

Course Code: BUDS 5013

Title in English: Theory and Method in Buddhist Studies

Title in Chinese: 佛學研究方法

Course Instructors: Prof. TAM Wai Lun 譚偉倫 and Prof. Sonia WONG Kwok 王珏

Year: 2025-26 Every Tuesday 7:00 – 9:30 pm

Course Description

This course introduces students to the historical development and primary disciplinary approaches and methods in the academic study of Buddhism. It integrates the exploration of various approaches, theories, methods, concepts, and issues in Buddhist studies with the acquisition of essential graduate skills. These skills include critical thinking and writing, effective utilization of primary and secondary sources, and the ability to navigate library, electronic, and other information resources relevant to Buddhist studies. Students will become familiar with key concepts in the field.

The course is divided into two parts:

1. **Part One:** Prof. Sonia Wong, an expert in hermeneutics in Biblical Studies—a highly developed field—will deliver a series of six lectures on hermeneutics. Students and the instructor will then consider how these theories could be useful and adapted for use in Buddhist Studies. A mid-term examination will conclude this part of the course.
2. **Part Two:** Prof. TAM Wai Lun will guide students in reading selected works in Chinese Buddhism to explore their approaches, methods, concepts, and issues. At the end of the course, students will be required to design a project with a clearly defined approach, method, concept, and issue, presented in the form of a formal graduation paper proposal. This proposal will help students to develop their graduation paper during the second term for the course BUDS 5012 Graduation Paper 畢業論文, which is a required course for the MABS programme.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the historical development, theory, and methods in Buddhist studies.
2. Acquire fundamental knowledge and understanding of selected approaches, methods, theories, and concepts in the study of Buddhism.
3. Locate and utilize books, journals, journal articles, websites, and other resources relevant to religious topics, including those studied in this course.

Skill Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Develop analytical and problem-solving abilities, critical intelligence, and appreciative thinking, along with key research skills, to prepare for advanced studies in Buddhist Studies.
2. Enhance their ability to employ a variety of methods in studying and analyzing materials (e.g., philosophical, historical, hermeneutical, bibliographical, and ethnographical).
3. Improve research skills in Buddhist Studies, including academic writing and presentation, to advance further academic research in the field.

Attitude Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Recognize the contested and provisional nature of knowledge and understanding.
2. Develop a reflective and empathetic attitude in understanding Buddhism.
3. Cultivate sensitivity to ultimate concerns and the religious dimensions of human life.

Course syllabus and schedule

Abbreviations

CUL = Available on CUHK Library website

Bb = Available on Blackboard

J&M = *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*

TEIOM = *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms & Their Applications*

BCC = *The Postmodern Bible*

- **September 2:** Introduction to Hermeneutics and Narrative Criticism (Sonia Wong)
 - *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Applications* (1999), eds. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, pp. 201-29 (hereafter TEIOM). CUL.
 - *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (2007), ed. Gale A. Yee, pp. 19–45 (hereafter J&M). CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - Abrams, Meyer H. *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1971), pp. 3–29. Bb.
 - Moore, Stephen D. “Biblical Narrative Analysis from the New Criticism to the New Narratology.” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative* (2015), ed. Danna Nolan Fewell, chapter 2. CUL.
 - Powell, Mark Allan. *What Is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press (1990). CUL.

