Course Overview
One of the most significant, and neglected, characteristics of Buddhism is an active interest in local cults. This interest often resulted in various forms of interaction, in which Buddhist doctrines, rituals, and imagery were combined with pre- and non-Buddhist religious phenomena; old cults were restructured, and new cults arose. This course is an attempt to outline a systematic understanding of Buddhism’s manifold relations with local cults in various parts of Asia, beginning with patterns established in ancient India, and followed by further developments in Thailand, Burma, Tibet, China, and Japan.

Course Requirements
You are expected to attend all classes, prepare the readings before each class, and actively participate in in-class discussion. You are required to take a mid-term exam and a final exam, and to write a research paper on a topic of your choice related to the course readings but discussed with me well in advance and approved by me.

Absences: you will be permitted two excused absences from lectures; additional absences will result in a grade reduction.

Mid-term Exam and Final Exam: you will have to choose two topics from among a few general themes addressed in the class and write about them in a concise but thoughtful, original, and exhaustive way.

Research Paper: at the end of the course you will have to turn in a 10-page research paper about one of the subjects addressed in the course. Tangential topics are OK only as long as they are clearly connected to course material. You must discuss the topic of your research paper with me well in advance and obtain approval. Please understand that papers whose topics have not been discussed with me in advance might be subject to a grade reduction (including, in extreme cases, a failing grade). You are expected to use at least 8-10 sources (among which, at least 5 must be books).

Grading
Attendance and active participation in class: 15%
Mid-Term Exam: 20%
Final Exam: 25%
Research Paper: 40%

Required Texts and Readings
—Course Reader

The books and the course reader are available at the Campus Bookstore (UCen). The required books, as well as other books related to the course, are also on reserve in the library.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** All students are expected to adhere to university codes of academic integrity. All instances of academic misconduct (including Cheating, Plagiarism, and Collusion) will be rigorously investigated and carried forward with the academic judiciary at the Office of Student Life.

***Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices before each class.***
Course Schedule

**Week 1 (March 28)** *Course Introduction*
<<March 30 NO CLASS: Dr. Rambelli attends a conference in Honolulu>>

**Week 2 (April 4 and 6)** *Indian Popular Religion and the Formation of Buddhism*
Readings: *Haunting the Buddha*

**Week 3 (April 11 and 13)** *Burma Nats Cults*
Readings: *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism; Burmese Supernaturalism; The Burmese Nats* (Reader)

**Week 4 (April 18 and 20)** *Thai Spirit Cults 1*
Readings: *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand*

**Week 5 (April 25 and 27)** *Thai Spirit Cults 2*
Readings: *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand; Spirits of the Place* (Reader)

<<<<<<MID-TERM EXAM ON APRIL 27>>>>>>

**Week 6 (May 2 and 4)** *Bon: The Indigenous Tradition of Tibet*
Readings: Bon: A Heterodox System; Bon Religion: Scriptures, Pantheon, Ritual; The Bon Religion (two chapters); Tonpa Shenrab Miwo; Olmo Lungring; Myths and Rituals; Bonpo Tantric Deities (Reader)

**Week 7 (May 9 and 11)** *Buddhism and Shinto*
Readings: Combinatory religion… in pre-modern Japan; Medieval Shinto as a form of “Japanese Hinduism”; Wrathful Deities and Saving Deities; Shinto Icons; Re-positioning the gods; Both parts or only one?; Buddhist and Shinto traditions at Suwa shrine (Reader)

**Week 8 (May 16 and 18)** *Buddhism and Chinese Folk Religion 1*
Readings: *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*

**Week 9 (May 23 and 25)** *Buddhism and Chinese Folk Religion 2*
Readings: *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*

<<<<<<FINAL EXAM ON MAY 25>>>>>>

MAY 30 NO CLASS MEMORIAL DAY

**Week 10 (June 1)** *Final Considerations: Autochthonous, Local, Translocal*
Readings: Tradition: The nameless religion; Buddhism, local cults and cultural semiotics (Reader)

<<<<<<RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON MONDAY, JUNE 6, BY 4 PM>>>>>>
Course Bibliography


Scheid, Bernhard. “‘Both Parts’ or ‘Only One,’” in Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, pp. 204-221.
