Quarter: Spring 2017
Course Title: Introduction to Buddhism
Course Code: REL 69
Instructor: Gary Gach
Course Summary: Please see course page for full description
Schedule: 7 – 8:50 pm
(Note: Optional meditations will be offered, as an elective, beginning one hour before each class, to complement the material; meditations as announced are subject to change.)
Recommended Texts: It would be good to add one book of your choice available from the Stanford Bookstore. A stack of selected free books will also be available during one session. Additional texts will also be made available online.)

Grade Options & Requirements
No Grade Requested (NGR): This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
Credit/No Credit (CR/NC): Attend at least 5 sessions. Between Weeks 4 & 6, complete & return three questionnaires, pertaining to your understanding and possible application of course materials, + one self-assessment, evaluating important lessons & residual difficulties. Such work-product shall be confidential, shall remain the property of the student, & shall be deleted from the instructor’s files upon completion of the course.
Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass): Complete requirements for credit (above), plus compose & furnish an original paper, 3-5 pages in length. Topic to be submitted & approved by Week 5; paper turned in by Week 6. Contact teacher if a topic doesn’t come to mind. Work-product shall be confidential, shall remain the property of the student, & shall be deleted from the instructor's files upon completion of the course.

Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

Tentative Weekly Outline
Week 1 – April 6: Life & Teachings of the Buddha: The Middle Way
Why study the life of the Buddha? What does the Sanskrit for “study” tell us? Background: the Axial Age (then, and now). Siddhartha was a Hindu, but “Hindu” ≈ a religion: the matrix of India. Parivrajaka wanderers. When do we call Siddhartha “Buddha,” and why? Historography and sacred story. What were the Buddhist councils? Why did Buddhism die out in India?
We will plumb the Four Noble Truths’ capacity for liberation, and for establishing and maintaining the foundations of a global religion. This will also enable us to appreciate how Buddhism can be adopted and adapted by any culture, and any individual. In so doing, we'll recognize why “Buddhism” is a neologism, made up by and for the West. (How can you tell the difference between Buddhists and non-Buddhists?)
• Topics covered:
  • The matrix of Hindu civilization & culture
  • What is enlightenment?
  • Practical lessons from the life of the Buddha
  • The Four Noble Truths
• The Triple Gem: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
• Readings: Foreword, Introduction and Chapter 1 of Complete Idiot's Guide. Chapters 5–6 for students wishing additional reading
• Optional pre-class elective: basic meditation

**Week 2 – April 13: Theravada (Original Buddhism): “Be a Lamp”**
- Topics covered:
  - Basic meditation = tranquility & insight
  - Mindfulness, when meditation is not enough: view, ethics, & meditation
    - insight (e.g., emotional intelligence)
    - ethics (e.g., precepts; intentionality; mindfulness trainings)
  - Concentration + mindfulness + selective watering
  - Walking & other daily activities as opportunities for intentionality & contemplation; use of gathas
  - Full Awareness of Breathing; Four Frames of Reference; Abhidhamma
  - Impermanence; the four Boundless Dwellings (Brahmaviharas)
- Optional pre-class meditation: full awareness of breathing

**Week 3 – April 20:  Zen: “Just Do It”**
- Topics covered:
  - Taoism
  - Zen hallmarks: Intuition, spontaneity, brevity, & wit
  - Prajna (wisdom): nondualism, impermanence, interbeing, nonself; nonconceptualization; nonattainment
  - Hua-tou & koan study; Heart Sutra; Dogen
  - Theravada with a Mahayana twist: Buddha nature, lineage, innovations on Triple Gem
  - Interbeing
- Optional pre-class meditation: posture (Soto) and choiceless awareness (shikantaza)

**Week 4 – April 27: Pure Land: “Just say the name”**
- Topics covered:
  - Sacred story; devotion
  - Boddhisattvas & deities; realms (buddhaverses); Bodhisattva vows
  - Recitation, chanting
  - Great Doubt [Zen] vs. Supreme Trust; Tariki (other-power) as including jiriki (self-power);
  - Jodo Shin, the practice of no practice; Shinran
  - Zen Pure Land: Nienfo (Who’s saying the name of the Buddha?)
  - Proposed topics for papers due
- Readings: Chapter 13 of Complete Idiot’s Guide to Buddhism. Additional reading: River of Fire, River of Water: An Introduction to the Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism, Taitetsu Unno, especially chapters 4–11 (each relatively brief) & the illustration
• Sign up for questionnaires for credit
• Optional pre-class elective: deep listening and loving speech

**Week 5 – May 4: Vajrayana: “Honor the resistance”**
• Topics covered:
  • Analysis + devotion; wisdom & compassion
  • Mahayana with a tantric twist
  • Refuge tree; mantra; prostrations (earth touchings)
  • Prepatory ngondro (exoteric), & esoteric practices: guru yoga, deity yoga, empowerments
  • Lajong slogans of Atisa; Madhyamika of Nagarjuna; songs of Milarepa
  • Reception of traditions in the West
• Approval of topics of papers for grade
• Readings: Chapter 14 of Complete Idiot's Guide to Buddhism. For additional reading: Introduction to Tantra, Lama Yeshe
• Optional pre-class meditation: tonglen (sending & receiving)

**Week 6 – May 11: Buddhism in Contemporary Science & Culture**
• Topics covered:
  • Buddhism & culture: literature, visual arts, music, cinema
  • Buddhism & science: physiology & physics
• Readings: Chapter 18, 19, 20 of Complete Idiot's Guide to Buddhism
• Papers for grade turned in
• Optional pre-class elective: sound meditation, five-element meditation

**Week 7 – May 18: Engaged Buddhism**
• Topics covered:
  • Hospice & chaplaincy; prison Dharma
  • Mindful teachers & mindfulness in school
  • Dharma Gaia
  • Intersectionality
  • Buddhist economics
  • Reflection; bowing out
• Readings: Chapter 21 of Complete Idiot's Guide to Buddhism
• Optional pre-class elective: metta meditation