- **September 9: Ideological Criticism (Sonia Wong)**
 - TEIOM, pp. 283-306. CUL.
 - J&M, pp. 138-60. CUL.
 - *The Postmodern Bible* (1995), The Bible and Culture Collective, pp. 272–308 (hereafter BCC). CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (1976). London: Verso. CUL.
 - Pippin, Tina. "Ideology, Ideological Criticism, and the Bible." *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 4 (1996): 51-78. CUL.
- **September 16: Feminist Criticism (Sonia Wong)**
 - J&M, pp. 65–89. CUL.
 - BCC, pp. 225–71. CUL.
 - TEIOM, pp. 268–82. CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - Osiek, Carolyn. "The Feminist and the Bible: Hermeneutical Alternatives." *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 53, no. 4 (1997): 956–68. CUL.
- **September 23: Reader-Response Criticism (Sonia Wong)**
 - TEIOM, pp. 230–252. CUL.
 - BCC, pp. 20–69. CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - Iser, Wolfgang. "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction." In *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute* (1971), ed. Joseph Hillis Miller, pp. 1–45. New York: Columbia University Press. CUL.
 - Iser, Wolfgang. "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach." *New Literary History* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1972): 279–99. CUL.
 - Tompkins, J. P., ed. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University (1980). CUL.
- **September 30: Postcolonial Criticism (Sonia Wong)**
 - J&M, pp. 161–82. CUL.
 - Wong, Sonia Kwok. "What Is Postcolonial Studies and How Is It Applied to the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament." In *The Old Testament Hebrew Scripture in Five Minutes* (2024), eds. Philippe Guillaume and Diane Edelman. Sheffield: Equinox, pp. 419–23. CUL.
 - Wong, Sonia Kwok. "Signifying the Empire against the Empire: Doing Historical Criticism with Postcolonial Theories." In *Heilige Schriften in der Kritik: XVII. Europäischer Kongress für Theologie* (2022), ed. Konrad Schmid, pp. 125–42. CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**

- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom* (2005). 2nd ed. London; New York: Routledge. Taylor & Francis eBooks Complete. CUL.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (2002). 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge. CUL.
- Sugirtharajah, R. S., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism* (2018). New York: Oxford University Press. CUL.
- **October 7** Day after Mid-Autumn Festival Public Holiday
- **October 14:** Psychological Criticism and Trauma Theory (Sonia Wong)
 - BCC, pp. 187-224. CUL.
 - Brooks, Peter. "The Idea of a Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism." In *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature* (1987), ed. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, pp. 1–18. CUL.
 - O'Connor, Kathleen M. "Reclaiming Jeremiah's Violence." In *The Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets* (2010), eds. Julia M. O'Brien and Chris Franke, pp. 37–49. Bb.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - Kille, D. A. *Psychological Biblical Criticism* (2001). GBS. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress. CUL.
 - Vandermeersch, Patrick. "Psychoanalytic Interpretations of Religious Texts: Some Basics." In *God, Biblical Stories and Psychoanalytical Understanding* (2001), eds. Rainer Kessler and Patrick Vandermeersch, pp. 9–27. Bb.
- **October 21:** In-class Mid-term Examination & Introduction to Part II of the Course (TAM WL)
 - 吳汝鈞. 《佛學研究方法論》。臺北: 臺灣學生書局, 民國 72 (1983/2006/2024 上、下冊)。
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - 張曼濤, 主編. 《佛學研究方法》。臺北: 大乘文化出版社 民國 67 (1978), pp. 343-365. CUL.
 - Lopez, Donald S., Jr., ed. *Buddhist Hermeneutics*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2022), chapters 1 and 2, by Lopez and Lamotte, respectively. CUL.
 - Lopez, Donald S. "Burnouf and the Birth of Buddhist Studies." *The Eastern Buddhist* 43, no. 1 (2012): 25-34. CUL.
- **October 28:** Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism (TAM WL)
 - Sharf, Robert. *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*. Kuroda Institute, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 14. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2002), pp. 1-27, 77-133, 263-278. CUL.

- Sharf, Robert. "On Pure Land Buddhism and Chan/Pure Land Syncretism in Medieval China." *T'oung Pao* 88, nos. 4/5 (2002): 282-331. CUL.
- Sharf, Robert. "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience." *Numen* 42, no. 3 (October 1995): 228-283. CUL.
- Sharf, Robert. "Mindfulness and Mindlessness in Early Chan." *Philosophy East and West* 64, no. 4 (October 2014): 933-964. CUL.
- **Recommended Reading:**
 - Ch'en, Kenneth Kuan Sheng. *Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (1973/2015). CUL.
- **November 4: Studies in Chan Buddhism (TAM WL)**
 - McRae, John R. *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press (2004). CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - McRae, John R. *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2021). CUL.
 - 马克瑞著; 韩传强译. 《北宗禅与早期禅宗的形成》。上海: 上海古籍出版社 (2015)。
 - Jorgensen, John. "Early Chán Revisited: A Critical Reading of Daoxuan's Hagiographies of Bodhidharma, Huike and Their Associates." In *Chan Buddhism in Dunhuang and Beyond: A Study of Manuscripts, Texts, and Contexts in Memory of John R. McRae* (2021), eds. Christoph Anderl and Christian Wittern. Leiden, Netherlands; Boston, Massachusetts: Brill. CUL.
- **November 11: Critical Buddhism (TAM WL)**
 - Hubbard, Jamie, and Paul Swanson, eds. *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press (1997). CUL.
 - 《修剪菩提树: "批判佛教"的风暴》(2004), 杰米·霍巴德, 保罗·史万森主编; 龚隽... 等译. 第1版 上海: 上海古籍出版社. CUL.
 - **Recommended Reading:**
 - Park, Jungnok. *How Buddhism Acquired a Soul on the Way to China*. Edited by Richard Gombrich. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing (2012).
- **November 25 Interfaith Concert: No Class**
- **November 18 & December 2: Students' Proposal Presentations (TAM WL)**

