

## RLGN/WGST347 Buddhism, Gender, & Sexuality

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Historian Joan Wallach Scott once warned that scholars could not simply insert gender into their research as though adding a new room on a house already built; they would have to begin again from the bottom. Considering gender as a cultured way of being in, understanding, and interacting with the world within which we are situated, this seminar queries the conceptualization of gender and sexuality in Buddhism and Buddhist communities across space and time, with particular emphasis on those located in Asia. What does it mean to be a woman, a man, someone of the third sex, or none of the above? What are the Buddhist idea(l)s about femininity, masculinity, and personhood? How do these idea(l)s change with translation and transmission? We will explore together the theories and practices of gender and sexuality expressed by Buddhist communities from its beginnings to the present day. Buddhism's major conversation partners throughout history – Hinduism, Confucianism, and Daoism – will also be brought into discussion. Previous knowledge of Buddhism is preferred but not required.

This course is also cross-listed with Women and Gender Studies as WGST 347.



*Seated Guanyin or Avalokiteśvara, China, Qing dynasty (1644-1911).  
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. Severance A. Millikin 1989.331.*

*Welcome! This is a LONG syllabus, I know. But think of it not as a terms and conditions agreement that you simply click “accept” whenever the option pops up, instead, use it as a compass for your academic success in this course. I highly recommend that you read through the syllabus at least once during the first week of class, so you are familiarized with what is in here. More importantly, the syllabus is designed to be your first stop whenever you have questions about the course. When in doubt, **read the syllabus**; and if said doubt persists, get in touch with me!*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

By the end of the class, you will be able to –

- Demonstrate basic knowledge about the many Buddhist traditions in general, and their views on womanhood, gender, and sexuality in particular.
- Become familiar with key theories and methodologies used by scholars of religion, gender, and sexuality, and discuss their application in the Buddhist context.
- Reflect critically on some of the discourses and practices at the heart of a discussion on Buddhism and gender, and why they matter.
- Appreciate, recognize, analyze, and discuss the complexities and contradictions in humanities knowledge.
- Develop the ability to think critically as well as appreciatively about cultures and communities that are sometimes considered “foreign” or “other;” commit to a compassionate understanding of others and engage in respectful, productive conversations with people holding different views.
- Learn effective communication through thoughtful reading and writing practices, to be able to craft, support, and evaluate arguments, and to be familiarized with the academic writing and editing process.

- Reflect on the dialectic relationship between power/justice/equality and gender, sexual orientations, and other forms of social identities.
- (Add your own objectives here)
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## COURSE POLICY AND EXPECTATIONS

### **Academic Integrity**

As students at Case Western Reserve University, you are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards of academic conduct. Academic integrity addresses all forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, obstruction, and submitting without permission work to one course that was completed for another course. Please review the complete academic integrity policy for additional information, including an overview of the processes & procedures for reporting academic misconduct: <http://students.case.edu/handbook/policy/integrity.html>.

**Citations** in a recognized academic format are mandatory for written assignments. These requirements will be reviewed in detail before the first assignment. Please do not hesitate to ask me if you have questions about citation practices.

You must obtain permission from me before using **AI composition software** (such as ChatGPT) for assignments in this course. Using these tools without my permission puts your academic integrity at risk.

### **Accommodations**

I am fully committed to the university's goal of accessible education and an equitable academic experience. Please see me *as soon as possible* if you require any accommodations because they cannot be given retroactively. Visit Disability Resources to set up a plan that meets your specific needs. <https://students.case.edu/academic/disability/>. I rely on Disability Resources to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on the documentation on file.

### **Communication**

Feel free to get in touch with me about any course-related matters, either by email or during student hours. I will typically respond within 24 hours on weekdays; and by Monday if an email is received over the weekend. Email is a type of formal correspondence, and should be treated as such. Please address your messages to "Dr. Liang" or "Professor Liang" and use correct grammar and spelling.

### Technology Use in Class

Please bring the required textbooks and/or readings to class when they are assigned for that day. You need not print other readings out for class if you bring a laptop/tablet and have the reading downloaded or easily accessible online. However, you may only use laptops/tablets in class when directly instructed to refer to readings.

Taking notes on a laptop/tablet is allowed only with an official academic accommodation. Otherwise, you should take notes in writing. Any use of personal laptops/tablets for purposes unrelated to the class will result in significant reductions to your participation grade.

