

Comparative Literature 382g (THH116)

***Zen and Taoism in Asian Literature***

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THH356T

Office hours: T. Th. 3.30-4.30 pm and by appt.

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THH 175

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**Course Description**

The course will present an overview and appreciation of Zen-Buddhism and Taoism in the literature of China and Japan. The class will study the basic concepts of Taoism and Buddhism (Zen, in particular), distinguishing between those unique to each philosophy and those shared by both. Students will undertake close readings and analysis of selected works, recognizing the influences of these two major thoughts and their literary, religious, philosophical implications. In addition, the instructor will cover briefly the significant artistic achievements in the context of Zen-Buddhism and Taoism, with specific reference to the aesthetic intricacy of sculptures and paintings in Buddhist caverns, as well as to the religious artifacts of bronze and ceramic-porcelains. Consequently, students will share with these texts not only their religious and philosophical contents, but a deeper cultural understanding of literature and art through their peculiar form of expressions.

The following textbooks will serve as core readings for class discussions throughout the semester. Additional reading materials will be pasted on blackboard to access.

**Required texts:**

1. Alan Watts. *The Way of Zen*, Random House.
2. Yukio Mishima. *Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Vintage International.
3. Arthur Waley (tr.) *Monkey*, Grove Press.
4. Price & Wong (tr.) *The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui-neng*, Shambhala Press.
5. Course Reader

**Course Requirements:**

One analytical paper of roughly 2,500 words or 10 to 12 pages, typed, double-spaced plus notes and bibliography; a midterm examination and a final examination, each weighing 30% of the final grade with an additional 10% for classroom participation (quiz and regular attendance), evidence of studying assigned readings, and class discussions. Students are expected to attend all lectures as well as a weekly discussion section. Paper

topics can be selected through consultation with the instructor/TA or in reference to the topic samples. Late submission of papers will be penalized by a deduction of one percentage point per day of lateness from the grade of the paper. There is no makeup examination except for students who submit an authentic medical proof. Likewise, those who fail to attend one-third of the semester class sessions will receive a failing grade. PLEASE NOTE; Failure to attend discussion section will be taken very seriously. One unexcused absence will be tolerated, but further unexcused absences will affect the “class participation” portion of the student’s grade (not the overall grade) as follows:

- 2 absences: 1 letter grade deduction
- 3 absences: 2 letter grades deduction
- 4 or more: automatic “F”

**Important dates:**

One midterm (October 14<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday), one term-paper, one final examination (December 11<sup>th</sup> Thursday, 2-4 pm), and occasional quizzes. Class ends at December 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday.

**Academic Integrity:**

All written work must be in a student’s own words and represent original thought. The ideas of others as well as quotations must be properly attributed; more than six words copied from another source without proper reference constitute plagiarism (See *SCampus*).

Exams cannot be made up, except under rare circumstances when prior permission has been granted by the instructor. With regard to plagiarism (on papers) and cheating (on exams), I adhere to the “Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines” on 2002-2003 *SCampus*, please review these carefully and see me if you have any questions.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

Students who need to request accommodations based on a disability are required to register each semester with the Disability Services and Programs office (Student Union, Room 301). In addition, a letter of verification to the course instructor, from the Disability Services and Programs office is needed for the semester in which you are enrolled for this course. If you have questions concerning this procedure, please contact both the instructor of the course, and the Disability Services and Programs office at 213-740-0776.

**Course Syllabus:**

**I. Understanding and Not Understanding Zen and Taoism**

Is Zen a system of philosophy, highly intellectual and profoundly metaphysical as most Buddhist teachings are? Is Zen a religion? How does its meditation exercise differ from other religious schools? What is the philosophy of the Tao in Taoism? How does the “unconventional” knowledge of Taoism differ from the “conventional”

social codes of communication? How important is the understanding of the “no mind” in the teachings of Zen and Taoism?

Watts 3-28, “The Philosophy of Tao”

## II. The Origin of Buddhism, Zen-Buddhism and Taoism in China and Japan

What are the basic teachings of Buddhism? How is the practice of instantaneous awakening without passing through preparatory stages lead to the rise of Zen-Buddhism? What is the hierarchy of the Zen masters and their characteristic teachings? What are the basic teachings of Taoism found in Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*?

William de Bary (Course Reader) “Basic Teachings of Buddhism” 415-420  
 Watts 29-114 “The Origin of Buddhism”  
 “Mahayana Buddhism”  
 “The Rise and Development of Zen”

The Way of Lao Tzu (*Tao Te Ching*) tr. and commentated by Wing-tsit Chan  
 (Course Reader): Introduction: The Philosophy of Tao 3-22  
 Texts, chapters 1,2,3,4,5,8,9,10,11,13,15,18,19,22,23,26,28,  
 30,31,33,36,40,41,43,45,48,56,66,78,80,81,

## III. Principles and Practices of Zen-Buddhism and Taoism

Is Zen nihilistic? How illogical is Zen? How practical is Zen in achieving its purpose of awakening? What are the unique characteristics of emptiness, and non-action?

Watts 115-153 “Empty and Marvelous”, “Sitting Quietly, Doing Nothing”  
 T’ao Ch’ien (Course Reader) “Peach Blossom Spring” 167-168

## IV. Further Development of Zen

What are *zazen* and *koan*? How do they represent the dualistic understanding of the static and dynamic experience? How are these experiences merged with social cultural practices and one’s own private life?

Watts 154-173 “Za-zen and the Koan”

Yukio Mishima *Temple of the Golden Pavilion*

(Midterm Examination, October 14<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday)

## V. Further Development of Taoism

What are the basic teachings of Chuang Tzu? How is Chuang's dialectics applied to literature and the arts? How are Taoist mysticism and transcendence expressed in the parables and paradox of Chuang?

