



# California Institute of Integral Studies

## **LIBERATION DHARMA: GENDER, BUDDHISM, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

PARW 6441, 3 units, Room 311 (and online)  
Spring 2019

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### **Course Description**

Using the wisdom of Buddhist teachings, this course examines spiritual awakening as liberation from oppressions based in gender, race, class, and sexuality. The concept of “liberation” is explored as an experience of freedom and healing from both personal and collective suffering. We will examine the role of women in Buddhism, both historically and in contemporary times; social movements based in engaged Buddhism; tantric Buddhism; Ecobuddhism; and struggles for racial justice in Western *sanghas*. This course will include experiential activities such as meditation, reflective dialogue, and embodied practices. These practices will complement the course texts and provide tools for students to more authentically engage with each other within spiritual and social justice environments.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

By the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Synthesize and evaluate interdisciplinary scholarship on both historical and contemporary intersections of gender, Buddhism, and social justice.
- Apply basic Buddhist concepts and practices to personal and collective efforts for social transformation.
- Integrate and articulate growth in self-awareness, political consciousness, and spiritual/philosophical development.
- Demonstrate growth in the following skills: active listening, presentation dialogue facilitation, academic writing and research.

## Course Texts

### Required Texts

- ❖ Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Interbeing*.
- ❖ Gross, Rita M. *Buddhism Beyond Gender: Liberation from Attachment to Identity*. Boulder: Shambala Publications, 2018.
- ❖ Loy, David. *Ecodharma: Buddhist Teachings for the Ecological Crisis*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2019.\*
- ❖ Manuel, Zenju Earthlynn. *The Way of Tenderness: Awakening through Race, Sexuality, and Gender*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2015.
- ❖ Tsomo, Karma Lekshe. *Buddhist Women and Social Justice*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.

\*This book will be released on Jan 29, 2019 and we'll be reading it toward the latter part of the semester.

### Recommended Texts

- Allione, Lama Tsultrim. *Wisdom Rising: Journey into the Mandala of the Empowered Feminine*. New York: Enliven Books, 2018.
- Gross, Rita. *Buddhism After Patriarchy*.
- Johnson, Charles. *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice*. Boston: Shambala Publications, 2014.
- Queen, Christopher. *Engaged Buddhism in the West*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

### Recommended Reference Books

- Manuel, Zenju Earthlynn. *Tell Me Something About Buddhism*. 2011. (This is a quick read and is strongly recommended if you have little to no previous experience with Buddhism)
- Smith, Huston and Philip Novak. *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction*. 2003.
- Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*
- Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. 1998.

## Course Assessment Measures

### Mindful Participation

15%

In order to receive an "A" for participation, please come to the in-person portion of the class on time and prepared to discuss the readings. In addition, your mindfulness will contribute to everyone's learning experience. Mindful participation includes: setting the intention to be present and attentive; being an active listener; being aware of your use of class time and the impact of your words on others; turning off cell phones and minimizing other distractions.

For the online portion of the class, participation includes responding to Canvas posts within

the allotted time frame and attending scheduled Zoom calls. We will have 4-5 scheduled Zoom calls throughout the semester and all students are required to attend at least 3.

### **Transformative Practice & Journal**

**20%**

Each student will commit to adopting a Buddhist-inspired practice or set of practices for the duration of the course. Please identify something that will challenge you but that you feel confident that you can commit to. Make sure to be clear on your *intention* for your practice. While many Westerners associate Buddhist practice solely with meditation, there are other practices that are just as important, such as observing the ethical precepts.

Example practices:

- Practicing "right speech" and observing one's process around this
- Sitting meditation, 10-30 minutes a day
- Chanting the Lotus Sutra

Please note that your practice should be something you engage with daily or weekly; it should not be a one-time event. You will share your practice intention with the class via Canvas and will also be paired up with a "Dharma Buddy" who will help keep you accountable.

You will reflect on both your practice and your learning in this course by keeping a journal.

