The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong Limited
2019/20 Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies (Chinese Medium) Programme - Course Syllabus

Course Code: MABS 01
Course Title: Buddhist Doctrines of Pali Nikāyas: Analysis and Interpretation

Aim: To give a critical and comprehensive knowledge of Buddhist doctrines of Pali Nikāyas

Contents: Fundamental Teachings of early Buddhism, questions raised and solutions offered by modern scholars on the interpretation of early Buddhist doctrines, the diverse trends discernible in the early Buddhist discourses as to the nature of the world of sensory experience and the reasons that could be adduced in grasping their significance within the context of the religion. Philosophical system of early Buddhism will form an Integral part of this course.

The course will be based on Suttapiṭaka and supplemented, where necessary, with the Abhidhammi and commentarial expositions. It is in the interests of the student to gain an ability to read the Pali suttas in the original texts.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures, discussions and assignments

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Two Short Essays (40%) and Final Examination (50%)

Expected Learning Outcome: Ability to elaborate critically the Fundamental Teachings of Suttapiṭaka and to read and understand relevant discourses in original sources

Recommended for Reference:
Course Code: MABS 22  
Course Title: Buddhist Art and Architecture - I (Indian subcontinent)  

**Aim:** A descriptive knowledge of monastic art and architecture in Indian subcontinent.

**Content:** Evidence of Buddhist architecture from the Pali Canon; the monastic residence and its gradual evolution from early timber structures to buildings of a permanent nature; the rock-cut sanctuaries and their functions as residences and places of worship; Stupa and its evolution as symbol of religious worship; stupa-decorations as a form of mass media; the an iconic representation of the Buddha and the subsequent introduction of the Buddha image as an object of worship; the different schools of Buddhist iconography and the areas of their origin; the development of the Bodhisattva image and other Buddhist deities; Buddhist sculpture and painting in the Gupta era; the Gandhara school of Buddhist art; the Greek and Iranian influences on its sculpture and iconography; the part it played in the diffusion of Buddhist art in Central and East Asia; Buddhist art and architecture in South India with special reference to Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and Jaggyyapeta; the last phase of Buddhist art under the Pala and Sena dynasties; refinements of its sculpture; the heavy dependence of Tantrayana on sculpture; the development of the śakti cult and its influence on Buddhist iconography.

**Methods of Teaching and Learning:** Lectures and class discussion

**Assessment Method:** In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

**Learning Outcome:** The student is able to describe the origins of Buddhist monastic art and architecture in Indian Subcontinent, socio-economic influences on ancient monastic art and architecture, and characteristics of relevant art works and architectural constructions.

**Recommended for Reference**
Course Code: MABS 52
Course Title: History of Indian Buddhism: From its Origins to the Emergence of Mahāyāna

Aim: To have an objective understanding of the development of any Buddhist tradition presupposes a proper historical perspective.

Contents: The course is designed to provide students with a foundational and general, but not superficial, survey of Indian Buddhism from a historical perspective highlighting all the important developments up to the emergence of Mahāyāna. The main themes for the course include: the origins of Buddhism and the Indian Background; process of the compilation of the Canon; the classification of the Buddha’s teachings; the Councils; the popularization of Buddhism; the emergence and development of the major Buddhist sects; King Asoka and his contribution .to the Buddhist cause; spread of Buddhism outside India; rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and other related topics.

It is expected that students taking this course will have acquired sufficient knowledge of the major historical development as a solid foundation for the further understanding of the contents of other courses offered by the programme, which deal in depth with specific historical and doctrinal issues in the various Buddhist traditions.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures and class discussion

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Two Short Essays (40%) and Final Examination (50%)

Learning Outcome:
At the end of this course, the student will be able to:
1. gain a foundational knowledge of the history of Indian Buddhism up to the emergence of the Mahāyāna movement;
2. critically examine different views and theories related to the history of Buddhism in India;
3. apply the knowledge derived from this foundational course to examine and appreciate the subsequent developments of Buddhism in Indian and beyond.

Recommended for Reference:
Course Code: MABS 54
Course Title: Mahāyāna Buddhism: A Doctrinal Survey

Aim: To provide a foundational knowledge of Mahāyāna Buddhism for students with no or little background in Buddhist Studies.

