The Visual Culture of Japanese Buddhism

Course Description: This course explores the rich visual culture of Japanese Buddhism. We will examine Buddhist sculpted images and illustrated hand-scrolls, portraits and picture books, mandalas and manga, from anime to zenga. In addition to examining Japanese Buddhist art and film, we will be analyzing the role that images play in Buddhism, the practices of production, and the ritualized ways of looking and interacting with these visual media.

Instructor: Chris Callahan
**Reading and Preparation:** This course involves the reading of both primary texts and images and secondary literature on various topics in the study of Buddhism and Art. We will also be examining a number of images of Japanese Buddhist art, not only as art but as icons in a religious context. Students will be expected to engage in “close reading” of primary texts and images and analyze and critically assess secondary scholarship. Completion of the assigned readings **before** class is essential to your active engagement in class discussions.

**Attendance and Participation (10%):** As this course is a small discussion-based seminar, your attendance and active participation is essential. Participation includes not only talking in class discussions, but asking questions and listening to your peers. All students will be asked to share their close readings of a passage from the primary texts and identify and assess arguments in secondary scholarship. If you do not have a chance to speak in class, you may also post your questions and comments on weekly discussion boards as part of your participation in the course.

**Discussion Facilitator (10%):** Beginning with the second week, all students will sign up to be “discussion facilitator” to lead us in a discussion on readings and images. You must sign up for two time slots. A discussion facilitator will provide a 1-2 page outline that includes: (1) a brief synopsis (one paragraph) of the primary work in question, and/or a summation of any secondary readings that clearly identifies the main argument; (2) a paragraph that discusses a key issue for discussion (3) an organized list of quotes and questions for discussion in class. A copy of the handout must be sent to the instructor by 5pm on the day prior to the day of the class discussion.

**Essays:** Two essays (**20% and 20% each**) of approximately five (5) pages on assigned topics are required. A final research paper (35%) of approximately eight (8) pages on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor will be due at the end of the semester. A draft of your paper will be due on December 2nd for peer review.

**Final Presentations and Writing Workshop (5%):** All students will be asked to offer a presentation on their final research project and field questions on their writing and research. In addition to presenting your work, you will be required to offer critical comments and questions to your peers. Each of you will be assigned a peer who will pre-read your draft and take the lead in asking questions during after your presentation.

**Grades and Grading:**

- **Attendance and Participation:** 10%
- **Discussion Facilitation:** 10%
- **Short Essay One:** 20%
- **Short Essay Two:** 20%
- **Final Essay:** 35%
Final Presentation: 5%
Total: 100%


Required books:


Trainor, Kevin, general editor. Buddhism: An Illustrated Guide. (For those with little background in Buddhism)

Course Schedule and Readings

I. Introduction to Buddhism and Visual Culture

Week One
#1 Introducing Buddhism and Visual Culture

#2 Behold the Buddha: Story and Symbolism

II. Living Icons in Japanese Buddhism.

Week Two
#3 Living Buddhist Statues

**#4 Sakyamuni: The Eternal Life**

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**Week Three**

**#5 Amida: The Buddha of Infinite Life and Light**

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**#6 Kannon: The One who hears the Cries of the World**

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**Week Four**

**#7 Jizō: A Very Busy Bodhisattva**

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**#8 East Asian Portraiture**

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**Week Five**

**#9 Portraits of Shinran**

III. Picture Scrolls: Propaganda, Rationality and Performance

#10 (TH) Picture Scrolls and Etoki (絵解き)

********Short Paper One Due

Week Six

#11 Picturing The Founder of Japanese Buddhism

#12 Picturing Karma and the Six Realms: Rokudō-e (六道絵)

Week Seven

#13 Hungry Ghosts: Gaki zōshi (餓鬼草紙)

#14 Picturing Death: Kusōzu (九相図)

Discussion Facilitators (1):
Week Eight
#15 Dying Like the Buddha: Nehanzu (涅槃図)

IV. The Lotus Sutra: Word/Image

#16 Picturing Words and Picture Words

Week Nine
#17 Lotus Sutra: Image as Text, Text as Image
--------------Discussion Facilitator (1):

V. Mandalas and Sacred Geography

#18 Entering the World of the Mandala
--------------Discussion Facilitator (1):

Week Ten
#19 Esoteric Buddhism and Tantric Art
--------------Discussion Facilitator (1):

VI. Zen and the Art of
#20 What is Zen and is it Art?

***** Short Paper Two due

Week Eleven
#21 Zenga: Art as Koan

---------- Discussion Facilitator (1):

#22 More Zenga: What is the sound of Hakuin clapping?

---------- Discussion Facilitator (1):

Week Twelve
#23 From Bodhidharma to Daruma Dolls

---------- Discussion Facilitator (1):

VII. Visualizing Buddhism in the Modern World

#24 From Icon to Art

---------- Discussion Facilitator (1):
Week Thirteen
#25 Visualizing Faith in Modern Japan

Discussion Facilitator (1):

VIII. Japanese Buddhism and Popular Culture

#26 The Buddha Manga

Discussion Facilitator (1):

Week Fourteen
#27 Osamu’s Buddha

Discussion Facilitator (1):

Final Presentations and Paper Workshop