

Zen Buddhism

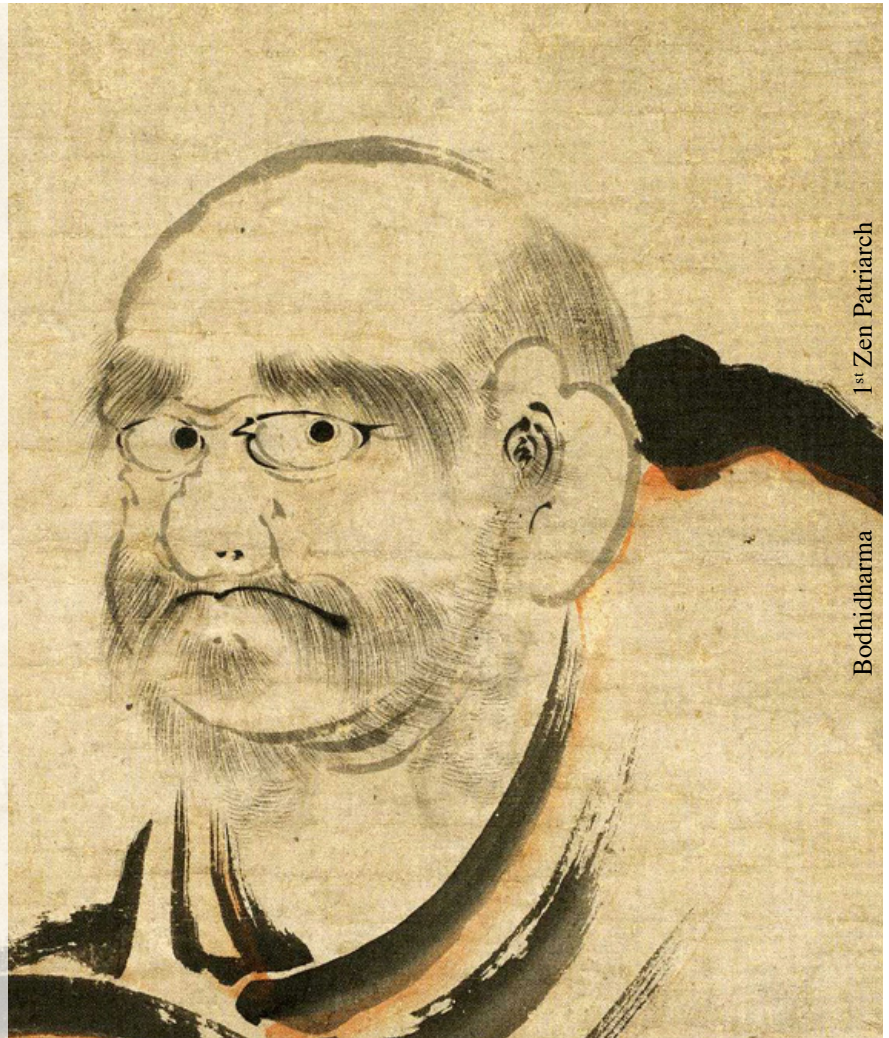
Mind and Material Practices

UC Santa Barbara
Summer 2019
Session B

12:30-1:50PM
LSB 1101

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Course Description

This course will explore the history, literature, and practices of Zen Buddhism as it developed in China, Japan, and in the West (especially the US). During our exploration we will read Zen texts, ruminate upon Zen myths, contemplate Zen art, listen to Zen music, examine Zen meditation, and analyze Zen objects.

As we can see, “Zen” has come to represent a lot of things. “Zen” is the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese character meaning “meditation” 禪, pronounced *chán*. Aside from meditation, Zen also refers to its own distinctive lineages, literary genres, and rhetorical styles. Historically, Zen has its origins in seventh century China, but its myths trace its origins to the Buddha in India. The tension between history and myth will be a point of reflection in our course, and we will see how this tension has driven the popularity of Zen until today.

