

# **An Introduction to Buddhist Art and Iconography**

## **The Aesthetics of Human Perfection**

History of Art 570

Spring Quarter 2009



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### **Instructor:**

John C. Huntington, Professor

Office: 231 Hayes Hall

Official office hours: approximately TR 3:30 PM to approximately 7:00 PM

If I am in my office, the door will be open and you are welcome at any time.

Telephone: office, 688-8198; home, 888-1083 (No home calls after 10:00 PM)

E- Mail: <huntington.2@osu.edu>

The course will normally meet twice a week, MW, at 1:30-3:18

Monday 25 May is Memorial Day there will be no class

**Tuesday 09 June at 1:30 is the Final examination**

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**Text: 1)** Draft chapters of a book in preparation: John C. Huntington. *The Aesthetics of Human Perfection: An Introduction to Buddhist Art and Iconography*. Specific chapters will be made available as PDF files accessible over the Internet at:

<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/Projects/JCHArticles/JCHMasterIndex.html>

**Text: 2)** Other readings specific to each class will be posted in the course website at:

<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/studyslide.html>

listed by course number 570 and lecture number 1-18

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### **Course Description & Objectives:**

Description:

As a “non-theistic” religion, Buddhism does not, in any manner, address the notion of an Abrahamic “God.” Instead, it defines and demonstrates what the perfected person should become through dedication and practice of the Buddhist methodology (Dharma). As early as we have any evidence, about the 2nd century BCE, Buddhist teachers used works of art to aid in expressing the principles of their religion and for setting goals for its practitioners. Throughout its subsequent history, Buddhist art tends to display the positive side of the doctrines and practices—in essence, modeling what the individual could be, should be, and would be, if the viewer clearly understood the message of the art and followed its implicit instructions. This course is especially focused on how teachers and artists of Buddhism have

worked together to create one of the world's most lavish communications systems, one that explains individual salvation and personal perfection—two key principles of one of the great religions of the world. A study of Buddhist art across Asia produced over a huge span of time makes it possible to determine which practices were emphasized and what impact they had on the life of the court, monastic communities, and the population at large. The course will introduce an approach to religion that American students generally have little exposure to and will provide a basic understanding of Buddhist patterns of moral and ethical behaviors.

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Catalogue Description: [25 words]

The course will examine how Buddhist art attempts to convey the ideal of human perfection as an attainment of Buddhist practice

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Course Objectives:

- 1) To provide a general knowledge about Buddhism and its three major methodologies: Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana;
  - 2) To understand Buddhist practices as engendered by the arts;
  - 3) To attain an aesthetic appreciation for the major art forms of Buddhism.
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### **Method of Instruction:**

Primarily, slide-lecture and discussion techniques will be used in the course, although there will be numerous “no slide” days or classes where the images will consist of didactic graphics. These will usually be posted on the Huntington Archive web site. <http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/studyslide.html> listed by course number 570 and lecture number 1-18

. Invariably, some individuals will wish to discuss the ideas in this course in more detail than the usual class format allows. The students are always welcome in my office for further discussion of any topic.

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### **Student Responsibilities:**

***This is a class that the student will have to attend with great regularity!*** Taking notes, studying the visual material on the Huntington Archive web site, and doing the readings are an absolute necessity. There will be two exams, a midterm, and a final at the university appointed time. Unless there is a physical emergency, such as a car accident, no one may be absent from an examination without prior permission. The grade for a no-show is E.

## Grading:

Attendance and participation in classroom discussions	10%
Term paper	15%
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	50%

The exams will consist of two portions:

### 1) Visuals:

Ten representative works of art are projected and in a timed 2 minute period the student is to identify the object, its period or date, the artist (if appropriate) and write a brief statement as to the stylistic, iconographic, or socio-cultural importance of the object(s). Scoring is done on a deduction of points basis according to the scale provided.

The visuals count for approximately 1/3 of the midterm and final examinations

### 2) Essays:

Two to four essay topics, almost invariably with alternate questions, will be on the midterm and final examinations respectively. They will be graded on maturity of knowledge and comprehension of the topic in the cultural and religious contexts. The essays count for approximately 2/3 of the midterm and final examinations.