Use of phones in class is prohibited except in emergencies.

### Late Policy

Without prior approval, late assignments will be accepted for up to one week after the due date at 80% of the original grade. After one week, late work will no longer be accepted.

## ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

There will be two forms of grades given for assignments throughout the semester:

**Graded** — In addition to on-time submission, your assignment will be graded on its quality.

Sophisticated	90-100%
Highly Competent	80-90%
Fairly Competent	60-80%
Not Yet Competent	0-60%

**Credit/No Credit** — You get full credit for the assignment by completing the assignment and submitting it on time.

You will be assessed based on the following assignments:

#1 Your Presence in Class (Graded)	20%
#2 Short Essays (Graded)	17%
#3 Reading Responses (Credit/No Credit)	18%
#4 Primary Source Presentations (Graded)	10%
#5 Final Research Paper or Project	35%
*Project Proposal (Credit/No Credit)	
*Annotated Bibliography (Credit/No Credit)	

*\*Paper Draft (Credit/No Credit)*  
*\*Peer review and post-review edits (Credit/No Credit)*  
*\*Peer review*  
*\*Post-review edits*  
*Project Presentation (10%, Graded)*  
*Final Draft Submission (25%, Graded)*

\*\*\*Extra Credit Activities

TBD

See Appendix 1, "Assignment Description" for more information on how to complete each assignment.

Your success in this class means you do **all of the following**:

- have no unexcused absences;
- come to each class meeting or student hour with question(s) ready to ask;
- speak and help others speak in class;
- complete all the assignments in due time and meet all the requirements;
- communicate with me well and often, especially when you think you might need my help!

## TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCES

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings and relevant resources will be posted on Canvas.

Some hard copies of readings are also placed on course reserve at Kelvin Smith Library (see below). When you request the use of these materials at the KSL Service Center desk, please provide the instructor's name or course ID and the title of the item being requested.

Title	Type
Birth in Buddhism	Book
The Book of Discipline (Vinaya-pitaka) [6 volumes]	Book
Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction	Book
Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender	Book
Buddhist Masculinities	Book
Charming Cadavers	Book
Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism	Book
The Faces of Buddhism in America	Book
The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti	Book
An Introduction to Hinduism	Book
Lady of the Lotus-Born	Book
Life of the Buddha	Book
The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics	Book
The Red Thread	Book
Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women	Book
Women in Buddhism : Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition	Book

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Thank you to Drs. Ann Gleig, Karen Lang, Alison Melnick, Andrew S. Taylor, Shao-yun Yang, and many others who have provided suggestions, feedback, and inspirations that helped shape the current content and design of this course.*

## MEETING SCHEDULE

- Unless otherwise noted, all readings and relevant resources will be posted on Canvas.
- Books available in Kelvin Smith Library in the course reserve are marked by {CR}.
- Readings eligible for primary source presentations are marked by {PS}.

\*\*\*The meeting schedule might be subject to change but will be announced beforehand. Please always refer to Canvas – Modules for the most up-to-date information.\*\*\*

## PART 1 FOUNDATIONS AND ORIENTATIONS

### Week 1

Monday, 8/28

\*\*\*Class orientation, no required readings.\*\*\*

Wednesday, 8/30 Contextualizing Buddhism

**Read:** {CR} "Points of Departure," "Varṇāśrama-dharma," in Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 10-19, 58-67.

### Week 2

Monday, 9/4

\*\*\*Labor Day holiday, no class today.\*\*\*

Wednesday, 9/6 Buddhism: The Basics

**Read:** (1) "The Buddha," in Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 13-27; (2) {PS} {CR} Selections from *Life of the Buddha* by Ashvaghoṣa, translated by Patrick Olivelle (only read the parts highlighted in yellow).

\*\*\*Remember to sign up for your first (ungraded) primary source presentation! (We will practice some close reading together in class on Wednesday, 9/6.)\*\*\*

### Week 3

Monday, 9/11 Buddhism: The Basics

**Read:** (1) {PS} {CR} Selections from Tenzin Choegyel, *The Life of the Buddha*; (2) {PS} "The Sūtra of the Wheel of Dharma" (You will read both the "Introduction" and the "Translation").