Chuang Tzu (Course Reader) 23-30 "Free an Easy Wandering"  
 31-45 "Discussion on Making All Things Equal"  
 46-49 "The Secret of Caring for Life"  
 50-63 "In the World of Men"  
 96-110 "Autumn Floods"  
 111-117 "Supreme Happiness"  
 118-140 "Mastering Life"

#### VI. The Influence of Buddhism in Classical Literature

Arthur Waley *Monkey*

#### VII. *The Diamond Sutra* and *The Sutra of Hui-neng*

*The Diamond Sutra* 17-53  
*The Sutra of Hui-neng* 1. Autobiography 67-78  
 2. On *Prajna* 79-87  
 3. Questions and Answers 88-93  
 8. The Sudden School and the Gradual School 129-137

#### VIII. Zen Buddhism and Taoism as a Cultural Tradition

How do the teachings of Zen-Buddhism and Taoism influence the daily life and habitats of the Asian intellectuals? How are these influences reflected in their writings? How do these works reveal the intrinsic value of life and its transient brevity?

Kenko Yoshida *Essay in Idleness* (Course Reader)

Chapters:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,15,17,18,21,22,25,26,29,38,41,49,52,53,55,56,58,59,60,69,73,74,75,79,80,85,87,89,92,93,104,105,107,108,112,115,117,123,125,130,131,134,137,139,141,142,145,150,155,164,166,170,172,173,175,188,189,192,193,211,212,217,235,243.

#### IV. Zen/Tao and the Other Arts

How do the teaching of Zen-Buddhism and Taoism influence the expression of art and literature, such as painting and poetry?

Watts 174-202 "Zen in the Arts"

Photoshop: Chinese and Zen gardens, Buddhist caverns (grottoes)

### Suggested readings:

#### A/ General Works:

- Basho. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*. Penguin, 1966.
- Eugen Herrigel. *Zen in the Art of Archery*. Vintage, 1971.
- Robert M. Pirsig. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Bantam, 1974.
- Alan Watts. *Beat Zen, Square Zen and Zen*. City Light Books, 1959.
- Craig Clunas. *Art in China*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

#### B/ Secondary Works:

##### Taoism:

- Arthur Waley. *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*. (with chapter on Chuang Tzu), Doubleday Anchor Books, 1964.
- Holmes Welch. *Taoism: The Parting of the Way*. Beacon Press, 1957.
- Chang Chung-yuan. *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art and Poetry*. Harper & Row, 1970.

##### Zen-Buddhism:

- Heinrich Dumoulin. *Zen Buddhism: A History*. Volume one on India and China, volume two on Japan. Macmillan, 1988.
- D.T. Suzuki. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. Grove Press, 1960.
- Ibid. *Essay in Zen Buddhism: First Series*, Grove, 1961.
- Ibid. *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. Evergreen, 1960.
- Sohata Ogata. *Zen for the West*. Greenwood, 1976.
- Stewart Holmes. *Zen Art: For Meditation*. Charles E. Tuttle, 1973.
- Lucien Stryk, et al. *Zen Poems of China and Japan*. Doubleday Anchor, 1973.
- Ibid. *Zen Poetry*, Penguin, 1981.
- Ibid., ed. *World of the Buddha: An Introduction to Buddhist Literature*, Grove, 1968.

### Suggested Topics for Term Paper:

1. Discuss the concept of life and its cultural aspects in Yoshida Kenko's *Essay in Idleness* which reflects the influence of Zen Buddhism and Taoism. Discuss: Kenko as an arbiter of Japanese taste. His view on houses, interior decoration, gardens, tradition in art...etc. What are his aesthetic theories of the Beginning and End; and the importance of perishable beauty?
2. Taking the *Monkey* as a Buddhist quest of spiritual fulfillment, trace the allegorical significance of the journey of the pilgrims that lead to their final enlightenment.

Discuss the major characters as complementary allegorical figures. Do they represent different aspects of human nature or philosophical positions?

3. Trace the psychology of the arsonist in Yukio Mishima's *Temple of the Golden Pavilion* with emphasis on the subconscious of crime and punishment. Similar to the Freudian interplay of the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, Mishima's main protagonist is caught in between the influence of good and evil. How does his prolonged inner depression, or rather, obsession with beauty, lead to the schizophrenic decision to destroy the temple? Discuss the paradox of human nature (good/evil). Do you believe human nature is basically good? If so, why? If not, why?
4. Compare and contrast the significance of the Utopian theme in East/West literature. Suggestions are as follows:

West:

Thomas More, *Utopia* (social criticism and religious tolerance.)

Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* ("Besalem", or the logically organized society.)

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (anti-science and social satires.)

Henry Thoreau, *Walden* (the solitude of Nature as safe refuge for man.)

East:

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 80, (small country with few inhabitants.)

T'ao Ch'ien, "*Peach Blossom Spring*" (utopia in the mind of purposelessness.)

Kamo no Chomei, *An Account of my Hut* (recluse as utopia.)

Yoshida Kenko, *Essay in Idleness* (Buddhist realm as utopia.)

5. Discuss Zen Buddhism in reference to the *Diamond Sutra* and *The Sutra of Hui-neng*.
6. Discuss the "dream motif" in East/West literature under the following determining factors: a/ A vision of grandeur. (The hero is put to sleep and dreams that he undergoes a long series of experiences in which he imagines that he achieves a high degree of success.) b/ Illusion of time. (When the hero falls asleep, his dream seems to occupy a long period of time, but when he awakens, he finds that he has been asleep only briefly.) c/ Time measuring device. (The story uses a material object to measure the amount of time that actually passes in the dream. For example, the dream man may take the space of time it requires to cook a meal, saddle a horse, or water one's garden.)