



## **Buddhist Art in the Modern World**

**ASC 1137, Freshman Seminar**

**1 Semester-hour Credit**

**Day/Time Room tba**

Professor Namiko Kunimoto

Email: [Kunimoto.3@osu.edu](mailto:Kunimoto.3@osu.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30am – 10:30am or by appointment

### **Course Description:**

We encounter references to Buddhism and images of the Buddha in our everyday life; in fact, they have become so ubiquitous that we may have ceased to engage with them critically. What to make of cereal that promises to make you enlightened with every crunch, or “Zen” face cream? Does an icon that was looted from a Thai Temple have the same religious power that a sculpture of Amida Buddha has in a temple in Japan? This course will introduce students to Buddhism and ask them to consider how cultural, commercial, and spiritual significance is constructed, and how these constructions have been transformed in recent history. The course will involve critical engagement with readings and images, as well as discussion and debate. We will close the course with student’s creative presentations on Buddhist Art (students may either make their own piece of “Buddhist Art” and present it, or present on a pre-existing piece of Buddhist Art).

**Required Texts:** readings as pdf files available on Carmen

### **Course Requirements and Grading:**

Section Participation (30%)

Quizzes and response papers (30%)

Final presentation (40%)

### **Explanation of Grade Standards:**

**A** = excellent understanding of the topic/question, an insightful and thoughtful response to the material covered, goes beyond basic limits of assignment, persuasive and logical argumentation, and no typographical or grammatical errors.

**B** = competent understanding of the topic/question, adequate grasp of information, logical argument, possibly a few organizational problems or grammatical errors, but shows overall coherence in discussion and has few or no problems with grammar or typing.

**C** = meets minimum requirements of the assignment but reveals superficial preparation through problems with factual information (omissions or errors) and logical argument, and may have grammatical and/or typographical errors.

**D** = inadequate work, does not follow directions, poor use of resources, serious writing problems

**F** = work not turned in or does not match assignment requirements

## Expectations and Guidelines

Attendance, active participation, attentiveness, and a commitment to reading and writing carefully will ensure your success in this course. In addition, recognizing the class is a learning community will ensure we are all making the most of our time together.

### ***Are laptops allowed in class?***

Because we want to build a good learning environment and a strong sense of community in the classroom, laptops are not allowed. Please speak to me if you have a personal reason for needing a laptop.

### ***What is the Facebook group for?***

The group is simply away to continue our community-building and discussion outside the classroom. Please feel free to post photos that may be interesting, links to relevant events and articles, or to raise comments that come to mind. It is not mandatory to join the group, but I hope you will all do so. The website is: tba

### ***What are the required texts?***

Readings are on Carmen in pdf form. Studies show that reading from a printed text rather than a digital text results in better comprehension so I recommend printing out your readings and bringing them to class. Discussion based on readings will be a major component of the class.

### ***Do I have to talk in class?***

Yes, when the floor is open for discussion all students should try to be involved. Articulating your ideas will help you understand the course material and conceptualize your assignments. A respectful and engaged format of questioning and debate will allow everyone to feel comfortable sharing his or her ideas with the class. If you are talkative, try to allow others in class to speak. If you are shy, come to class prepared with at least one comment to share.

Please note, if your cell phone or other device makes noise during class you must bring cookies for the entire class at our next meeting!

### ***Is attendance mandatory?***

Yes, every class is meeting important. Students must make a commitment to attend and be actively involved in this class. There will be a sign-in attendance sheet for each class meeting. **30% of your final grade is based on attendance and participation and more than two unexcused absences will lower your**

**final grade a percent for each absence.** If an unavoidable conflict occurs please be in communication with me to request an excused absence. Excused absences include serious illness (with a doctor's note), major religious holidays, and travel to deal with a major family emergency (with documentation).

***What happens if I am late?***

Habitual tardiness is extremely disruptive.