One of the lasting allures of Zen is its “mystical” character that derives from its own mythology. Zen often proclaims that its own authority stems from its non-reliance on scripture, the very bedrock of the Buddhist tradition. Because of this positioning, it is easy to view Zen as a tradition that abandons traditional forms of Buddhist practice – but this would be a mistake. To fully appreciate the history of Zen, we must place it within its proper *monastic* context and beside its numerous *material* practices. Thus, in addition to myth, we will focus on Buddhist perspectives on meditation and material culture and explore how they converge in the practice of Zen.

The first portion of the course will be devoted to reviewing basic Buddhist concepts. These will be placed in contrast to the significant cultural transformations that occurred in China and Japan, thus resulting in creation of this elusive entity we call Zen.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- ✿ **Identify** and **describe** principle beliefs, practices, themes, and contested issues in (Zen) Buddhism
- ✿ **Apply** historical critical methods to **explain** the social or cultural forces that shape the different contours of (Zen) Buddhism
- ✿ **Analyze** and **evaluate** the claims regarding the mind and meditation practice in (Zen) Buddhism
- ✿ **Analyze** visual and material objects related to (Zen) Buddhism for multiple layers of meaning
- ✿ **Communicate** – and even debate – with your peers through in-class activities, out-of-class online discussion forums, and through written assignments

Grading

Attendance & “Prep-ticipation” (10%) (23 classes): Attendance and class preparation/participation is mandatory. The daily readings will prepare you for class engagement (discussion, surveys, peer review, & other activities) so take notes on what you read, *including your thoughts on the content* (GS Reflections, below, will help with this process if this concept is new to you). Also, consider lectures and discussions as complementary to our readings, thus being prepared and willing to engage with your peers (in small groups) are *keys* to success.

Gauchospace Reflections (20%) (20 total): These are *daily* short responses to the assigned readings. They require you to assess what you found new, old, and odd (the 3Qs) for each reading, as well as a reflection on a daily theme (1DT). Entries need to be posted on Gauchospace *before* class each day; late work will not be accepted. You are allowed to miss a maximum of two reflections without grading repercussions. See Gauchospace for extended instructions on 3Qs/1DT.

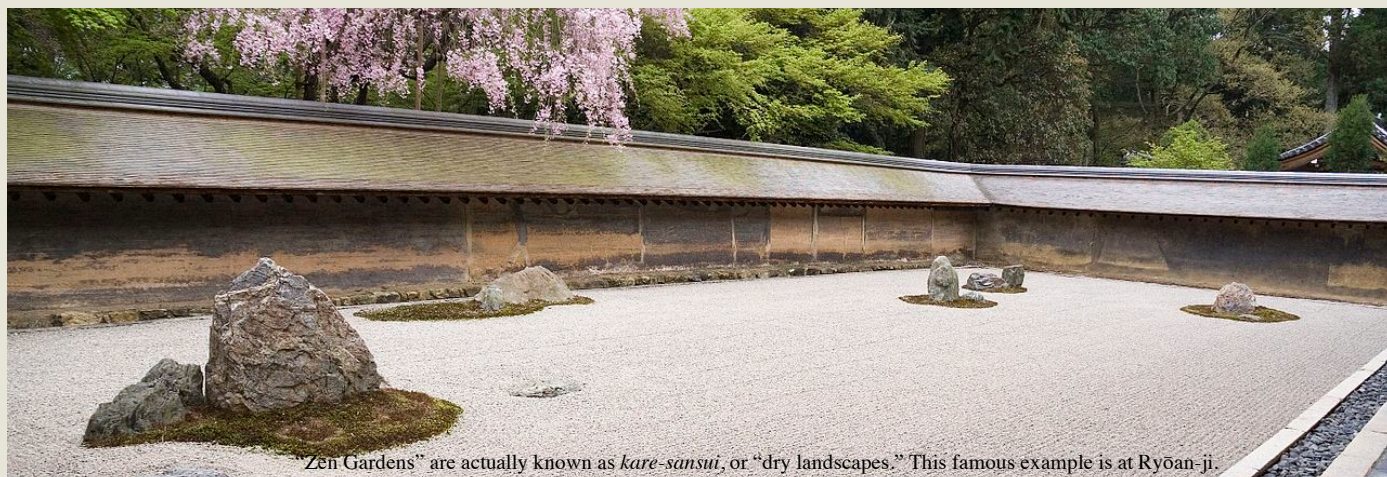
Quizzes (10%) (4 total): At the start of every week we will have a “low-stakes memory challenge” covering the material from the previous week. These will be *online* through Gauchospace and completed at home *before* the start of the first class of that week. See Gauchospace for more info.

