

## **Buddhist Studies Graduate Seminar Buddhist Politics**

UCSB RG ST 257/EACS 257 Spring 2011  
Time: W 12 noon-2:50 pm Place: HSSB 2252

Professor Fabio Rambelli, HSSB 2253  
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Office hours: M 11-12, W 3:00-4:00, and by appointment

### **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 of 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*  
Readings: Chakravarti, "Political Background of Buddhism"; Hazra, "Political Condition of Ancient India"; Thapar, "Renunciation"; Dutt, "Internal Polity"; Hazra, "Constitution"

**Week 3 (April 13)** *Early Buddhist Political Thought*  
Readings: Gokhale, "Early Buddhist Kingship"; "Buddhist View of the State"; "Disorder"; "Dhamma"; "Attha"; Chakravarti, "The King in Early Buddhism"; Strong, "Ashoka"

**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*  
Readings: Collins, "The Perfect Moral Commonwealth"; Rambelli, "Buddhist Republican Thought and Institutions"

**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*  
Readings: Emmerick, "The Sutra of Golden Light"; Orzech, "The Transcendent Wisdom Scripture for Humane Kings"

**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

- Chakravarti, Uma. *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Collins, Steven. *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Dutt, Sukumar. *Early Buddhist Monachism*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996 (1924).
- Emmerick, R.E. *The Sutra of Golden Light*. London: Luzac & Co., 1970.
- Gokhale, Balkrishna Govind. *New Light on Early Buddhism*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1994.
- Hazra, Kanai Lal. *Constitution of the Buddhist Sangha*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Co., 1988.
- Orzech, Charles D. *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism*. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
- Rambelli, Fabio. "Buddhist Republican Thought and Institutions in Japan: Preliminary Considerations." In James Baskind, ed. *Scholars of Buddhism in Japan: Buddhist Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Japanese Studies Around the World 2008). Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2009, pp. 127-153.
- Rambelli, Fabio. "Sada Kaiseki: An Alternative Discourse on Buddhism, Modernity, and Nationalism in the Early Meiji Period." In Roy Starrs, ed. *Politics and Religion in Japan: Red Sun, White Lotus*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, forthcoming 2011.
- Strong, John S. *The Legend of King Asoka*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Tambiah, Stanley J. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Thapar, Romila. *Cultural Pasts*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Victoria, Brian. *Zen At War*. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1997.