Course Components (Teaching Modes and Learning Activities)

- On-Site Face-to-Face Lectures: 100%

Assessment Types and Percentages

1. Mid-term In-Class **Examination** on Hermeneutics (by Sonia Wong): 40%
2. **Reading Summary** of at Least **One** Class Reading (Submitted via Blackboard, choose from required or recommended readings on October 21–November 4): 15%
3. In-Class **Proposal Presentation** (10 Minutes, November 18 or December 2; Please Sign Up in First Class Meeting): 5%
4. **Written Proposal** (Submitted via Blackboard on or before the End of Classes): 30%
5. Proposal must be **submitted via Blackboard** with a VeriGuide receipt.
6. Active In-Class **Participation**: 10%

Details regarding the Mid-term examination, reading summary, and proposal will be provided in class.

Grade Descriptors

- A: Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
- A-: Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
- B: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes that compensates for less satisfactory performance in others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
- C: Satisfactory performance on most learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
- D: Barely satisfactory performance on several learning outcomes.
- F: Unsatisfactory performance on several learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Feedback for Evaluation

- An end-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class.
- Students are encouraged to provide comments and feedback on the course via email or personal meetings with the instructor.

Contact Details for Teachers & TAs

- Prof. Sonia Kwok Wong: Room 324, 3F, Leung Kau Kui Building, CUHK; sonia.wong@cuhk.edu.hk
- Prof. TAM Wai Lun: Room 219, 2F, Leung Kau Kui Building, CUHK; wltam@cuhk.edu.hk
- The instructors are usually available to meet in their offices on Fridays between 3 pm and 5 pm. However, students must make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance. Some weeks, the instructor may be fully booked, or may be away from the office at that time. Meetings immediately before or briefly after class are also possible.
- Course Website: Blackboard

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Attention is drawn to the University's policy and regulations on academic honesty and the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policies. Details can be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

For each assignment, students **must submit a signed declaration acknowledging their awareness of these policies, regulations, guidelines, and procedures**. For group projects, all members must sign the declaration. For assignments in the form of computer-generated documents that are primarily text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement (in the form of a receipt) will be issued by the system upon submission of the soft copy.

Assignments without the receipt will not be graded. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Guideline on sharing lecture recordings

Attention is drawn to the following:

- The copyright of any lecture recordings shared in the course, whether they are produced by teachers, students, or peer note-takers, belongs to the University.
- Students should not share these recordings with others without obtaining prior written consent from the teacher(s).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Students are reminded to use AI tools responsibly and ethically and to be aware of their limitations.

Approach 3 – Use Only with Explicit Acknowledgement

Students may use AI tools in certain class activities and assignments, provided they explicitly acknowledge and properly cite the input from AI tools.

Acknowledging Support from AI Tools

Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of a generative AI tool and cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate any content (whether text, image, data, or other formats) that was created by the tool.

- **Example of Acknowledgement:**

"I acknowledge the use of [name of AI tool—e.g., ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com>)] to [specify the support, e.g., **plan my essay, generate ideas for content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get dates of historical events, etc.**]."

- **Example of Citation:**

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Mar 20 version). <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

- **Example of Including Texts Generated by an AI Tool in Your Work:**

“The following text was generated by an AI tool/language model (e.g., ChatGPT):

[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]”

- **Example of Including Texts Generated by an AI Tool and the Prompts Used:**

“[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (e.g., ChatGPT):

[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]”