### Scoring of Visuals

-00	4.0	=	A
-02	3.7	=	A-
-04	3.3	=	B+
-06	3.0	=	B
-08	2.7	=	B-
-10	2.3	=	C+
-12	2.0	=	C
-14	1.7	=	C-
-16	1.3	=	D+
-18	1.0	=	D
-22	0.7	=	D-
-24	0.3	=	E+
-25	0.0	=	E

### **Read the fine print:**

Because of the fact that I am usually able to get to know most students quite well during the term and I understand grading to be a less than absolute process, I reserve the right to deviate from the forgoing in the event I think it appropriate. I am especially positively inclined towards excellent papers and/or marked improvement between the midterm and the final examinations. -Disruptive behaviors and bad attitudes will be negatively rewarded.

**Statement of Departmental Policies:**

**Images for Study:** <http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/>, and click on the “projects” and go to “course support: where you will find the courses listed by number .

**Students with disabilities:** Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to discuss your specific needs. I usually rely on the Office of Disability Services to verify the need for accommodation and to help develop accommodation strategies. Students with disabilities who have not previously contacted the Office of Disability Services are encouraged to do so by looking at their website (<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>) and calling them for an appointment.

**Academic misconduct:** OSU professors are required by their contracts to report suspected cases of academic misconduct to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. (The University’s rules on academic misconduct can be found on the web at <http://acs.ohio-state.edu/offices/oaa/procedures/1.0.html>)

The most common form of misconduct is plagiarism. Remember that any time you use the ideas or the statements of someone else, you must acknowledge that source in a citation. This includes material that you find on the web. The University provides guidelines for research on the web at <http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor>.

## Lectures:

### Week 01:

Lecture 01: Introduction to the course.

Part 1: Course description and student responsibilities.

Part 2: Geography of Asia.

Part 3: Major centers of Buddhism.

Lecture 02: Fundamentals of Buddhism.

Part 1: Northern Indian religious setting at the time of the rise of Buddhism.

Part 2: Life and death of Siddhartha Gotama (Shakyamuni Buddha).

### Week 02:

Lecture 03: Early Pilgrimage practice methodologies for the laity.

Part 1: The Stupa and the cult of pilgrimage (gaining merit by doing).

Types of relics: Body, places of actions, reminders.

Readings: See John C. Huntington, PowerPoint segment:

“Svayambhu Mahachaitya as one of the Astamaha Sairira Stupas.”

PDF downloads:

<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/Projects/JCHArticles/JCHMasterIndex.html>

"Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism," part I [Lumbin<sup>a</sup> and Bodhgay<sup>â</sup>], in *Orientalions*, vol. 16, no. 11 (Nov. 1985), pp. 46-61.

"Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism," part II [R<sup>≈</sup>ipatana M<sup>@</sup>gad<sup>â</sup>va], in *Orientalions*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Feb. 1986), pp. 28-43.

"Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism," part III [Îr<sup>â</sup>vasti and S<sup>â</sup>Δk<sup>â</sup>sya], in *Orientalions*, vol. 17, no. 3 (Mar. 1986), pp. 32-46.

"Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism," part IV [Vaiβali and R<sup>â</sup>jag<sup>@</sup>ha], in *Orientalions*, vol. 17, no. 6 (Jul. 1986), pp. 28-40.

"Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism," part V [Kuβinagara, Appendices and Notes], in *Orientalions*, vol. 17, no. 9 (Sept. 1986), pp. 46-58.

Lecture 04: Early Pilgrimage practice methodologies for the laity.

Part 2: The Stupa as transcendent and sacred space.

Readings: See John C. Huntington “Symbolic Systems Inherent in Stupas” at:

<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/Encyclopedia%20Buddhist%20Icon/07%20Stupa%20Charts/StupaCharts18.html>

### Week 03:

Lecture 05: Early Pilgrimage practice methodologies for the laity

Part 3: Surrogate pilgrimage and the ritual of “pilgrimage”

Readings: See John C. Huntington’s

"Pilgrimage as Image: the Cult of the *A<sup>≈</sup>amah<sup>â</sup>pr<sup>â</sup>tih<sup>â</sup>rya*," part I, in *Orientalions*, vol. 18, no.

4 (April 1987), pp. 55-63.