Mid-Term Exam (30%): The in-class midterm will cover material from the first three weeks of class. The exam will be multiple choice and short answer with a take-home essay component.

Final Exam (30%): The in-class final will be comprehensive with a focus on the last three weeks of class. The exam will be multiple choice and short answer with a take-home essay component.

Your Success Matters to Me!

If you have a documented disability that affects your work in this class, the Disabled Students Program (<http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/>) will help you with arranging accommodations.



“Zen Gardens” are actually known as *kare-sansui*, or “dry landscapes.” This famous example is at Ryōan-ji.

Motivations

People take courses in Religious Studies for many reasons, but honestly its mostly because it fulfills some requirement, no?

Pause. Think for a moment why a course like ours might be considered *essential* to your college experience. What could you learn about the world or yourself in this course?

Also reflect on the level of commitment you will bring. It is completely possible to do well in the class without a profound re-evaluation of the world around you, but that would be a shame. We can playfully imagine three levels of training for Zen practitioners, so let's see how they might stack up in our course.

recluse

A **recluse** has memorized the basic facts of Zen Buddhist history and can easily recall the most important figures, events, and concepts (even those tricky foreign terms).

A recluse's main concerns pertain to basic questions of *what* and *who*.

A recluse tends to assume that the readings, instructor's lectures, and other materials are all mutually reinforcing and telling the same basic story. Discussion and reflection will be mostly irrelevant if the facts are memorized.

disciple

A **novice** has a firm foundation in the facts of Zen Buddhism, but will also be interested in exploring different interpretations of ideas and analyzing them.

In addition to questions of who and what, a novice's questions pertain to asking *how* and *why*.

A novice will notice that scholars have different (and often contradicting) perspectives on Buddhist history, and will appreciate when underlying assumptions are challenged through discussion.

master

A **master** has applied a critical analysis to the history of Zen Buddhism, but will also want to evaluate ideas and create new, critical perspectives and arguments.

Beyond how and why, a master asks *how the material is personally relevant* or *why it is important for society*.

A master will actively seek alternative sources, interpretations, and voices, generating a fearlessness and curiosity to engage with others in order to seek the "truth" and develop truly transformative wisdom.

Other Policies

§1 Motivation Policy

Please deeply consider your personal motivations for taking our class and the commitment you can bring. I will bring enthusiasm (that's easy!) and a desire to help you see something new about yourself or about the world.

§2 Attendance Policy

Students are required to attend class regularly and arrive on time (but certainly come to class, even if late). If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with a fellow student to get notes and any assignments. You are allowed to miss **two classes** without grading repercussions, but your Attendance grade will be reduced one-third of a letter grade for each subsequent absence. A **fifth** missed class, without prior consultation with me, will result in an automatic failure of the course.

§3 Technology & Digital Media Policy

Please turn off your cell phones or set them to silent (*vibrate does not count*) before class begins. As I'm sure you are aware, cell phones are distracting and divert important cognitive energies away from our class. I hope you come to consider our time together as a valued period of critical inquiry and engaging conversation. I should note that there will be times when we will use our cell phones (or computers) to do classroom activities.

§4 Late Work Policy

If a situation arises where you cannot finish the work on time (illness, scheduling conflicts, etc.), I am willing to work with you to revise a due date *if* you contact me a few days ahead of the due date. The earlier the better.

§5 Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work as one's own. Examples include: copying and pasting text from websites and presenting it as your own original work; copying and pasting text from printed or digital sources and presenting it as your own original work; using another student's work and claiming it as your own original work. This will result in failure of the assignment and possibly of the course.