### **Dharma Talk**

**15%**

Each student will have the opportunity to develop a mini "dharma talk" to share with their peers. A dharma talk is a reflection on how the Buddha's teachings apply to real life. For the purposes of this course, the dharma talk should also relate to a larger social, political, and/or ecological issue (tied to readings?). Some guidelines:

- It can be helpful to begin your talk by focusing on a particular teaching, such as the ethical precept to avoid killing or the practice of sympathetic joy. Alternatively, you can start with an excerpt from one of our readings, a passage from a Buddhist scripture, or a poem.
- Speak from the heart. This talk is not meant to be a dry intellectual analysis but a way to connect with the classroom *sangha*. Share stories or examples from your own life to ground your message.
- The talk should be 10-15 minutes long.

### **Midterm Paper**

**10%**

This thesis-driven paper will offer an original analysis of one of the topics covered in the course. Your paper should draw upon at least 4 course readings. This paper will serve as the foundation for your final research paper. Please note that this is *not* a rough draft - it must be rigorous and well-edited. However, your midterm paper may suggest areas that need further research and explication. You will further refine your thesis and expand upon your ideas for your final paper.

MA: 5-6 pages; PhD: 6-8 pages

**Final Research Paper****40%**

Your final research paper will build upon your midterm and will take into account instructor feedback. You will expand your paper by incorporating outside research and elaborating on your key ideas.

**MA:** 12-15 pages, **PhD:** 15-18 pages

Papers must be double-spaced, use a 12 point font, and include a works cited page. Please proofread your papers carefully before submitting them.

**Course Policies**

*The following are CIIS policies that cannot be overridden by individual departments or instructors:*

**Class Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend all class meetings regularly and punctually. Students are assigned an F (Failure) or NP (No Pass) grade if they are absent for more than 20 percent of a course. This maximum includes both excused and unexcused absences. Three instances of tardiness or leaving early are considered equivalent to one absence.

Instructors may permit a student to deviate from this rule on the grounds of illness necessitating confinement for 24 hours or more, a death in the family, or other extreme emergencies. The instructor may request verification of these circumstances by a letter from a medical professional, the Dean of Students, or the Academic Vice President as appropriate.

### **Academic Integrity**

Creative and original scholarly research is at the heart of the Institute's academic purpose. It is essential that faculty and students pursue their academic work with the utmost integrity. This means that all academic work produced by an individual is the result of the individual's efforts and that those efforts acknowledge explicitly any contribution by another person. Reproducing another's work and submitting it as one's own work or without acknowledging the source is called "plagiarism," or stealing the intellectual property of another, which is the antithesis of scholarly research. Any use of others' ideas or others' expression in any medium without attribution is a serious violation of academic standards. If confirmed, plagiarism subjects a student to disciplinary action.

### **Policy on Incompletes**

Permission to be given an "I" grade is given only in the following circumstances:

- a. medical reasons documented by a health-care professional;
- b. a family emergency verified with supporting documentation; or
- c. decision by faculty member based on exceptional pedagogical reasons.

For reasons "a" or "b," students are given a maximum of two semesters to finish their coursework; for reason "c," one semester. Please note when I do grant incompletes, I usually give a shorter extension (e.g. one month or one semester). If you believe that you will need to request an "I" for this course, please let me know as soon as possible – Incompletes will not be granted on the day or two before the final paper is due.

Students are responsible for ensuring the timely completion of all paperwork related to "I" grades; please see the full CIIS policy in the Academic Catalog for details.

### **Student Disability Services**

A student with a permanent or temporary disability may request accommodations by contacting Student Disability Services (SDS), a service of the Dean of Students Office, at [studentaffairs@ciis.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@ciis.edu). The Student Disability Services Coordinator works with students to provide reasonable accommodations that will allow for full access and participation in the academic environment. The student must provide documentation from a licensed healthcare professional. The Student Disability Services Coordinator will communicate with the student's faculty only after receiving a written request from the student; the nature of the disability is never disclosed. More information about registering with Student Disability Services can be found in the Student Life tab of MyCIIS, or at [https://my.ciis.edu/ICS/Student\\_Life/Student\\_Disability\\_Services.jnz](https://my.ciis.edu/ICS/Student_Life/Student_Disability_Services.jnz).