Wednesday, 9/13 Why (and How) to Study Gender and Sexuality in Buddhism

**Read:** (1) Catherine Wessinger, "Foundations, Methodology, and Key Terms," in *Theory of Women in Religions*, 19-38; (2) Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91.5 (December 1, 1986): 1053-1075.

### Week 4

Monday, 9/18 A Critique of the Liberal Feminist Interpretations

**Read:** (1) Nirmala S. Salgado, "Decolonizing Female Renunciation," in *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renunciant*, 21-31; (2) {CR} Amy Paris LANGENBERG, "Introduction," in *Birth in Buddhism: The Suffering Fetus and Female Freedom*, 10-17.

Wednesday, 9/20      Putting the Theory to Practice: What Is Gender and Sexuality as Defined in Buddhism?

**Read:** You will be divided into groups to cover different readings. Instructions will be given in class a week before.

**\*\*\*Essay 1: due 8am on Monday, 9/25\*\*\***

## **PART 2      FIVE KEY QUESTIONS: ORDINATION, RULES ABOUT SEX, MASCULINITY, (IR)RELEVANCE OF GENDER, AND TRANSGRESSIONS**

### **Week 5 Ordination: Getting Access to Practice Buddhism as a Women**

Monday, 9/25

**Read:** (1) {PS} {CR} Selections from Charles Hallisey trans., *Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women*; (2) Chün-Fang Yü, "Buddhism and Gender," in *Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History*, pp.218-228 (stop before "Views of Women in Chinese Buddhism").

**Do:** Based on the second reading today, review the syllabus section on potential research paper or project topics and note down 2-3 that you are interested in exploring further. We will have an in-class exercise to brainstorm together.

Wednesday, 9/27

**Read:** (1) {PS} {CR} Selection from *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-pitaka)*, translated by I. B. Horner; (2) {CR} Selection from Bhikkhu Analayo, "Bhikkhū Ordination," *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*.

**\*\*\*Short Research Proposal due Monday, 10/2, 8am\*\*\***

### **Week 6 Why Is Sex So Bad for Buddhists?**

Monday, 10/2

**Read:** (1) {CR} Amy Paris Langenberg, "Buddhism and Sexuality," *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*; (2) {CR} Selections from Liz Wilson, *Charming Cadavers*.

Wednesday, 10/4

**Read:** {CR} Janet Gyatso, "Sex," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, 271-90.

**Recommended:** {PS} If you want to know the rules for nuns in detail (as transmitted in the Theravada tradition with 311 rules for nuns and 227 for monks), see the full monastic code called patimokkha here: <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/vin/sv/bhikkhuni-pati.html>.

**\*\*\*Remember to sign up for your second (graded) primary source presentation!\*\*\***

### **Week 7**

Monday, 10/9      Why Is Sex So Bad for Buddhists?



**Read:** {CR} Amy Paris Langenberg, "Real Monks Don't Have *Grhastha* Sex: Revisiting Male Celibacy in Classical South Asian Buddhism," *Buddhist Masculinities*, 288-312.

Wednesday, 10/11      Buddhist Masculinities

**Read:** John Powers, (1) "A Manly Monk," *A Bull of a Man: Images of Masculinity, Sex, and the Body in Indian Buddhism*, 24-66; (2) {PS} "Appendix 1: The Major and Minor Physical Characteristics of a Great Man," and "Appendix 2: Epithets of the Buddha," in *A Bull of a Man: Images of Masculinity, Sex, and the Body in Indian Buddhism*, 235-9, 241-3.

### **Week 8 The (Ir)Relevance of Gender in Enlightenment**

Monday, 10/16

**Read:** {CR} Keown, "The Mahāyāna," *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, 57-69.

\*\*\*Essay 2: due by 8am on Wednesday, 10/18\*\*\*

Wednesday, 10/18

**Read:** (1) {PS} {CR} "The Goddess," in Robert A. F. Thurman trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, 56-63. (2) {PS} {CR} "The Goddess of the Ganges" and "The Nāga Princess," in Diana Y. Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahāyāna Tradition*, 180-190; (3) Chün-Fang Yü, "Cults of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas," and "Buddhism and Gender," in *Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History*, pp.82-92, 228-238.