Course Materials

- ✿ Access to our course website at Gauchospace (<https://gauchospace.ucsb.edu/>)
- ✿ **Required text:** John McRae's *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (2003) – Available at our university bookstore.
- ✿ A **digital reader** will be made available online via Gauchospace. You will need to bring in a digital or print copy to class each day – we will consult the texts directly in lecture and through in-class activities

What is a Material Practice?

Too often the study of religion is perceived as the study of beliefs, myths, and worldviews. This method of study, often solely concerned with reading old scriptures (called *sūtra* in Sanskrit or *jīng* 經 in Chinese), overlooks the numerous ways in which religious beliefs have been coupled with real world practices that use and produce material artifacts.

David Morgan, a leading scholar in the material study of religion, argues that this new approach “allows for religion to happen as a sensory phenomenon.” By viewing any religion as a material

religion, this enables us to develop an understanding for the significance of objects and the relationships religious actors have with them.

In our course, we will not only pay attention to Zen beliefs and myths, but also the materials and material practices that accompany them. In our analysis of religious objects, we will not treat them like dead art historical remains, but sites of living meaning negotiated through social interactions. To achieve our aims we will engage in thinking about “object biographies,” which aim to identify the many layers of meaning wrapped around each object.



Questions & Conversations

To the left, we have Zen master Nanquan. He is threatening to kill a cat if his disciples do not answer his questions correctly. Zen masters often are presented as acting in spontaneous and non-conventional ways, but it was always for the benefit of their students.

I've come to believe that classroom conversations are crucial to understanding. Don't get me wrong, there will be times where I talk *at* you (ahem, lecture), but there will also be times when I hope to talk *with* you. I certainly want to hear what you think about the things we uncover.

Some conversations will occur in a small group settings – it's just easier to run a large class that way, but it also allows for more intimate conversations. It's also a good place to ask questions about the material; asking questions is *precisely* how we all learn.

Let's make sure to foster inclusivity in our class and maintain respect for others. Excited disagreement, backed by reason and displayed with civility, is encouraged.



Zen Lore

After Baizhang's students had stolen his farming tools so he would rest, he famously stated:
"A day without work is a day without eating."

What is a Mind Lab?

Periodically throughout the term we will engage in short classroom experiments of the mind, which I've rather simply termed Mind Labs. These experiments will help orient ourselves to some aspect about the nature or functioning of the mind as described and explained in Buddhist sources. The ultimate goal is to better understand the various cognitive states and contemplative practices often referred to in Buddhist and Zen Buddhist texts.

Through informal classroom surveys using Mentimeter (you can download an app to your phone or go to the website) and class discussion we will use the insights developed with these experiments to (hopefully) better understand a particular Buddhist concept (such as the mental process of *vicāra*) or a particular Buddhist contemplative practice (such as "Maintaining Awareness of the Mind"). Ultimately the hope is that exposure to these ideas through conceptual practice and thought experimentation will make us better analysts of the states described in the textual sources, or simply just more curious about how our own minds – and habits of mind – operate.

How Do I Succeed in this Course?

The illustration above is a portrait of the Zen master Baizhang. A very famous quote is attributed to him: "A day without work is a day without eating." If you look closely at the grading in our course, a good amount of our work is, for lack of a better phrase, the daily grind. This is on purpose. By responding to readings daily and engaging in daily discussion (both in small groups and with the entire class) you can slowly form and then assess your understanding of the material. The weekly quizzes are also meant to provide you regular intervals to *reorganize* your notes and further check your understanding (research has shown that re-reading is not sufficient). Moreover, a sizable grading portion of both the midterm and final will be a take home "creative" essay where you will have several days to work on your response. Even though this is a summer course, we are pacing a marathon, not running a sprint.

If you are ever feeling lost, or overwhelmed, come talk with me. I am more than happy to chat about your concerns, and if helpful, strategize how to best accomplish your goals.

About Me

You can call me Peter. I am a PhD candidate in the Religious Studies department working on early medieval Chinese Buddhism. My dissertation looks at how smell and aromatic substances have influenced medieval religions in China. Obviously, my research stinks! (Sorry...)

