

REL 444/544 Medieval Japanese Buddhism, Fall 2024 CRN 15826/7

Mark Unno

Instructor: Mark T. Unno, munno (at) uoregon.edu <http://pages.uoregon.edu/munno/> Wed. 2:00-4:50 pm, PLC 248

Office Hours by Zoom <https://tinyurl.com/2zurdnhv> M & Tu 1:00-1:45 pm or by appointment

[\(see also Syllabus Appendix\)](#)

Overview

REL 444/544 Medieval Japanese Buddhism focuses on major developments in the formation of Japanese Buddhism, especially the Kamakura (1185-1333), such as Zen, Pure Land, and Shingon Buddhism. This course also traces influences on later developments including the modern period. The course weaves together the examination of religious thought, practice, and cultural developments in historical context. We begin with an overview of key Buddhist concepts for those without prior exposure and the formative matrix of early Japanese religion. We examine in depth examples of major founding figures and innovators, in particular three contemporaries: Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253), Zen master and founding figure of the Sōtō sect; Myōe of the Shingon and Kegon sects, a reformer and innovator; and Shinran, founding figure of Jōdo Shinshū, the largest Pure Land sect, more simply known as Shin Buddhism. We conclude with the study of some modern examples that trace their origins to medieval developments, including Maura “Soshin” O’Halloran, an Irish-American Zen adept, and Shinmon Aoki, a Shin Buddhist author and practitioner. Themes of the course include: Buddhism as state religion; the relation between institutional practices and individual religious cultivation; ritual practices and transgression; gender and sexuality; relations between ordained and lay; religious authority and enlightenment; and the two-fold truth and religious practice. The seminar format includes lecture, student presentations, and discussion. Students will have latitude to develop their own final research projects.

Requirements

1. *Attendance*: Required. Students can have one unexcused absence without penalty. Each class missed thereafter without prior permission will result in 1/2 grade penalty for the course grade.
2. *Short exams*: There will be one short, in-class exams, based on materials from the readings, lectures, and course web site.
3. *Medium papers*: There will be two medium-length papers (3-4 pages) based on topics that will be provided by the instructor.
4. *Small group project*: There will be one group research project in teams of 3 or 4 students. Details available on web site.
5. *Presentation*: Students will make a presentation on the readings for one of the section meetings. The presenter should *not* summarize the reading but should use the presentation to discuss why the selected ideas/passages in question are important for understanding the reading and proceed to explain as well as raise questions about these ideas/passages. The primary purpose of these presentations is to *launch* the discussion, not to demonstrate breadth of knowledge or to lead the discussion. Each presenter will prepare a handout with 2 questions and brief, corresponding quotations from the readings. More detailed instructions will be provided on the course web site.
6. *Final paper*: Each student will hand in a final paper of 8-11 pages double-spaced (A longer final paper of 12-15 pages will be required for those who have registered for REL544.) Suggested topics will be provided. Students may choose to create their own topics in consultation with the instructor. In the case of the latter, a one-paragraph description of the topic must be submitted by **email** to the instructor at least one week prior to the due date, but an earlier consultation is recommended.
7. *Late policy on written assignments*: Three grace days total will be allotted excluding the final paper for which no extensions will be given. For the short papers, a cumulative total of three late days will be allowed without penalty. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.
8. Be sure to bring the readings to class or have them available on a screen device so that we can discuss specific passages.

Grades

Short Exam 10% Short paper I 15% Short paper II 15% Group Project 10%
Presentation 10% Discussion 10% Final paper 30%

Learning Outcomes

In this course students will: 1) develop a sophisticated understanding of how Medieval Japanese Buddhism constituted a formative moment in the development of major schools such as Zen and Pure Land, 2) acquire tools for the study of Buddhism based on both emic and etic sources (primary texts and secondary scholarly literature), 3) learn to identify and analyze thematic presentations of Buddhist thought and praxis including gender, sexuality, national identity, and class, and 4) have their work assessed through exams, papers, and class discussion.