### **Week 9**

Monday, 10/23

\*\*\*Fall break, no class today.\*\*\*

Wednesday, 10/25

\*\*\*Museum visit, no required reading today. Instead, we will meet at the Cleveland Museum of Art.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Annotated Bibliography due Monday, 10/30, 8am.\*\*\*

### **Week 10 Sacred Sexuality as Transgression: Empowerment or Exploitation?**

Monday, 10/30

**Read:** (1) {CR} "Ideology of Transgression," in Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*, 98-124; (2) {PS} Stevens, *Wild Ways*.

Wednesday, 11/1

**Read:** (1) Holly Gayley, "Revisiting the 'Secret Consort' (*gsang yum*) in Tibetan Buddhism;" (2) {PS} {CR} Excerpt from *Lady of the Lotus-Born: The Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyel*, 5-22.

\*\*\*Essay 3: due by 8am on Monday, 11/6\*\*\*

### **Part 3 ASKING THE KEY QUESTIONS AGAIN**

**Week 11      *The (Ir)Relevance of Gender in Enlightenment (Revisited) and "Queerness" in Buddhism***

Monday, 11/6

**Read:** (1) José Ignacio Cabezón, "Homosexuality and Buddhism," in *Homosexuality and World Religions*, 81-102. (2) {CR} Leonard Zwilling, "Homosexuality as Seen in Indian Buddhist Texts," in *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, 203-14.

Wednesday, 11/8

**Read:** (1) Sallie Jiko Tisdale, Narayan, Helen Liebenson, and Andrew Holecek, "Does my transgender identity conflict with Buddhism's teachings on no-self?" (2) Ray Buckner, "Our Opportunity to Include All Genders in Buddhist Communities."

\*\*\*Optional Viewing Session: *Bhikkhuni: Buddhism, Sri Lanka, Revolution*. Kelvin Smith Library, Room 215. 3:30-5pm, Friday, November 10.\*\*\*

**Week 12**

Monday, 11/13 Reviving Full Ordination

[Guest speaker: Dr. Darcie Price-Wallace]

**Read:** (1) Janet Gyatso, "Recently, Under the Bodhi Tree," *Tricycle Magazine*, Winter 2017, <https://tricycle.org/magazine/recently-bodhi-tree/>; (2) Darcie M. Price-Wallace, "Buddhist Pro-Woman Attitudes Towards Full Ordination: Tibetan and Himalayan Monastics' Views." *Journal of Global Buddhism* 24 (1):1-24. <https://doi.org/10.26034/lu.jgb.2023.3140>.

Wednesday, 11/15      Redefining Gender

[Guest speaker: Dr. Ellen Posman]

**Watch:** Malgorzata Dobrowolska, *Bhikkhuni: Buddhism, Sri Lanka, Revolution* (1h 10min, I will arrange an optional viewing session before the class meeting).

**Read:** (1) Jue Liang, "Buddhist nuns and female scholars are gaining new leadership roles, in a tradition that began with the ordination of Buddha's foster mother," *The Conversation (United States)*, December 9, 2021: <https://theconversation.com/buddhist-nuns-and-female-scholars-are-gaining-new-leadership-roles-in-a-tradition-that-began-with-the-ordination-of-buddhas-foster-mother-172477>; (2) Swati Chawla, "From Illiteracy to PhD: How Exiled Tibetan Buddhist Nuns Are Ensuring Gender Parity," *The Wire India*, September 25, 2018: <https://thewire.in/religion/from-illiteracy-to-phd-how-exiled-tibetan-buddhist-nuns-are-ensuring-gender-parity>.

**Week 13**

\*\*\*Thanksgiving break, no classes this week.\*\*\*

**Week 14      *Ordination (Revisited) and Empowering Buddhist Women Today***

Monday, 11/27 Buddhist Masculinities (Revisited) and Intersectional Identities

**Read:** {CR} Marcus Evans, "Buddhism and Afro-Asian Masculinities in *The Man with the Iron Fists*," *Buddhist Masculinities*, 233-258.

**Watch:** {PS} (Content Warning: Violence scene, blood, nudity) Trailer and selected scenes from *The Man with the Iron Fists*: (1) Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3swVdu41lxg>; (2) "Forging the Iron

Fists:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8mlmo0aND0>; (3) "The Prostitutes' Revenge:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfgJbZHRes8>; (4) "Fist of Vengeance:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWS3FOpdFMU>.

