

## CPLT 203R: Novel Buddhas



Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha* © 1974

**Hours:**

M/W/F 11:45AM - 12:35PM

**Location:**

Callaway Center S102

**Instructor:**

Patrick Blanchfield

**Contact:** pblanch@emory.edu

or pat.blanchfield@gmail.com

not @learnlink

**Office Hours:** *By appointment*

**OPUS:** 4138

### Course Description:

Since the death of Siddhārtha Gautama circa 400 BCE, representing the actions and doctrines attributed to the personage of the Buddha has proven a polyglot, culturally plural, and historically variable enterprise. In this course, we will assess the recent prospect of the "Buddhist novel" and "Buddhist fiction" more generally by examining literary representations of explicitly Buddhist themes in works by global authors alongside pieces by emergent authors in media ranging from film to manga to nonfiction prose. We will join these works with selections by various theorists in order to approach questions of cultural appropriation, generic classification, translation, and canonicity.

### Required Texts:

*Buddha*, Karen Armstrong; *Buddha Volume 4: The Forest of Uruvela*, Osamu Tezuka; *Life of the Buddha*, Āśvaghoṣa; *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling; *Siddharta*, Herman Hesse; *Deep River*, Shusako Endo; *Cloud Atlas*, David Mitchell; *Buddha's Little Finger*, Victor Pelevin; *An End to Suffering*, Pankaj Mishraj

### Important Dates:

Monday 9/6: *No Class – Labor Day*

Monday 10/11: *No Class – Fall Break*

Friday 10/29: *First Paper Due*

Monday 11/1: *No Class – AAR Atlanta*

Wednesday 11/24: *No Class - Thanksgiving*

Friday 11/26: *No Class – Thanksgiving*

Wednesday 12/1: *Final Paper Due*

## Upcoming Readings:

Session 1: Friday 8/27

---

- Gerald Reilly, *Nixon under the Bodhi Tree* (short story)

Session 2: Monday 8/30

---

- Rupert Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism, Chapter 1
- *Optional*: Donald Lopez, The Story of Buddhism, Chapter 2

Session 3: Wednesday 9/1

---

- Karen Armstrong, Buddha Chapters 1-3

Session 4: Friday 9/3

---

- Karen Armstrong, Buddha Chapter 4-End

No Class: Monday 9/6 (Labor Day)

---

- Film: PBS Biography, *Buddha*

Session 5: Wednesday 9/8

---

- **WRITING WORKSHOP**

Session 6: Friday 9/10 (Guest Teacher)

---

- Asvagosa – *Buddhacarita* Introduction)

Session 5: Monday 9/14 (Guest Teacher Part II)

---

- Asvagosa, *Buddhacarita* Canto VII (<http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Buddhacarita/07-Book-VII.htm>)

Session 6: Wednesday 9/16

---

- Conze, trans. *The Buddha's Previous Lives*
- Stryk, trans. *Jataka Tales*

Session 7: Friday 9/18

---

- **BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** Oscar Wilde, *The Happy Prince*

Session 8: Monday 9/20

---

- **MANGA:** Tezuka, Osamu. *Buddha, Volume 4: The Forest of Uruvela*
  - Chapter Six (In The Forest of Trials) – Chapter Eight (Assaji’s End)

Session 9: Wednesday 9/22

---

- **MANGA:** Tezuka, Osamu. *Buddha, Volume 4: The Forest of Uruvela*. Cont’d.
  - Chapter Nine (Sujata) – Chapter 11 (The Story of Yatala)

Session 10: Friday 9/24

---

- **BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** de Voragine, Jacobus. ‘Saints Barlaam and Josaphat.’ (Hagiography from *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*)

Session 11: Monday 9/27

---

- **NOVEL:** Hesse, Hermann. *Siddhartha*.
  - Introduction – Part I

Session 12: Wednesday 9/29

---

- **NOVEL:** Hesse, Hermann. *Siddhartha*.
  - Part II
- **OPTIONAL BLACKBOARD RESOURCE :** Hsia, Adrian. ‘Hermann Hesse and the East.’
- **OPTIONAL BLACKBOARD RESOURCE :** Kassim, Husain. ‘Toward a Mahayana Buddhist Interpretation of Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*..?’