Required Texts

1. Shinmon Aoki, *Coffinman: The Journal of a Buddhist Mortician* (Anaheim, CA: Buddhist Education Ctr, 2002).
2. Maura O’Halloran, *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2017).
3. Mark Unno, *Shingon Refractions: Myōe and the Mantra of Light* (Boston: Wisdom Publications: 2004).
4. Taitetsu Unno, *Tannisho: A Shin Buddhist Classic* (Honolulu: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1996).
5. *Course Packet-REL 444/544 Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Fall 2024 – on Canvas).

Course Packet REL 444/544 Medieval Japanese Buddhism, Fall 2024 (Focus pages marked with asterisk*)

Introductory background material for those without coursework in Buddhism or Japanese Religion

1. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 9-26.
2. Robert A. F. Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987) 56-63, 73-77.*
3. Hayao Kawai, "Japanese Mythology: Balancing the Gods," in his *Dreams, Myths and Fairy Tales in Japan* (Daimon, 1995) 67-97.*

Matrix of Japanese society and religion leading up to the Kamakura Period

4. Toshio Kuroda, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion," tr. by James Dobbins and Suzanne Gay, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7:1 (Winter 1981), 1-21.*
5. Joseph Kitagawa, "Chapter 6. The Shadow and the Sun: A Glimpse of the Fujiwara and the Imperial Families in Japan," in his *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 98-116.
6. William LaFleur, "Chapter 2 In and out of the Rokudō," in his *Karma of Words-Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1983) 26-59 (48-59*).

Matrix of Japanese society and the development of Buddhism into the Kamakura Period

7. Helen Craig McCullough, tr. *The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1988), 1-6, 17-19, 23-37.*
8. Robert E. Morrell, "Tendai's Jien as Buddhist Priest," *Early Kamakura Buddhism-A Minority Report*, 23-43.
9. Kazuo OSUMI, "Buddhism in the Kamakura Period," in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol 3 Medieval Japan*, gen. ed. Kozo YAMAMURA (NY: Cambridge University Press), 544-563 (544-555, 560-563*).
10. Jeffrey P. Mass, "The Emergence of the Kamakura Bakufu [Military Government]" in *Medieval Japan-Essays in Institutional History*, ed. John W. Hall and Jeffrey P. Mass (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 127-156.

The Zen Buddhism of Dōgen

11. Mark Unno, "Philosophical Terms in the Zen Buddhist Thought of Dōgen."*
12. Mark Unno, "18. *Shushōgi* Paragraph 30," *Engaging Dōgen's Zen*, eds. Bret Davis, Jason Wirth, & Brian Schroeder (Boston: Wisdom, 2016), 179-184.*
13. Norman Waddell & Masao Abe, tr. "Shōbōgenzō Genjōkōan," by Dōgen Kigen, *The Eastern Buddhist* 5:2 (10/1972), 129-140.*
14. Steven Heine, *The Zen Poetry of Dogen* (Boston: Tuttle, 1997), 1-34.
15. Barbara Ruch, "The Other Side of Culture in Medieval Japan," in *The Cambridge History of Japan - Volume 3 Medieval Japan*, 500-511.*

The Shin Buddhism of Shinran

16. Mark Unno, "Key Terms – Pure Land Buddhism and the Philosophy of Hōnen and Shinran."*
17. Mark Unno, "The Original Buddhist Rebel - Shinran," *Tricycle* (Winter 2017), 1-16.
18. Mark Unno, "The Nembutsu of No-Meaning and the Problem of Genres in the Writings and Statements of Gutoku Shinran," *The Pure Land* 10-11 (12/1994) 1-9.*

Further readings on the background of women and gender in Buddhism and in the context of the Kamakura Period

19. Rita Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 29-54.*
20. Lori Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010) 250-300.

REL 444/544 Medieval Japanese Buddhism: Weekly Schedule

[All readings from Course Packet unless followed by (RT)=(Required Text)] (Focus pages marked with asterisk*)

Week I: Oct 2: Introduction-Course Overview: The Background of Buddhism; Buddhism and Japanese Religion

Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9-26.