I have lived in Buddhist temples in the US and in Asia and have assisted for many years with the Woodenfish Program, which brings college students to China to live in a Buddhist monastery for a month. If you have any questions about living with Buddhist monks and nuns, feel free to ask!

Daily Schedule *subject to change, see GauchoSpace for up-to-date daily assignments

Date	In Class Schedule	Due For Class
Mon., Aug. 5	Welcome: What is Zen and how can we study it?	Optional: Lopez 2001: 1-18 [18 pages <i>inclusive</i>]
Tue., Aug. 6	The Myth of the Buddha	Harvey 2013: 8-31 [24 pages], Lopez 2001: 37-59 [23 pages]
Wed., Aug. 7	Foundations of Buddhist Thought I	Harvey 2013: 32-49 [18 pages]
Thur., Aug. 8	Foundations of Buddhist Thought II	Harvey 2013: 50-87 [28 pages]
Mon., Aug. 12	Quiz 1 Due Enter the Mahāyāna	Harvey 2013: 108-127 [20 pages], Williams 2009: 45-62 [18 pages]
Tue., Aug. 13	Chinese Religious Traditions	Mitchell 2013: 222-9 [8 pages], Kohn 2005: 2172-3 [1 page], Ivanhoe 2005: 5857-8 [1 page]
Wed., Aug. 14	Early Buddhist Meditation	Gethin 1998: 174-201 [28 pages]
Thur., Aug. 15	Buddha Nature and the Nature of the Zen Mind	Williams 2009: 103-9, 115-25 [18 pages], Lusthaus 2004: 914-6, 917-20 [7 pages] or Sharf 2014: 933-53 [21 pages]
Mon., Aug. 19	Quiz 2 Due The Legends of Early Zen	McRae 2003: 22-8 [8 pages], McDaniel 2012: 25-33 [9 pages]
Tue., Aug. 20	The Bodhidharma Method	McRae 1986: 101-5 [5 pages], McRae 2003: 28-33 [6 pages], “Drawing Bodhidharma” [https://bit.ly/2lON7xJ]
Wed., Aug. 21	Eastern Mountain Zen: Daoxin and Hongren	McRae 2003: 33-44 [12 pages], McRae 1986: 121-38, 144-7 [22 pages]
Thur., Aug. 22	Sudden Enlightenment and the Myth of Huineng	McRae 2003: 45-69 [25 pages], McDaniel 2012: 60-7 [8 pages]
Mon., Aug. 26	Midterm Exam	“Zen and the Art of Multiple Choice Questions”
Tue., Aug. 27	Evolving Styles of Zen: Shitou and Mazu	McRae 2003: 80-3 [4 pages], McDaniel 2012: 84-102 [19 pages]
Wed., Aug. 28	“Encountering” a Master	McRae 2003: 74-80, 83-6, 92-4, 95-8, 112-5 [22 pages], McDaniel 2012: 164-74, 178-88, 218-227 [32 pages]
Thur., Aug. 29	Kōans: A Method to Madness?	McRae 2003: 119-33 [15 pages], Wright 2000: 200-3, 205-7 [7 pages], McDaniel 2012: 296-303 [8 pages]
Mon., Sep. 2	No class	No class
Tue., Sep. 3	Quiz 3 Due Life in a Rinzai Temple	Hori 2006: 117-29 [13 pages], Hori 2006: 131-47 [17 pages], McDaniel 2012: 36-42, 238-50 [20 pages]
Wed., Sep. 4	Hongzhi’s Silent Illumination	McRae 2003: 133-42 [10 pages], McDaniel 2012: 126-37 [12 pages]
Thur., Sep. 5	Dōgen’s Sitting Zen	Tanahashi 1985: 3-30 [27 pages], McDaniel 2012
Mon., Sep. 9	Quiz 4 Due Zen and the Arts	Lachman 2004: 125-30 [6 pages], Levine 2014: 529-47 [19 pages]
Tue., Sep. 10	Zen in the US	Iwamura 2011: 3-61 [selections]
Wed., Sep. 11	Scientific Study of Meditation & Review	Ricard, Lutz & Davidson 2014: 39-45 [7 pages]
Thur., Sep. 12	Final Exam	