**Arriving late more than two times will be counted as an absence and more than two unexcused absences will lower your final grade a percent for each absence.**

***Each student is to prepare a précis from time to time. What is a précis?***

A précis is a short written response to a selected reading. The précis should be more than just a summary of the article: it should also include your own opinions, questions, comments, and criticisms of the reading. Each précis should be one page in length, max 300 words – no longer! Please bring your précis and readings to class so that you can refer back to the text and your response to it. Writing précis will help you to think critically about the course material. Your archived précis are also an invaluable study resource. There is a sample précis available on Carmen as a guideline. Check your syllabus for précis due dates. All précis are due by 10:00 am via email on the date stated.

***Will late assignments be accepted?***

Late assignments will not be accepted unless there has been an emergency or an extension has been granted before the due date. Assignments must be handed in on the day they are due at the beginning of class (or via email as indicated on the syllabus). If you feel you cannot meet a deadline or find that you are having difficulty with readings or assignments, please speak with me as soon as possible. I will try to accommodate all legitimate and reasonable requests for extension (for example illness or personal emergency).

**If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.**

***What if I need special accommodations?***

**This class is meant to be equally accessible to all students. Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150**

**Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901;  
<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.**

***What if I have writing problems?***

This class is specifically designed to help improve your writing!

In addition, OSU has a special center devoted to assisting you.

Please see <http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter> or call 614-688-4291.

The Writing Center offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, Supplemental Instruction, and services for students with learning disabilities and ADHD.

***A note on academic misconduct:***

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct:<http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

## **Class Schedule**

### **Week 1 - Introduction to Buddhism**

#### **What is Buddhism? What is Buddhist Art?**

Gary Gach, *Guide to Understanding Buddhism*. (New York: Alpha Books, 2001), Chapter 1.

### **Week 2 - Life of the Buddha**

#### **How can we understand the life of the Buddha through artistic representations?**

Terminology quiz

### **Week 3 - “The Look” The Buddha and Iconography**

#### **How is looking at art a religious practice?**

Stella Kramrisch, “Emblems of the Universal Being,” in *Exploring India's Sacred Art*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 130-140.

**Week 4 - Devotion and Vision**

**How Do We See the Buddha?**

David Freedberg, *The Power of the Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), Introduction. précis due.

**Week 5 - Icons in the Modern Museum – Debate One**

**Does the Buddha belong in a museum?**

Yui Suzuki, “Temple as Museum, Buddha as Art: Horyuji’s Kudara Kannon and its Great Treasure Repository,” *RES* 52 (2007): 127-140.

**Week 6 - Colonial Practices and Buddhist Art**

**How did colonialism shape our understanding of Buddhism today?**

Iconography quiz

**Week 7 – Looting the Buddha**

**How has the illicit antiquities trade shaped religious practice and collecting?**

Roger Atwood, “Introduction,” *Stealing History: Tomb Raiders, Smugglers, and the Looting of the Ancient World*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 1-18.

**Week 8 - Buddhist terms and Visual description**

**How can we describe the Buddha’s appearance?**

In-class writing assignment

**Week 9 - Violence and Buddhist Art: Bamiyan**

**How have wars and terrorism effected Buddhist icons?**

Film excerpts: Christian Frei, *Giant Buddhas* (2005; 95 mins.)

**Week 10 – Buddhist commercialism**

**How does commercial culture profit from Buddhism?**

Tunya Sukpanich, “Commercialising Religious Art,” *Bankok Post* Aug. 5, 2007.

Browse: <http://theworsthorse.com>.

Bring examples of Buddhist commercial culture to class. Précis due

**Week 11 - Debate: Should there be restrictions on the sales of Buddhist imagery?**

**Week 12 - “Zen” Art in America and Europe - Yves Klein, Mark Tobey and others**

**What is Zen Art? Where did it come from?**

Jacquelynn Baas, “Nowhere from Here: Contemporary Art and Buddhism,”  
In *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art.*, ed. Baas and Mary J. Jacob  
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 19-27.

**Week 13 - Final Presentations**

**What is Buddhism in the Modern World?**

**Week 14 – Final Presentations**

**What is Buddhism in the Modern World?**