Pilgrimage as Image: the Cult of the *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya*," part II, in *Orientalism*, vol. 18, no. 8 (August 1987), pp. 56-68.

Lecture 06: Early Pilgrimage practice methodologies for the laity.  
Stupas of “actions” and “reminders” throughout the world.

- 1) Indic: Amaravati, Gandhara, Kaghanhalli.
- 2) Sri Lanka: Kelaniya and the 16 sites.
- 3) Burma: Swedagon.
- 4) Thailand: Phrapathom chedi.
- 5) China: Fa men si.
- 6) Tibet: Gyantse.

Readings: Sections of unpublished manuscript, *The Aesthetics of Human Perfection*:  
<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/Projects/JCHArticles/JCHMasterIndex.html>

Week 04: The rise of images

Lecture 07: Early Buddha images and the notion of the benefits of “seeing the Buddha.”

Readings: "The Origin of the Buddha Image: Early Image Traditions and the Concept of Buddhadasanapunya," in *Studies in Buddhist Art of South Asia*, edited by A. K. Narain, Delhi, 1985, pp. 23-58 PDF available on the Huntington Archive website:

<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/Projects/JCHArticles/JCHMasterIndex.html>

Lecture 08: The rise of Madhyamika and the notion of the Bodhisattva

Readings: The Heart Sutra. See “Selected Sutras” at:  
<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/studypages/internal/sutras/sutraMasterIndex.html>

Week 05: New being of perfection

Lecture 09: The beginning of the image of the Bodhisattva;  
The Six Perfections and the Tathagata Garbha theory.

Readings: The Six Perfections. See “Selected Sutras” at:  
<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/studypages/internal/sutras/sutraMasterIndex.html>

Lecture 10: The many faces of Bodhisattva Yana

- Part 1: The Buddha as Bodhisattva
- Part 2: The Bodhisattva as benefactor
- Part 3: The Practitioner as Bodhisattva

Week 06:

“Lecture 11:” MIDTERM (One hour exam— no lecture per se)

Lecture 12: The Bodhisattva (cont'd); Maitreya as the Buddha to come.

Readings: "The Iconography and Iconology of Maitreya Images in Gandhāra," in *Journal of Central Asia*, vol. VII:1 (July 1984), pp. 133-179. See:  
<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/studypages/internal/677.02%20Chinese%20Buddhist%20Art/ChineseBuddhismMasterIndex.html>

Week 07:

Lecture 13: The Bodhisattva (cont'd); Avalokiteshvara the Perfection of Compassion.

Readings: Chapter 24 of the Lotus Sutra; the Great Compassion Dharani.  
See: <http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/studypages/internal/sutras/sutraMasterIndex.html>

Lecture 14: Other major Bodhisattvas.

Kshitigarbha  
Manjusri  
Samantabhadra  
Sarvarvarniviskhambhin  
Akashagarbha  
Vajrapani  
Gaganaganga (Avalokiteshvara's surrogate)

Readings: Sections of unpublished manuscript, *The Aesthetics of Human Perfection*:  
<http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/Projects/JCHArticles/JCHMasterIndex.html>

Week 08:

**Monday is Memorial Day— No School**

Lecture 15: The female Bodhisattvas or Buddhas;  
"Woman as wisdom and the origins of female persona in Buddhism."

Reading: Mullin, Glenn H., with Jeff. J. Watt. *Female Buddhas: Women of Enlightenment in Tibetan Mystical Art* (Art from the Collection of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation), Santa Fe, New Mexico, Clear Light Publishers 2003 All

Week 09:

Lecture 16: The Chan, Son, and Zen traditions.  
Part 1 The legend (or history) of Bodhidharma.  
Part 2 The development of Chan in China.

Readings: McRae, John R. *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Chan Buddhism*.  
Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1986

Lecture 17: The Art of Chan/Zen.

Part 1 Paintings.

Part 2 Japanese Gardens and Aesthetics.

Readings: Fontein, Jan and Money L. Hickman. *Zen, Painting et Calligraphy*, Boston: Museum of fine Arts, 1970, all (On reserve in the Fine Arts Library.)

Week 10

Lecture 18: An Introduction to Tantra.

Lecture 19: Tantra 2.