*The following are policies and guidelines specific to this course:*

**Late Papers**

Except in case of documented emergency, late papers will be marked down a third of a grade (e.g. A- to B+) for every two days they are late. Please note that it may take you longer to receive feedback on your work if you turn it in late.

**Office Hours and Email**

I am happy to meet with students to answer questions or chat about the course material during office hours. I am also available to discuss your ideas for your research papers, dharma talks, or other assignments. Please contact me at least week in advance to set up either an in-person or phone appointment; I am generally in the office Tuesdays-Thursdays. While I am also available via email, if you have a lengthy or detailed question, I'd prefer to discuss it during a scheduled appointment time. For logistical questions, please consider asking a peer or the TA first. Note that I may take up to 48 hours to respond to an email and that I do not check email during late evenings and weekends.

Please note that this schedule is subject to change, depending upon student interests, availability of guest speakers, and other factors. I may also add or replace readings as the semester progresses; students are welcome to suggest readings as well. Further, I may assign a few audio dharma talks as supplementary texts throughout the semester.

## COURSE CALENDAR PART I: INTENSIVE (JAN 26 & 27)

### Jan 26: The Buddha and the Concept of Liberation

How is the life of the historical Buddha relevant to us today? What is ‘liberation’? Should liberation be understood in individual or collective terms? What do Buddhist ethics and metaphysics suggest about social responsibility?

#### Texts:

If you have little to no previous experience with Buddhism, please read *Tell Me Something About Buddhism* by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel (or another introductory text) before the intensive.

#### Articles:

- Gil Fronsdal (translator): “The Just” and “Oneself” from *The Dhammapada: A New Translation of the Buddhist Classic with Annotations*.
- Patricia Hunt-Perry and Lyn Fine: "All Buddhism is Engaged: Thich Nhat Hanh and the Order of Interbeing" from *Engaged Buddhism in the West*.
- [need to copy] Charles Johnson, “Reading the Eightfold Path” from *Dharma, Color, and Culture*
- Huston Smith: “Buddhism: The Man Who Woke Up” from *The World’s Religions*.
- Joanna Macy: “The Shambhala Prophecy” from *Coming Back to Life*.
- Peter Harvey: “The shared foundations of Buddhist ethics” from *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*.
- **Thich Nhat Hanh**

### Jan 27: Compassion, Interdependence, and Social Justice

Today, we will go more deeply into how Buddhist concepts of compassion and interdependence relate to social justice and healing from oppression.

- Manuel, *The Way of Tenderness*, pp.
- Sharon Salzberg, *LovingKindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* (excerpt)

## COURSE CALENDAR PART II: CANVAS (FEB 14 – MAY 10)

CIIS guidelines stipulate that each class session be 3 hours. The Intensive portion of the class was about 15 hours and comprised our first 5 classes. Therefore, our first online class, which begins Feb 14, is referred to here as Class #6. Because we completed 5 classes so early in the semester, we have time for a break before we begin again mid-February. Please note that our class weeks will begin on Thursday and end on Wednesday. You must post within the allotted time period in order to receive full credit.

### Class 6 (Feb 14-20): Whose Liberation?: Gender and Caste in Early Buddhism

In what ways did Buddhism challenge Hindu notions of caste and authority? How do we make sense of the contradictions in the Buddha's teachings about women? How are Buddhist women challenging the sexism in Buddhist cultures?

#### **Textbooks:**

*Buddhist Women and Social Justice* by Karma Lekshe Tsomo

- Chapter 3: "Is the Bhiksuni Vayana Sexist?"
- Chapter 7: "Reclaiming the Robe: Reviving the Bhikkuni Order in Sri Lanka"
- Chapter 9: "Buddhism, Women, and Caste: The Case of the Newar Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley"
- Chapter 15: "Resistance without Borders: An Exploration of Buddhist Nuns Across Cultures"

#### **Articles**

- Rita Gross: "Sakyadhita, Daughters of the Buddha: Roles and Images of Women in Early Indian Buddhism" and "Do Innate Female Traits and Characteristics Exist? Roles and Images of Women in Indian Mahayana Buddhism" from *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*.
- Jeffrey Samuels: "Buddhism and Caste in India and Sri Lanka" from *Religion Compass*.
- Christopher Queen: "Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation" from *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*.
- Ambedkar: TBD
- Alan Sponberg, "Attitudes toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism," from *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezon.

