

RELS 403 Buddhist Thought and Practice

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RELS 403 takes a broad and comprehensive look at the “three yana” tradition of Buddhism as it appears in South and East Asia, Tibet, as well as its migration to the west. The three “yanas,” or vehicles, represent three distinctive forms of Buddhist philosophy and practice (think of the three major forms of Christianity—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism—and their unique characteristics). Our primary focus will begin with the Hinayana (Theravada) tradition in India, move to Mahayana innovations in India and East Asia, and conclude with the Vajrayana/tantric (Tibet) tradition.

No prior knowledge of Buddhism is required or expected.

COURSE OUTCOMES

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE, YOU WILL HAVE ACQUIRED:

1. An understanding of the development of the Buddhist tradition within its context of origin and subsequent spread to other geographic regions.
2. An in-depth knowledge of the primary tenets, practices and symbolic systems of the Buddhist tradition.
3. An in-depth knowledge of the various forms of Buddhism, along with their primary tenets, practices and symbolic systems.
4. A broad understanding of how religion functions in people’s personal, social and historical lives.
5. An appreciation for the diversity of manifestations of religious expressions.
6. A basic knowledge of the diverse ways in which the history of religion is studied within the academy, including their strengths, weaknesses and the elements of religious life which escape analysis.