

Esoteric Buddhism HR 8250; Fall 2019  
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This course surveys the entire scope of the Buddhist tantric tradition, from its origins in early medieval India to the present. Organizing structure of the course attempts to balance regional and topical approaches to the study of the field. Organized like a directed readings course, but with weekly assignments, students work independently.

Student outcomes:

- understand the history of tantric Buddhism: assessed by weekly reflection paper for weeks 3, 5, 7, 10, 12
- understand and be able to explain the doctrinal basis of tantric Buddhism: assessed by weekly reflection paper for weeks 1, 4, 12
- understand the textual basis of tantric Buddhism: assessed by weekly reflection paper for week 2
- articulate the role and nature of practice in tantric Buddhism: assessed by weekly reflection papers for weeks 6, 9, 11, 12, 13
- understand and explain the disciplinary and methodological issues in the study of Buddhist tantra: assessed by weekly reflection papers for weeks 1 & 14.
- demonstrate an ability to write in a coherent and well-organized fashion, employing standard academic styles for footnotes, and bibliography: assessed by term paper

Readings:

- Chapters from Tantra Across the Buddhist Cosmopolis –abbrev. TABC
  - other essays as identified in calendar below
- will be distributed via class page on Moodle: these materials are only for your own use in relation to the class—do not share, duplicate, or post online. Other readings may also be posted on the class page as well.
- NOTE: reading assignments are uneven, some weeks having more, others less—please check ahead and plan your time appropriately so that you can submit your weekly reflection paper on time

Term paper: 4,500 +/- 500 word paper on a topic to be determined in consultation with instructor; use standard academic paraphernalia as per Turabian, see GTU catalogue

Grading: weekly reflections, cumulatively, and term paper are each 50% of final course grade, weekly reflections are simply evaluated as adequate or not, total number of adequate ones determining the grade weight (# of adequate/14 weekly reflections, weighted as ½ of final grade)

Calendar:

Week 1 (4 to 10 Sept): introduction and terminology  
TABC 1.1 Introduction  
Gray, "On the Very Idea of a Tantric Canon"

Week 2 (11 to 17 Sept): literatures  
Hartzell, James F. "The Buddhist Sanskrit Tantras: 'The *Samādhi* of the Plowed Row.'" *Pacific World*, 3rd series, no. 14 (Fall 2012), 63–178.

- Week 3 (18 to 24 Sept): origin and development in India  
 TABC 2.1, Origins of Tantra  
 Davidson, "Magicians, Sorcerers and Witches," *Religions*, 2017
- Week 4 (25 Sept to 1 Oct): mahāsiddhas  
 TABC 2.2 Saraha  
 submit topic & outline of term paper for approval
- Week 5 (2 to 8 Oct.): East Asia  
 TABC 3.1 East Asia  
 Orzech, " Mandalas on the Move," *JIAS* 19.2 (1996)
- Week 6 (9 to 15 Oct): pilgrimage  
 TABS 3.2: Pilgrimage Shikoku  
 Paul Donnelly, "Where the Heroes and Sky-Goers Gather," *Religions* 8.8 (2017)
- Week 7 (16 to 22 Oct): Southeast Asia,  
 TABC 4, Southeast Asia  
 Aciri: Maritime Buddhism
- Week 8 (23 to 29 Oct.): *Reading Week*
- Week 9 (30 Oct to 5 Nov): monumental tantra  
 TABC 4.2 Borobudur  
 Chemburkar, "Stūpa to Maṇḍala," *Pacific World* 3<sup>rd</sup> series, no. 20 (2018): 169–221.
- Week 10 (6 to 12 Nov): Inner Asia  
 TABC 5.1, Central Asia
- Week 11 (13 to 19 Nov): Chöd  
 TABC 5.2: Decaying Corpses  
 R.E. Dachele, "Piercing to the Pith of the Body," *Religions* 8.9 (2017)
- Week 12 (20 to 26 Nov): global tantra  
 TABC 6.1: Globalization  
 Harrington: "Exorcising the Mandala: Kalacakra and the Neo-Pentecostal Response" *JGB* 13 (2012), 147–171.
- Week 13 (27 Nov to 3 Dec): psychologization  
 TABC 6.2: Psychologization of Tantra
- Week 14 (4 to 10 Dec):  
 TABC 7.1 Conclusion
- Week 15 (11 to 17 Dec): end of term  
 submit papers