### Class 7 (Feb 21-27): Whose Liberation?: Race, Sexuality, and Gender in U.S. Buddhism (part 1 of 2)

Why has American Buddhism become associated with whiteness? How do racism, sexism, and homophobia play out in American *sanghas*? Is identity relevant to awakening? (This week we will focus intensively on race while considering how race intersects with gender and sexuality).



Textbook: Manuel, *The Way of Tenderness* (complete the book)

- Leah Kalmanson: "Buddhism and bell hooks: Liberatory Aesthetics and the Radical Subjectivity of No-Self"
- Janice D. Willis: "Diversity and Race: New Koans for American Buddhism" from
  - *Women's Buddhism, Buddhism's Women*
- **David W. Chappell: "Racial Diversity in the Soka Gakkai" from *Engaged Buddhism in the West***
- **Charles Johnson, "Why Buddhism for Black America Now?" from *Taming the Ox***
- Fields, Rick. "Divided Dharma: White Buddhists, Ethnic Buddhists, and Racism" from *The Faces of Buddhism in America*
- Ruth King, *Mindful of Race* (excerpts)

### **Class 8: Whose Liberation?: Race, Sexuality, and Gender in U.S. Buddhism**

### **Class 9: Liberation, Embodiment, and Sexuality**

Did the Buddha teach liberation *from* women or the liberation *of* women? What is the relationship between embodiment – particularly women's embodiment – and enlightenment? How should we interpret the precepts on "sexual misconduct"? Is Buddhism compatible with queer politics?

#### **Texts:**

*Buddhist Women and Social Justice* by Karma Lekshe Tsomo

- : "Buddhist Understandings of Subjectivity"

#### **Course Reader:**

- Zenshin Florence Caplow and Reigetsu Susan Moon: Excerpts from *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women*
- Susan Murcott: "Prostitutes, Courtesans, and Beautiful Women" from *First Buddhist Women: Poems and Stories of Awakening*
- Grace Jill Schireson: "Nuns and Sexuality" from *Zen Women: Beyond Tea Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters*
- Miranda Shaw: "Prthivi: Mother Earth" from *Buddhist Goddesses of India*
- Judith Simmer-Brown: "Introduction: Encountering the Dakini" and "Gender, Subjectivity, and the Feminine Principle" from *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*
- Zwillig, Leonard. "Homosexuality As Seen in Indian Buddhist Texts." From *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*
- Huai Bao: "Buddhism: Rethinking Sexual Misconduct," from *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, 12.2 (2012): 303-321.

### **Class 10: Walking the Path of Liberation: Anti-Oppression Work**

How do Buddhist teachings relate to systemic suffering and violence? How can the dharma help us address understand and unravel internalized oppression and internalized dominance? How is the dharma relevant to the experiences of ability and disability?

**Texts:**

*Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism* by Hilda Gutierrez Baldoquin, pp. 93-168

*Buddhist Women and Social Justice* by Karma Lekshe Tsomo

- Chapter 6: “Integrating Feminist Theory and Engaged Buddhism: Counseling Women Survivors of Gender-Based Violence”
- Chapter 10: “Trafficking in Buddhist Girls: Empowerment through Prevention”
- Chapter 11: “Khunying Kanitha: Thailand’s Advocate for Women”

**Course Reader:**

- Lynne M. Bejoian, Ph.D.: “Nondualistic Paradigms in Disability Studies & Buddhism: Creating Bridges for Theoretical Practice”
- Darla Y. Schumm: “Reimagining Disability” from *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
- Sulak Sivaraksa: “Structural Violence and Spirituality” from *Global Healing: Essays and Interviews on Structural Violence, Social Development and Spiritual Transformation*

**Class 11: Walking the Path of Liberation: Restorative Justice**

How can the dharma be applied to questions of justice, reconciliation, and peace? In particular, how is it being applied today in the specific practice of restorative justice?

