic dishonesty from one or more instructors, you will be dismissed from the university. Two violations *in this course* will result in automatic failure of the course. *You are expected to inform yourself about and abide by school policies regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, and harassment.* If you have questions about these policies, ask the professor right away.

Alfred's Student Code of Conduct may be viewed here:

http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/student_policies.code_of_conduct_0708.cfm

Alfred's policy on Academic Dishonesty may be viewed here:

http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/academic_policies.academic_regulation_ug.cfm#700

Other campus policies and resources can be found here:

<http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/policies.menu.cfm>

SCHEDULE

	Topic	Readings for the <i>next</i> class meeting
Week 1	Intro: sitting, standing, and walking	Smith Chs. 1-3, Ford Ch. 3
Week 2	Basic Buddhism	Smith 6, 8; Ford 1
Week 3	Overview of Buddhist history	Smith 4, 5, 7; Ford 2, 4
Week 4	Zen lineages, literature, transmission	Ford 5, 6; Sharf handout
Week 5	Buddhist modernism	Ford 7, 8, 9; www.sweepingzen.com
Week 6	American Zen	Ford 10-12, Dale Wright podcast
Week 7	American Zen: challenges	Begin reading Morinaga
Week 8	Spring Break	Finish Morinaga, write precepts reflection
Week 9	Discuss <i>Novice to Master</i>	Schireson Chs. 1-6, precepts reflection due
Week 10	Women	Schireson 7-10
Week 11	Women	Schireson 11-15
Week 12	Women	Arai 1-3
Week 13	Healing	Arai 4-6
Week 14	Healing	Work on final reflections
Week 15	Wrap-up	Final Reflections Due