Wednesday, 11/29 Sacred Sexuality in Tantra (Revisited) and Sexual Abuse in American Buddhism

**Read:** (1) {CR} Rita Gross, "Helping the Iron Bird Fly: Western Buddhist Women and Issues of Authority in the Late 1990s," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, 238-52; (2) Ray Buckner, "Buddhist Teachers' Responses to Sexual Violence: Epistemological Violence in American Buddhism," *Journal of Global Buddhism*, Vol. 21, (2020): 123-139.

### **Week 15 Research Project Presentations**

Monday, 12/4

Student research project presentation, no required readings.

Wednesday, 12/6

Student research project presentation, no required readings.

**\*\*\*Final research project due by 5pm on exam day (December 20).\*\*\***

## **Appendix 1    Assignment Description**

*\*\*\*Unless otherwise noted, all writing assignments should be submitted in Canvas, as a Word document, in standard 12pt font, double-spaced, with 1" margins.*

### **#1 Your Presence in Class (20%)**

#### **#1.1 Attendance and Participation (10%)**

Your presence in class is determined by the following factors: attendance, class participation, and academic civility. You are expected to attend all class meetings and complete all assignments on time. If you cannot come to class or are having difficulty completing assignments, please contact me before the meeting/assignment is due.

You will be allowed two unexcused absences each semester. Each unexcused absence after that lowers your participation grade by one percentage point. For an absence to be excused, I require evidence of serious illness (a doctor's note, for example), religious observance, or evidence that the absence significantly benefits your academic life at Case or future professional career (a selfie at a job fair or interview, etc.)

A rubric for attendance and participation:

- 9-10%: always attends class, submits all assignments on time, consistently and actively contributes to class discussions, and shows collegiality and professionalism to everyone;
- 7-8%: attends most class meetings, submits most assignments on time, makes contributions to class discussions, and/or shows some collegiality and professionalism;
- 0-6%: inconsistent attendances, does not submit assignments on time, limited participation in class, and/or lack of collegiality and professionalism.

#### **#1.2 Self-Grading and Peer-Grading (10%)**

To encourage active participation in the classroom and ensure everyone's voice is heard, at the end of the semester, you will be asked to grade yourself as well as your peers in terms of your collective presence in class.

For your self-grading (5%), you will give yourself a grade on your presence in class using the rubric above, and write a short (200-300 words) justification of the grade you've given yourself. For peer grading, you will give everyone else a grade on their presence in class using the rubric above, along with a one- or two-sentence explanation of the grade given.

## **#2 Short Essays (17%)**

As a part of your writing practice, and as a way to make sure we are on pace with our progress in the class, you will write three short essays responding to specific prompts. For more information on how to complete this assignment, please refer to Appendix 2.

## **#3 Reading Responses (18%)**

For every class meeting from Wednesday, August 30 onward, you will bring a short, one-page reading response (either print-out or handwritten) to class. This will form the basis of our class discussion. After class, you will hand your reading response to me, I will read through them and respond either individually or to the whole class, as appropriate. For your first reading response, I will give feedback on how to effectively complete the assignment.

This is a credit/no credit assignment. You will get full credit (18% of your final grade) if you complete 18 reading responses (there are 22 class meetings for which you can turn in a reading response, which means you are allowed to miss at least 4!).

### **#3.1 Purpose of the Assignment**

The purpose of this assignment is threefold –

- first, to ensure that we are engaging with the readings in a meaningful way, rather than glossing over the surface;
- second, to establish a daily practice of writing. Trust me, this will make writing less intimidating!
- third, and more importantly, to generate a classroom discussion that addresses your questions and interests, and to help you prepare for the three response essays.

For each class meeting, you will generate discussion questions based on the readings of the day. Reading Responses should be brought to class and submitted after our class meeting as a hard copy (you can type and print your responses, or to write it by hand).

### **#3.2 Criteria for Success**

**Just do it!**

But for real though, just do it. I am not asking you to deliver a highly polished piece of writing every day, but to ask you to try your best to establish a daily habit of writing. Note down interesting passages and points in the reading, keep track of the questions you have, and share them in class -- it's that simple.

You are also allowed to take some days off, because life happens. As long as you accumulate 18 reading responses (there are 22 in total), you will be fine! (Hey, but if you want to challenge yourself to write down discussion questions for every class ... you do you!)