GUEST SPEAKER: Jennifer Biehn, M.Ed.

**Texts:**

*Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism* by Hilda Gutierrez Baldoquin, pp. 169-226

*Buddhist Women and Social Justice* by Karma Lekshe Tsomo

- Chapter 4: “Transforming Conflict, Transforming Ourselves: Buddhism and Social Liberation”
- Chapter 5: “Redefining and Expanding the Self in Conflict Resolution”

**Course Reader:**

- Leah Kalmanson: "An Inexhaustible Storehouse for an Insurmountable Debt: A Buddhist Reading of Reparations" from *Buddhist Responses to Globalization*
- Melanie L. Harris: "Engaged Buddhism and Liberation Theologies: Fierce Compassion as a Mode of Justice" from *Buddhist Responses to Globalization*
- Sallie B. King: “Justice/Reconciliation” from *Being Benevolence: The Social Ethics of Engaged Buddhism*
- Bernie Glassman: “I Vow to Bear Witness” from *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master’s Lessons in Making Peace*
- James Thornton: "Presence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder: Gay Relationship as a Spiritual Practice" from *Queer Dharma: Voices of Gay Buddhists*

**Class 12: Liberation for all Sentient Beings: Ecology and Climate Justice**

What do Buddhist teachings say about humanity’s relationship with the rest of nature? How do the concepts of interdependence and impermanence help us relate to the realities of climate change and ecological devastation? What is ‘ecobuddhism’?

**Course Reader:**

- Thich Nhat Hanh: excerpts from Love Letter to the Earth
- Thich Nhat Hanh: excerpts from *The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology*
- Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft: excerpts from *Dharma Rain*

The following articles, and others, can also be located at [www.ecobuddhism.org](http://www.ecobuddhism.org)

- Joanna Macy: "It Looks Bleak. Big Deal, it looks Bleak"
- U.S. Dharma Teachers' Collaborative: "U.S. Dharma Teachers' Collaborative Statement on Climate Disruption"
- U.S. Dharma Teachers' Climate Collaborative: "16 Core Dharma Principles to Address Climate Change, and How Dharma Practitioners Can Engage"

**Class 13: Liberation for all Sentient Beings: Animal Rights**

According to Buddhism, what is the appropriate relationship between human and nonhuman animals? Must Buddhists be vegetarians?

**Course Reader:**



- Lisa Kemmerer: “Buddhist Traditions” from *Animals and World Religions*
- Ian Harris: “A Vast Unsupervised Recycling Plant: Animals and the Buddhist Cosmos” from *A Communion of Subjects*
- Matthew J. Walton: “Buddhist Reflections on Animal Advocacy: Intention and Liberation” from *Call to Compassion: Religious Perspectives on Animal Advocacy*
- Kerry S. Walters and Lisa Portmess: excerpts from *Religious Vegetarianism*

#### **Class 14: Liberating Economic and Social Systems: Buddhist Alternatives to Neoliberalism**

Is another world possible? Can Buddhist virtues be applied on a broader societal scale? How can a Buddhist lens be applied to understanding the contemporary ills of capitalism, globalization, and neoliberalism? What are some ways in which people are deriving inspiration from Buddhist and other spiritual teachings to fashion more liberatory alternatives?

##### **Course Reader:**

- Sulak Sivaraksa: excerpts from *Global Healing: Essays and Interviews on Structural Violence, Social Development, and Spiritual Transformation*
- David Loy: "The Lack of Modernity" and "The Religion of the Market" from *A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack*

#### **Class 15: The Way of the Bodhisattva**

What is the Bodhisattva path and how does it relate to social justice? How have we grown spiritually and philosophically through this course? How have we expanded our social and political awareness? How can we integrate and apply what we’ve learned as we move forward in our lives?

##### **Course Reader:**

- Shantideva: "Taking Hold of Bodhichitta" and "Dedication" from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*
- Thich Nhat Hanh: "The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings" from *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*

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