

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Course Outline**

**Phil 2966F
“Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy”**

Summer Term 2020

Instructor: Robert J. Stainton

Class Days and Hours: Tu, W, Th, F
6-7:30 p.m.

Office: StH 3126
Office Hours: Th 4:30-5:30
Meeting ID: 975 6327 7255

Classroom: Online via Zoom
Meeting ID: 990 1162 2365

Email: rstainto@uwo.ca

Web Site:
<http://publish.uwo.ca/~rstainto/>

DESCRIPTION

A very first introduction to Buddhist philosophy. The course will overview the connections among Buddhist epistemology, metaphysics and ethics, comparing them where helpful to doctrines familiar from Western philosophy (e.g., in the pre-Socratics and Early Modern Empiricists). Discussion will focus on the sutras (i.e., works tracing to the Buddha’s own teachings). We will discuss how each of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics connect to Buddhist soteriology (salvation from suffering), but the course will address Buddhism as philosophy, rather than as a religious practice. As such, the doctrines will be explained sympathetically, but also assessed critically.

TEXTS

Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.)(2005). *In the Buddha’s Words*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom.
[ISBN 978-0-86171-491-9]

OBJECTIVES

The twin objectives are honing of philosophical skills and enriching students’ familiarity with some “touchstone” ideas in Buddhist philosophy. In terms of skills, the emphasis will be on: introduction to philosophical writing; methodological reflection; and respectful but incisive philosophical dialogue.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In-class group debates (5% each): 10%
Brief essay (~1000 words): 25%
Two glossaries of philosophical terms: 20%

Participation in online classes: 10%
Take-home exam: 35%

Notes on assignments:

- The essay will have both an interpretive and a substantive component: both on what Buddhism teaches and on whether it's plausible.
- Glossary entries are homework and are to be completed within two days. However, to facilitate grading, they will be handed in at two points in the course, near the middle and at the end. Given that they are homework assignments, late submissions will be allowed only under extraordinary circumstances such that uploading the assignment is not possible.
- Participation includes regular attendance but also contributions to questions and answers.
- There are no "late penalties". Barring a medical/compassionate accommodation or a pre-arranged extension, term work not submitted by the deadline will receive a zero.
- The exam will cover materials as presented in class and as found in the assigned readings. The final exam is not a fourth research essay.
- Copying from sources of any kind – peers, websites, etc. – for any of the above assignments, requires proper citation.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an i) unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is ii) sufficiently severe to iii) temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using

the online Self-Reported Absence portal.

This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less. Example circumstances where an SRA is appropriate are medical reasons (such as pneumonia, a depressive episode, or an accident) or compassionate grounds (such as the death of a close family member). An SRA is not the appropriate avenue for a chronic condition or for simply running behind. For those, a student should seek a long-term academic accommodation or a pre-arranged extension respectively.

See here for more details:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/self_reported_absences_faqs.html

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Any material copied from sources, even a sentence or two, must be appropriately indicated and cited. To repeat, this applies to all submitted assignments: glossaries, essays and the final exam.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning (519) 661-3030 (during class hours) or (519) 433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.