### **#3.3 Tasks**

For each reading response, write on the following:

- A one-sentence takeaway you have from the reading. (Do *not* feel like you need to summarize everything that is covered in the reading, just write down what impresses/interests you the most.)
- One question you have about the reading (articulate in some depth one or two things you did not understand);
- One quote from the reading (including the page number on which it appears) that you find beautiful/striking/troubling and would like to share with the class; I will call at random at the beginning of the class for people to share their quote with the whole class;
- (This will become more applicable after Week 2) A one-sentence comment on possible connections between the reading and an earlier reading or discussion.

### **#4 Primary Source Presentations (10%)**

During the semester, you will make two 10-15 minute oral presentations. Your first presentation will be peer-reviewed in class but not graded. Your second presentation is worth 10% of the overall grade, and you will be graded based on your content, presentation skills, and teamwork.

A primary source presentation should focus on at least one of the primary sources (e.g., life story of the Buddha, a short biography, or a sutra) assigned for a given class meeting, and should analyze what we can learn from it about women, gender, and/or sexuality in Buddhism in the historical context within which it was produced. Your analysis should demonstrate your ability to not only understand but also think critically and contextually about the source.

### **#5 Final Research Paper or Project (35%)**

In this writing-intensive seminar, you will familiarize yourself with and practice the various building blocks that make up academic writing. The shorter writing assignments -- the daily reading responses, primary source presentations, and short essays -- help to cultivate a good writing habit and overcome the fear of writing. The final research project is a practice on a bigger scale; it asks you to combine all that you have learned in class into a single product: **a 15-20 page research paper** that (1) makes an original, coherent argument (2) using credible sources and (3) is arranged in a logical manner; or **a curated multimedia collection** presenting different objects, items, or texts surrounding a coherent theme related to Buddhism, gender, and/or sexuality.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

Discourse on desire in Buddhism	Gender (in)equality in Buddhism	Full ordination for nuns
Women's roles in Buddhism	Family ties in Buddhism	Motherhood in Buddhism
The regulation of sexuality and sexual transgressions in Buddhism	Buddhist masculinity	Queerness in Buddhism
Buddhist views on transgenderism	Buddhism and feminism	Buddhism and intersectionality
Buddhist concepts of the body	Buddhist women's education	...

*N.B. these are broad topics, and you are encouraged to choose one Buddhist tradition, one time period, one figure or text of interest as your focus. I am also happy to provide suggestions.*

### **#5.1 Research Paper Track**

For this final project, you will be conducting a research project of your choice, after consultation with me. Your research paper will examine the intersection of Buddhism and topics in gender and sexuality. You are especially expected to investigate and reflect on how the themes of power and justice/equity/identity manifest in your project.

Your work on the research paper will progress in the following steps:

1. A short research proposal is due by 8am Monday, October 25, 8am. Your proposal should be at least 2 double-spaced pages long, and should include:
  - a. a short description of two proposed topics for research.
  - b. at least two potential research questions per topic.
  - c. a proposed bibliography that includes at least two relevant secondary sources per topic. These sources may include readings on the syllabus but can include other sources as well. I am happy to assist you with identifying sources that would be relevant to your topics if you consult me in advance.

Based on your proposal, I will recommend a topic and research question to you, as well as additional sources.
2. By Monday, October 30, 8am, you should submit an annotated bibliography on Canvas.
  - a. Your annotated bibliography should be at least 4 double-spaced pages long and should include a statement of your chosen research question, followed by synopses and evaluations of at least one primary source and four secondary sources that you consider relevant to answering it. You should explain clearly how these sources would help you to answer your research question, and how they support and/or contradict each other. The secondary sources can include some of those listed in your research proposal but may include others as well.

- b. I am happy to assist you with identifying relevant primary sources; note that primary sources can include relevant non-textual material (e.g., paintings, sound recordings, movies, TV shows).
3. Before Monday, November 20, 8am, you will submit a 10-page (double-spaced) rough draft of your research paper. The draft will **not** be graded, but failure to provide a draft on time will result in five points deducted from the grade of your final paper. Your draft will be peer-reviewed by a classmate and also receive written feedback from me.
4. The final draft of your paper should be 15-20 double-spaced pages long and use Chicago-style citations (i.e., footnotes). The paper is due on by 5pm on December 20, 2023. It will be graded based on the number and quality of sources used, the clarity of writing, and the strength of the argument (i.e., how well it answers the research question).