Robert A. F. Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 56-63, 73-77.*

Hayao KAWAI, "Japanese Mythology: Balancing the Gods," in his *Dreams, Myths and Fairy Tales in Japan* (Daimon, 1995), 67-97.*

Week II: Oct 9: Background of Japanese Buddhism-Religion and the State; Karma in Medieval Japan

Toshio Kuroda, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion," tr. by James Dobbins and Suzanne Gay, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7:1 (Winter 1981), 1-21.*

Joseph Kitagawa, "Chapter 6. The Shadow and the Sun: A Glimpse of the Fujiwara and the Imperial Families in Japan," in his *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 98-116.

William LaFleur, "Chapter 2 In and out of the Rokudo," *Karma of Words-Buddhism and the literary arts in medieval Japan* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1983), 26-59 (48-59*).

Week III: Oct 16: Buddhism in the Kamakura Period: Themes and Background EXAM IN CLASS

Helen Craig McCullough, tr. *The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1-6, 17-19, 23-37.*

Robert E. Morrell, "Tendai's Jien as Buddhist Priest," *Early Kamakura Buddhism-A Minority Report*, 23-43.

Jeffrey P. Mass, "The Emergence of the Kamakura Bakufu [Military Government]" in *Medieval Japan-Essays in Institutional History*, ed. John W. Hall and Jeffrey P. Mass (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 127-156.

Kazuo Osumi, "Buddhism in the Kamakura Period," tr. by James Dobbins, in *The Cambridge History of Japan-Volume 3 Medieval Japan*, 544-563 (544-555, 560-563*).

Week IV: Oct 23: Myoe Koben: Kegon and Shingon Monk

PAPER I DUE on Canvas 1 pm

Mark Unno, *Shingon Refractions: Myōe and the Mantra of Light* (Boston: Wisdom, 2004), (1-72, 111-149*) (RT).

Lori Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*, 250-300.

Week V: Oct 30: Eihei Dogen: Zen Master of the Soto School

Mark Unno, "Philosophical Terms in the Zen Buddhist Thought of Dōgen."*

Mark Unno, "18. *Shushōgi* Paragraph 30," *Engaging Dōgen's Zen* (Boston: Wisdom), 179-184.*

Norman Waddell & Masao Abe, tr. "Shōbōgenzō Genjōkōan," by Dōgen Kigen, *The Eastern Buddhist* 5:2 (10/1972), 129-140.*

Steven Heine, *The Zen Poetry of Dogen* (Boston: Tuttle, 1997), 1-34.

Barbara Ruch, "The Other Side of Culture in Medieval Japan," in *The Cambridge History of Japan - Volume 3 Medieval Japan*, ed. by Kozo Yamamura (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 500-511.*

Week VI: Nov 6: Gutoku Shinran: Foolish Being of Pure Land Buddhism

Brief Research Proj DUE 1 pm

Mark Unno, "The Original Buddhist Rebel - Shinran," *Tricycle* (Winter 2017), 1-16.

on Canvas

Mark Unno, "The Nembutsu of No-Meaning and the Problem of Genres in the Writings and Statements of Gutoku Shinran," *The Pure Land* 10-11 (12/1994), 1-9.*

[Mark Unno, "The Nembutsu as the Path of the Sudden Teaching," unpublished paper, IASBS Conference, 1995, 1-7 \(online, course web site\).](#)(Optional)

Taitetsu Unno, *Tannishō: A Shin Buddhist Classic* (Honolulu: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1987)(RT).*

Week VII: Nov 13: Between Pre-modern and Modern I: Coffinman

PAPER II DUE on Canvas 1 pm

Shinmon Aoki, *Coffinman: The Journal of a Buddhist Mortician* (Anaheim, CA: Buddhist Education Ctr, 2002)(RT).*

Week VIII: Nov 21: Between Pre-modern and Modern II: Maura "Soshin" O'Halloran

Maura "Soshin" O'Halloran, *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2017)(RT).*

Week IX: Nov 27: Discussion of Paper Topics

Week X: Dec 4: Wrap Lecture and Discussion

FINAL PAPER DUE on Canv 12/6

Wrap-up remarks and discussion.