Contents: This is a foundation course. At the end of the course, students are expected to have acquired sufficient fundamental knowledge on the Mahāyāna tradition, to be able to better understand and appreciate the other more specialized courses on the various specific historical and doctrinal aspects within the vast tradition of the Mahāyāna, and indeed within the whole spectrum of the courses offered by PGIPBS. In keeping with this aim, its contents are mainly focused on the historical and doctrinal development in early Indian Buddhism - the source for all later development. The course begins with a survey on the contemporary theories of the origins of the Mahayana, and proceeds to examine the conception and formulation of the Bodhisattva Ideal in the earliest extant Mahāyāna texts, such as the Aṣṭa-sāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Ugrapariprcchā, etc. (including those preserved in Chinese translation). It further examines the question of the Primitive Prajñāpāramitā, the emptiness doctrine (śūnyatā) expounded by Nāgārjuna, the doctrines of the early Yogācāra and tathāgatagarbha thoughts. Other fundamental Mahāyāna doctrines examined include the trikāya, the six pāramitās, and the ten-stage progression (daśabhūmi). Some important scriptures are also selected for discussion, including the Diamond-cutter sutra, the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa, and the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures and class discussion

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Learning Outcome:
At the end of this course, the student will be able to:
1. gain an informed and objective historical perspective of the doctrinal development of the early Mahāyāna tradition - necessary for a proper comprehension and appreciation of the subsequent development of later Mahāyāna doctrines;
2. demonstrate the ability to critically examine the fundamental doctrines of Indian Mahāyāna;
3. critically appraise traditional and modern scholars’ accounts on doctrinal and historical issues related to Buddhism in general and Mahāyāna in particular;
4. apply their knowledge of the ethical and spiritual teachings of Mahāyāna - such as compassion, wisdom, the perfection practices (pāramitās), etc in their living, and thereby adding a spiritual dimension of their individual existences

Recommended for References:
Course Code: MABS 60
Course Title: Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma: Doctrines and Controversies

**Aim:** To enable students to understand basic knowledge of Abhidharma in general and doctrinal and controversial teachings in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma

**Contents:** The period of the Abhidharma represents the historical stage when Buddhist “philosophy” so-called truly began. A foundational knowledge of the Abhidharma doctrines will enable the students to acquire an integrated perspective of the Buddhist development as a whole: On the one hand, equipped with this knowledge which serves as a commentarial guide, they will be in a better position to comprehend the Buddhist tradition’s conceptions of the sūtra teachings in the preceding stage. On the other hand, they will be able to meaningfully relate the subsequent Mahāyāna development to the Abhidharma development, thereby gaining a deeper insight of the teachings of the former.

This course has as its scope the Abhidharma development in the northern tradition. It focuses primarily on the doctrines of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas and the Dārṣṭāntika-Sautrāntikas. While detailing the Abhidharma controversies, the relevant doctrines of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Vātsiputriya-Sāṃmitiyas, etc., will also be discussed. The early part of the course will outline the historical and doctrinal background necessary for understanding the controversial doctrines to be examined in detail subsequently. The bulk of the course that follows will focus on selected controversial doctrines of importance, such as the tri-temporal existence of all dharma-s (sarvāstiva), simultaneous causality, the ontological status of the cittaviprayuktasamskāra-s, the avijñapti and the unconditioned dharma-s, etc. The discussion on these controversies will mainly be based on the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, supplemented with commentarial material from the Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā, the Nyāyanusāra of Sanghabhadra, the Abhidharmadīpa with Vibhāṣā-prabhāvrtti, and the Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośa-Vyākhyā of Yaśomitra. By studying these controversies, the students will gain a deeper insight into the doctrinal and spiritual concerns of the ancient masters in this period, and how these concerns fervently stimulated progressive articulation and development of Buddhist thoughts.

**Methods of Teaching and Learning:** Lectures and class discussion

**Assessment Method:** In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

**Learning Outcome:**
At the end of this course, the student will be able to:
1. demonstrate proper understanding of the intellectual roles and doctrinal contribution of the Abhidharma masters of the different affiliations;
2. critically examine the specific Buddhist doctrines in the Abhidharma literature;
3. show deeper insights into the doctrinal and spiritual concerns of the ancient masters in this period, and how these concerns fervently stimulated progressive articulation and development of Buddhist thoughts.

**Recommended for Reference**
Course Code: MABS 62
Course Title: The Doctrine of Śūnyatā (Emptiness): Prajñāpāramitā Scriptures and Early Mādhyamika

Aim: To educate students of the doctrine of emptiness as expounded in the Prajñāpāramitā sutras and the Early Mādhyamika School.