A few useful sources:

- Tips and Tools for Writing in Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/religious-studies/>
- A Guide to Writing in Religious Studies, Harvard University: [https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/files/hwp/files/religious\\_studies.pdf](https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/files/hwp/files/religious_studies.pdf)
- The Chicago Manual of Style: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/>

## **#5.2 Presentation Track**

For this track, you may choose to work individually or with another classmate to curate a collection of multimedia objects (texts, images, music, audio, videos, statues, icons, ... the sky is the limit!) surrounding a coherent theme related to Buddhism, gender, and sexuality. If you choose to work individually, you should aim to collect 8-10 objects; if you choose to work in teams of two, you should aim for 12-15 objects.

When curating your collection, think about the following questions (you might start with #1, and look for relevant objects; or, you might be inspired or moved by a certain object, and go out to learn more about it, as #2 asks you to do):

1. What is the central issue I would like to explore? Feel free to choose one of the topics suggested above, or come up with one of your own.
2. What are some of the objects that I/we'd like to present?
  - a. Think about the time, location, material, length, size, texture, ... any visible and invisible aspects of the objects in question;
  - b. Think about the persons, places, ideas, and any other connections you can make to this object from what we have discussed in class: how do they relate to the issue of gender and sexuality in Buddhism? how do they relate to one another?
3. How are you planning to present your collection?
  - a. What will be your media of choice? Slides? Google Site? With accessibility and clarity in mind, choose what you think would best deliver your message. I am happy to help brainstorm ideas.
  - b. In what order do you plan to present your objects? Is there a story you'd like to tell? Is there a timeline, a map, or other sequence you'd like to follow?

In the process of creating your collection, it is common (maybe even expected) that you will need to further refine or even change your central issue, so the objects are better understood and represented. It



is also very common to edit out or add in objects. Curating is an *iterative* process – you will go back and forth between the central theme and the objects, and keep looking for the best way they relate to each other.

Your work on the research paper will progress in the following steps:

1. A short project proposal is due by 8am Monday, October 25, 8am. Your proposal should be at least 2 double-spaced pages long, and should include:
  - a. a short description of two proposed topics for research.
  - b. at least two potential objects per topic.
  - c. a proposed bibliography that includes at least two relevant secondary sources per topic. These sources may include readings on the syllabus but can include other sources as well. I am happy to assist you with identifying sources that would be relevant to your topics if you consult me in advance.Based on your proposal, I will recommend a topic and object to you, as well as additional sources.
2. By Monday, October 30, 8am, you should submit an annotated bibliography on Canvas.
  - a. Your annotated bibliography should be at least 4 double-spaced pages long and should include a statement of your chosen theme and at least four objects (six if you are working in groups of two), followed by synopses and evaluations of primary source and secondary sources that you consider relevant to the objects of your choice. You should explain clearly how these sources would help you to understand the objects in question, and how they support and/or contradict each other. The secondary sources can include some of those listed in your research proposal but may include others as well.
  - b. I am happy to assist you with identifying relevant objects and/or primary sources.
3. Before Monday, November 20, 8am, you will submit a rough draft of your object collection containing the required number of items, and a draft description for more than 75% of them. The draft will **not** be graded, but failure to provide a draft on time will result in five points deducted from the grade of your final paper. Your draft will be peer-reviewed by a classmate and also receive written feedback from me.
4. The final collection is due by 5pm on December 20, 2023. It will be graded based on the number and quality of sources used, the clarity of your written description of the objects, and the strength and quality of your argument as to how these objects relate to us a central issue in Buddhism, gender, and/or sexuality (i.e., how well it answers the research questions above).

