

Chan/Zen and its Doctrinal Buddhist Origins

Instructor: Jimmy Yu

Sep. 16, 2005 – March 3, 2006

Course Rationale:

While Chan (Jp. Zen) is known for its axiom, “not established on words and language; a transmission outside of the scriptures,” Chan masters past and present have made full use of words, language, and the scriptures in their teachings. As a path of cultivation and as a historical reality, Chan can only be understood in the context of Buddhism. In fact, many clerics prior to becoming Chan masters were precept adepts or scriptural exegetes (e.g., masters Linji and Deshan)—and some continued to write commentaries (e.g., masters Huaihai, Zongmi). Simply stated, scriptural understanding, and the correct views embodied therein, is integral to Chan awakening. This course is designed to familiarize Dharma Teachers and Meditation Instructors at the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture with the doctrinal views embodied in Buddhist scriptures that are relevant to Chan Buddhism.

Our survey of scriptures will not be historical. Rather, we will attempt to understand various Buddhist teachings as fully realized systems of thought, separated from the untidy complexities of their actual history. We will start by looking at early, foundational texts from the Nikayas (Skt. Āgamas) and move on to key Mahāyāna scriptures. We will engage in a close reading of selections from various scriptures followed by class discussion of their important issues in our class discussion.

Course Goals:

The specific goals for this course are: 1) to broaden our understanding of the scriptures and how they relate to Chan Buddhism; 2) to build a repertoire of anecdotes necessary for giving Dharma talks or teaching meditation classes; 4) to understand the central tenets of master Sheng Yen’s thought. At the conclusion of this course, each participant should be able to give one in-depth Dharma talk on a subject of their choice that is related to the teachings covered in the course. Please discuss the topic of your Dharma talk with me ahead of time so that we can ensure that each participant chooses a different topic.

Course Structure:

Class will meet every two weeks on Fridays. Reading assignments will be divided up by participants, but everyone will have at least one common reading. We will circulate our summaries of readings (2 pages) electronically (through email) 2 days before each class. Your write-ups will serve as a basis for class discussion and as notes for those who are assigned to

a different reading. Everyone is expected to complete reading assignments and to participate in class discussions.

Course Materials:

All reading materials are provided by the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture. For more reading materials, visit my website at: <https://www.princeton.edu/~jyyu/> (Go to: links/buddhist studies/canon and translations).

Course Schedule:

- September 16 Organizational meeting: introductions, goals, requirements, and questions.
*Peter Harvey's *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Chp 1-2).
- September 30 Āgama Teachings: *Peter Harvey's *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Chp 3-4); Gregory's *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity* (pp. 128-147); *Mahanidana sutta* (everything); *Mahasattipana sutta* (everything); Thich Nhat Hanh's commentary on *Kaccayana gotta*;¹ *Pabhassara Sutta* (everything)²
- October 14 Mahāyāna Emptiness—*Prajñāpāramitā* literature: *Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Chp 2); Charles Prebish's *Buddhism: A Modern*
October 28 *Perspective* (Douglas Daye's "Major Schools of Mahāyāna: Madhyamaka"); *the *Diamond Sūtra* (everything);³ *Vimalakīrti sūtra* (pp. 1-14; 17-31; 104-111).⁴
- 11/11 Mahāyāna Teaching of the Middle Way: *Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Chp 3); Ming-Wood Liu's *Madhyamaka Thought in China* (188-257); Francis Cook's "Fa-tsang's Brief Commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*" (167-206); Shifu's *There's No Suffering* (selections)
- 12/02 Mahāyāna Teaching of Tathāgatagarbha: *Alex Wayman and Hideko

¹ See:

<http://www.plumvillage.org/teachings/DharmaTalkTranscripts/spring98/1998%20Mar%2015%20%20Sutra%20on%20the%20Middle%20Way.htm>

² These scriptures are online; just do a title search. See: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-sutta.html#pq>

³ See: <http://www.drba.org/dharma/vajrasutra.asp> or

⁴ Burton Watson's translation. Find the corresponding pages to the chapters and read Thurman's translation online: <http://hjem.get2net.dk/civet-cat/mahayana-writings/vimalakirti-nirdesa-sutra.htm>

Wayman's *The Lion's roar of Queen Srīmālā* (Chp 1-55; 98-107);⁵

Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra (Chps 1-3, 10-11).⁶

1/20 Mahāyāna Teaching of Tathāgatarbha: * Sallie B. King's *Buddha Nature* (pp. 1-82); Takasaki Jikidō's *A study on the Ratnagotravibhaga* (pp. 32-45; 53-62; 268-304); *Anūnatva-Apūrṇatva-Nirdeśa* (everything).

2/10 The Perfect Teaching of Mahāyāna: *Gregory's "Sudden Enlightenment followed by Gradual Cultivation" in *Sudden and Gradual* (279-320); Cleary's *Avataṃsaka sūtra* (Chp on *Entry to the Inconceivable*); and *The Guide to Entry to the Inconceivable* by Li Tongxuan; *Lotus sūtra* (pp. ix-xxii; 23-96; 182-189; 224-232; 265-271).⁷

3/3 Sudden Teachings (Chan History and Silent Illumination): **Hoofprint of the Ox*, sections on prerequisite of Chan practice and silent illumination from (Chps 9, 8); *Buswell's "The 'Short-cut' Approach of *K'an-hua* Meditation" in *Sudden and Gradual*; Foulk's "The Form and Content of Koan Literature" and Schlütter's "Before the Empty Eon' versus 'A Dog has No Buddha-Nature': Kung-an Use in the Ts'ao-tung Tradition and Ta-hui's Kung-an Introspection Ch'an" in *The Kōan*.

TBA Presentations: Critique of Dharma Talks

⁵ These pages correspond to the pages in the book. However, tonight I discovered that Wayman's translation is online (which has no page numbers, obviously) <http://www.purifymind.com/SrimalaDeviSutra.htm> I will let you know the corresponding chapters soon.

⁶ I use the only complete translation available by Kosho YAMAMOTO, which is now available online (discovered this tonight): <http://www.nirvanasutra.org.uk/index.htm> There's a partial translation available (chp 1-6) online by Patton, but we're not reading these chapters. See: <http://villa.lakes.com/cdpatton/Dharma/Canon/index.html>

⁷ I use Burton Watson's translation.