Contents This course introduces the doctrine of emptiness as expounded in the Prajñāpāramitā sutras and the Early Mādhyamika school. It highlights the historical fact that this doctrine was undoubtedly inspired by the early Buddhist teachings as preserved in the Pāli suttas and Chinese āgamas. Nāgārjuna, generally regarded as the effective founder of the Mādhyamika school, certainly declares that his śūnyatā doctrine is none other than the Buddha’s teaching of Conditioned Co-arising (pratītya-samutpāda). The course will begin by examining the Śūnyatā doctrine in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, demonstrating that, just as the early Buddhist teachings, the early portion of this text – constituting the stratum of "Primitive prajñāpāramitā teachings" as well as the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā, in fact consistently emphasizes the doctrine of non-Self (nairatmya) and non-attachment, rather than the term śūnyatā. This will be followed by a discussion on the development of this doctrine in the Pañcaviṃśatī-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā where the term śūnyatā came to be increasingly emphasized and distinctively elaborated. In conjunction with the discussion of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā, important stanzas from Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā will also be critically examined.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures and class discussion

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Learning Outcomes
At the end of this course, the student will be able to:
1. demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the doctrine of śūnyatā in the early Prajñāpāramitā texts and Nāgārjuna’s exposition;
2. gain a proper historical perspective of the development of the śūnyatā doctrine from the Buddha’s teaching of pratītya-samutpāda in the discourses of Early Buddhism;
3. distinguish the subsequent development of the śūnyatā doctrine in the relatively later Prajñāpāramitā textual materials from its earliest or primitive form in the earliest period (as discernible from the earliest portion of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā).

Recommended for Reference
Course Code: MABS 63
Course Title: Doctrines of Early Indian Yogācāra

Content: This course introduces the students to the doctrinal development of Indian Yogācāra up to the period of Dharmapāla. The survey begins with a brief survey of the doctrinal contribution from the Sarvāstivādins in the milieu of the Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā, particularly the early yogācāras. It will then proceed to examine the doctrines in the Basic Section (本地分); *mauli bhūmi) of the Yogācāra-bhūmi, which on the whole constitutes the earliest stratum of the textual sources of the Yogācāra as a Mahāyāna school. Particular emphases are laid here on its doctrines of the two intrinsic natures, prajñaptivāda-svabhāva and nirabhilāpya-svabhāva, and its epistemological doctrines — both representing a realistic standpoint characteristic of this Section. This will be followed by a study of the relatively more developed doctrines in the texts of the Maitreya-Asaṅga complex and of Vasubandu, et al., including: the system of eight consciousnesses (particularly the ālaya-vijñāna doctrine), the Threefold Intrinsic Nature, the Threefold Absence of Intrinsic Natures, vijñaptimātratā and āśraya-parāvṛtti. The course will end with a discussion on the developed doctrines in Xuanzang's *Vijñaptimātra-siddhi (成唯識論).

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures and class discussion

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Learning Outcomes
At the end of this course, the student will be able to:
1. demonstrate adequate understanding of the historical background of the origins and development of the Indian Yogācāra tradition;
2. critically analyze the doctrinal signification of the major Indian Yogācāra teachings developed in the various texts pertaining to the different historical strata;
3. understand and apply the Yogācāra teachings related to spiritual praxis in their own lives.

Recommended for Reference


- Wei Tat. (1973). *Ch’eng Wei-shih Lum The Doctrine of Mere consciousness by Tripiṭaka Master Hsuan Tsang,*
Course Code: MABS 64  
Course Title: History of Chinese Buddhism

Content: This course examines the major events and thoughts in the history of Chinese Buddhism with a particular emphasis on the establishment of Chinese Buddhist Schools. A major aim is to show how Buddhism came to be gradually and successfully incorporated into and became one of the three pillars of Chinese thought and culture. The important Chinese Buddhist masters will also be examined against their historical background to show their contribution to the development of Chinese Buddhism.

It is expected that, at the end of the course, students will have acquired sufficient familiarity with the basic historical events, major Buddhist schools of thoughts and important personages together with their contribution to the development of Chinese Buddhism.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures and class discussion

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Learning Outcome
At the end of this course, the student will be able to:
1. demonstrate the ability to critically examine historical issues related to Chinese Buddhist tradition from an informed objective;
2. critically appraise the doctrinal issues in the various Chinese Buddhist schools;
3. develop an appreciation of the Chinese Buddhist tradition and their influence and impact to Chinese culture

Recommended for Reference
- *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Cheng, Chung-Ying (Editor.). Published by the University of Hawaii.