Here are some samples for you to consult while curating your own collection and writing descriptions:

- Cleveland Museum of Art exhibition *Fashioning Identity: Mola Textiles of Panamá*:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/fashioning-identity-mola-textiles-panama>
  - Magazine article “Fashioning Identity”:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/magazine/cleveland-art-fall-2020/fashioning-identity>
- Cleveland Museum of Art exhibition *Life and Exploits of Krishna in Indian Paintings*:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/life-and-exploits-krishna-indian-paintings>
  - Description of the painting “Krishna Playing with the Gopis in the Yamuna”:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2018.118>
- Cleveland Museum of Art exhibition *Women in Print: Recent Acquisitions*:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/women-print-recent-acquisitions>
  - Description of the screenprint “Handsome”:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2020.277>
  - Description of the painting “Six Bardos: Hymn (Behind the Sun)”:  
<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2020.285>

### **#5.3 (For Both Tracks) On the research presentation**

In Week 15, you will make an individual presentation on your research topic and findings. Your presentation should be about 15 minutes long. You are encouraged to use slides to present and will be expected to answer questions from the audience after the presentation. This presentation is worth 10% of the grade. I will assign your presentation dates by Week 11.

## Appendix 2 Essay Questions

*\*\*\*Unless otherwise noted, all writing assignments should be submitted in Canvas, as a Word document, in standard 12pt font, double-spaced, with 1" margins.*

### **Essay 1 Buddhist primary sources and their view on gender/sexuality**

5% of your grade. Due by 8am on Monday, September 25, 8am.

In our class meeting on September 20, we discussed together a number of different primary sources from classical Buddhist literature and how gender and sexuality are defined in those sources. For this essay response, you should pick two primary sources (one that you were assigned to read, and another one) and write about their definition of gender and/or sexuality.

Your response should be 500-700 words in length, and include:

- A definition of gender and sexuality that you agree with or plan to base your discussion on.
  - Not sure where to start? Look up the definition of “gender” and/or “sexuality” in a dictionary, encyclopedia, or a scholarly monograph.
- A brief introduction to the primary sources of your choice
  - Its genre, author, date and location of composition, content, and importance in the Buddhist tradition.
  - The reason you choose these two resources.
- A discussion on gender and sexuality as defined in these two sources
  - What do these two sources say about gender and/or sexuality?
  - Cite directly from the sources to support your argument.
  - Connect the two sources: do they share similar views? If not, what are the differences?
  - Why do you think it is the case? (It’s okay to try your best to guess here, we are just getting started! But keep these questions in mind and see how your response might change as we progress in the semester.)

### **Essay 2 New ways of thinking about gender in the Mahayana**

6% of your grade. Due by 8am on Wednesday, October 18.

For our Monday (October 16) class, we learned about the rise of Mahayana as a new form of Buddhism and some of its doctrinal innovations. Its new understanding of the Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist virtues, and further teachings promises potentially new ways of thinking about gender and sexuality in Buddhism. For this essay response, you should pick one new development in Mahayana Buddhism and write about its potential impact on a new way of thinking about gender and/or sexuality in Buddhism.

Your response should be 500-700 words in length, and include:

- A discussion of the one new development in Mahayana Buddhism that you choose to reflect on
  - What is this new development about?

- What is “new” about it? How does it change or depart from Early Buddhism?
- Its impact on a new way of thinking about gender and/or sexuality in Buddhism
  - In what ways does this new development relate to gender/sexuality?
  - What changes could it potentially bring? (As with the first assignment, it’s okay to try your best to provide an educated guess here. The point of the assignment is to get you thinking as we proceed to our discussion on Mahayana Buddhism in the coming weeks.)

### ***Essay 3, Radical nonduality and the (ir)relevance of gender***

6% of your grade. Due by 8am on Monday, November 6, 8am.

During our class meetings on Week 10, we covered two new re-interpretations of some key Buddhist teachings relevant to gender and embodied being. The tantric and Zen Buddhists each proposes their own radical path to enlightenment that pushes logics of gender’s ultimate irrelevance even further. This essay asks you to consider their expressions of gender and/or sexuality and its implications.

Your response should be 500-700 words in length, and include:

- A discussion of the new development from the Mahayana teaching of emptiness/nonduality in the tantric or Zen tradition of Buddhism
  - What is “transgressive” about Zen or tantric Buddhism? Think about it in terms of its interpretation of general Buddhist teachings and specifically in terms of its understanding of gender and sexuality
  - Based on the two class meetings and readings, in what ways does this transgressiveness manifest in Zen or tantric Buddhist communities?
- Its impact on a new way of thinking about gender and/or sexuality in Buddhism
  - How might this transgressive characteristic change women’s participation in Buddhism? What about the historical rejection of sexuality and the ascetic ideal?
  - What are some potential pitfalls in this new Buddhist understanding of gender and/or sexuality?