Course Overview

For more than two millennia, Buddhism has played an essential role in many Asian countries, affecting several aspects of their cultures. However, the general tendency among scholars and practitioners alike, especially in the modern era, has been to de-emphasize Buddhism’s contributions to political discourses and practices; as a result, Buddhist political movements, present in many Asian countries today, are seen as conspicuous deviations from spiritual considerations (that are normally considered the sole admissible realm of Buddhist doctrines and practices). Nevertheless, Buddhist political thought and related practices constitute a surprisingly rich and diverse field. In this seminar, we will explore several aspects of Buddhist politics, ranging from temple’s management to visions of universal kingship, from republican ideals to monarchical visions, by drawing examples from different Buddhist traditions. Our sources include Buddhist scriptures in Chinese/Japanese (with the possibility to confront them with Sanskrit, Pāli, and Tibetan versions) and writings by some the most representative scholars on the subject.

Course Requirements

You are expected to attend all classes, prepare the readings before each class, and actively participate in in-class discussion. You are also asked to write a reflection card based on the readings for each class. In addition, you will be asked to lead the class discussion one or more times during the quarter. You are required 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 one excused absence from the seminar; additional absences may result in a grade reduction.

Reflection Cards: you are expected to prepare a typewritten two-page reflection card for each class. It should contain a brief description of the main points of the day’s readings and your critical considerations and questions about them. My evaluation of your reflection cards will form part of the final grade.

Research Paper: at the end of the course you will have to turn in a 15-page research paper about one of the subjects addressed in the course. You must discuss the topic of your research paper with me well in advance and obtain approval.
Grading

Attendance, presentations, and active participation in class: 50%
Research Paper: 50%

Required Texts and Readings

—Course Reader
The course reader is available at the Campus Bookstore (UCen).
The course reader and other books related to the course are also on reserve in the library.

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

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.
Course Schedule

**Week 1 (March 30)** NO CLASS: Dr. Rambelli attends a conference in Honolulu

**Week 2 (April 6)** *Buddhism and Politics: The Indian Context and the Ancient Samgha*

**Week 3 (April 13)** *Early Buddhist Political Thought*

**Week 4 (April 20)** *The Ambiguities of Buddhist Kingship*
Readings: Tambiah, “World Conqueror and World Renouncer”

**Week 5 (April 27)** *Secular Politics, the Samgha, and Utopia*

**Week 6 (May 4)** *The Origins of Political Institutions*
Readings: Collins, “The Sutra on What is Primary (Agganna Suttanta)”, “The Sutra on the Wheel-Turning King (Cakkavatti Suttanta)”

**Week 7 (May 11)** *Mahayana Sacred Kingship*

**Week 8 (May 18)** *Buddhism and Modernization: The Case of Sada Kaiseki*
Readings: Rambelli, “Sada Kaiseki”

**Week 9 (May 25)** *How Engaged Can Buddhism Be? Uchiyama Gudo’s Anarchism*
Readings: Victoria, “Uchiyama Gudo”

**Week 10 (June 1)** *Paper Presentations and Final Considerations*

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


