

**PAYAP UNIVERSITY**  
**Thai and Southeast Asian Studies Certificate Program**

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Course: AR 461  
Course Title: Buddhism  
Prerequisites: None  
Credits: 3  
Instructor: John W. Butt  
Office: Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture  
Crystal Spring Campus  
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**Course Description**

This course is a study of the religious faith and traditions of the Buddhist community. The course will focus on the background and origins of the tradition, its history and development, and its major teachings and practices. Special attention will be given to the Theravada tradition with emphasis placed on past and contemporary Thai interpretations and expressions of that tradition. Assigned readings will include primary textual sources as well as secondary literature by Buddhist scholars, anthropologists, and historians of religion.

**Instructor**

John W. Butt, Former Director and Current Senior Advisor to Payap University's Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture, and Member of the McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap University.

**Course Objectives**

1. To help students to become acquainted with one of the major influences on the Thai understanding of what it means to be and to live as a "Human Being".
2. To introduce students to the background, teachings, practices, and historical development of the Theravada Buddhist religious tradition.
3. To help students to attain a more sophisticated and mature understanding of "religion" in general and "Thai Buddhist religion" in particular.
4. To help students to understand and appreciate better their own personal religious backgrounds and their present religious faith and traditions by being able to view these in a religiously plural context.

### **Teaching Methodology**

Learning activities will include classroom lectures and discussions as well as regular reading assignments and several field trips. Students will be required to write a five-page essay on a section of one of the assigned readings. They will also be expected to lead a class discussion on this section. In addition, they will be required to write a 12-page essay on an assigned topic concerning a Buddhist teaching or practice, and to prepare for and write a final comprehensive examination. The essays and examination are intended to give students the opportunity to show their knowledge of the factual data that has been covered in the readings and lectures and their ability to interpret critically the meaning and significance of that data both for the Theravada Buddhist community and for the history of religion as a whole.

### **Assigned Readings**

Students will be assigned readings from the following books:

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. *Handbook for Mankind*. English translation of a series of lectures delivered in May 1956 and published in Thai.

Chandra-ngarm, Saeng. *Buddhism and Thai People*. Chiang Mai: Ming Muang Printing Press, 1999.

Conze, Edward, ed. *Buddhist Scriptures*. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, First Harper Torchbooks edition, 1964.

Robinson, Richard H., and Willard L. Johnson. *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Encino, Calif. And Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997.

Spiro, Melford E. *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Weekly reading assignments and list of important Buddhist terms will be distributed to students shortly after the beginning of the class.

### **Course Outline**

Week 1	Mon., Sept. 26	Introduction: Buddhist "Religion"
	Fri., Sept 30	Historical Background & Context
Week 2	Mon., Oct. 3	Life & Significance of the Buddha
	Fri., Oct. 7	Field Trip to Doi Suthep / Lamphun
Week 3	Mon., Oct. 10	No class
	Fri., Oct. 14	No class
Week 4	Mon., Oct. 17	Teachings of the Buddha
	Fri., Oct. 21	No class

Week 5	Mon., Oct 24	No class
	Fri., Oct. 28	Teachings of the Buddha
Week 6	Mon., Oct. 31	Teachings of the Buddha
	Fri., Nov. 4	Developments and Expansion
Week 7	Mon., Nov. 7	Developments and Expansion
	Fri., Nov. 11	No Class
Week 8	Mon., Nov. 14	Southeast Asian and Thai Buddhist Religion
	Fri., Nov. 18	Southeast Asian and Thai Buddhist Religion
		(Optional Weekend Stay at Buddhist Wat and Practice Meditation)
Week 9	Mon., Nov. 21	Southeast Asian and Thai Buddhist Religion
	Fri., Nov. 25	Southeast Asian and Thai Buddhist Religion
Week 10	Mon., Nov. 28	Southeast Asian and Thai Buddhist Religion
	Fri., Dec. 2	Southeast Asian and Thai Buddhist Religion

Final Examination Dec. 7 at 9:00 a.m.

### **Evaluation of Students**

In order to receive a passing grade for the course students will be expected to complete all the reading and written assignments and to attend and participate in all course activities. The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Typed 4-page essay on an assigned section of Spiro's book	10%
Typed 12-page essay on an assigned Buddhist topic	30%
Final written comprehensive examination	60%

Points will be deducted for papers that are submitted late and for repeated tardiness and unexcused absences. Points will also be deducted for failure to attend and participate in all course activities. Payap University requires students to attend at least 80% of scheduled classes in order to be eligible to sit for the final examination.

### **Grading Scale**

A	Excellent	(90-100)
B+	Very Good	(85-89)
B	Good	(80-84)
C+	Better than Acceptable	(75-79)
C	Acceptable	(70-74)
D+	Barely Acceptable	(66-69)
D	Very Poor	(60-64)
F	Unacceptable and Failing	(Below 60)

JWB: Revised September 2005 C.E. / 2548 B.E.