Session 13: Friday 10/1

---

- **BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** Kipling, Rudyard. ‘The White Man’s Burden.’
- **BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. (excerpts)
- **OPTIONAL BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** Young, Robert JC. *Postcolonialism*. (excerpts)

Session 14: Monday 10/4

---

- **NOVEL:** Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*.
  - Chapter 1 – Chapter 5

- **OPTIONAL BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game* (excerpts)

Session 15: Wednesday 10/6

---

- **NOVEL:** Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. Cont'd.
  - Chapter 6 – Chapter 10

Session 16: Friday 10/8

---

- **NOVEL:** Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. Conc.
  - Chapter 11 –Chapter 15

No Class: Monday 10/11 (Fall Break)

---

Session 17: Wednesday 10/13

---

- **NOVEL:** Endo, Shusako. *Deep River*.
  - One (The Case of Isobe) – Five (The Case of Kiguchi)

Session 18: Friday 10/15

---

- **NOVEL:** Endo, Shusako. *Deep River*. Cont'd.
  - Six (The City by the River) – Nine (The River)
- **VISITING SCHOLAR:** Mario D'Amato Talk: "Buddhist Fictionalism" Details TBA

Session 19: Monday 10/18

---

- Endo, Shusako. *Deep River*. Conc.
  - Ten (The Case of Otsu) – Thirteen (He Hath No Form Nor Comeliness)

Session 20: Wednesday 10/20

---

- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*.
  - The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing – Letters from Zedelghem

Session 21: Friday 10/22

---

- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Cont'd.
  - Half Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery – The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish

Session 22: Monday 10/25

---

- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Cont'd.
  - An Orison of Sonmi~451 – Sloosha's Crossin' An Ev'rything After

Session 22: Wednesday 10/27

---

- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Cont'd.
  - An Orison of Sonmi~451 – The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish

Session 23: Friday 10/29

---

- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Conc.
  - Half Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery – The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing – Letters from Zedelghem

Monday 11/1 – **NO CLASS** AAR ATLANTA

---

Session 24: Wednesday 11/3

---

- **BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** TBA

Session 25: Friday 11/5

---

- **BLACKBOARD RESOURCE:** TBA

Session 26: Monday 11/8

---

- **NOVEL:** Pelevin, Victor. *Buddha's Little Finger*
  - Preface – 2

Session 27: Monday 11/8

---

**FILM:** *The Matrix*

*After 11/8, we will conclude Pelevin and begin workshopping your individual assignments together as a seminar.*

### **Short Writing Assignment Details**

**WHAT:** A five- to seven-page essay either (1) comparing and contrasting two texts we have already read OR (2) offering a close-reading of part of one text. You may choose to focus on a Buddhist theme (IE, illusion, desire, suffering, liberation, etc.), the portrayal of Buddha-like figures, or a topic of your own choice. Whatever you do, make an *interpretative argument*.

**WHY:** This paper is a diagnostic effort – it will give me a sense of where you stand as a writer going into your final project. So don't stress.

### **Final Paper Details**

*Your Final Paper project will represent the bulk of our work together in November and December, when we transition to a seminar-style workshop and present and critique our ongoing work together. You have considerable freedom in choosing what shape your final paper will take, and I will be extensively available for meetings with you as your progress, but this freedom also means that you are responsible for managing your own time and workflow!*

**WHAT:** An eight (8) to ten (10) page paper, double-spaced and featuring appropriate citations, that can take any of the following forms:

- *The Shoulda-Coulda-Woulda Option:* An “English-paper” style interpretative essay offering a reading of one of the texts we have only touched on obliquely in class (Buddha's *Little Finger*, *An End to Suffering*)
- *The Short Story Option:* Read any two (2) of the “Buddhist Short Stories” excerpts from the collections [Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree](#) or [You Are Not Here](#) available on BlackBoard. Comment on the respective merits of each story, do a compare and contrast, and offer some thoughts on what might make a story “Buddhist” or not.
- *The Armstrong's Revenge Option:* Read the Jorge-Luis Borges essay “Personality and the Buddha” available on Blackboard, and then reflect on his argument. Tying in both Armstrong's work and several examples from class, how have the various texts we've encountered this semester addressed the problem of the Buddha's subjectivity? You may also choose to develop the question of Buddha-Christ analogies with some reference to Thich Nhat Hanh's [Living Buddha, Living Christ](#).
- *The Ebert/Roeper/Siskel Option:* Watch any of the following “Buddhist” films and offer a reading; I am also open to additional film suggestions: *The Matrix Trilogy* (the Wachowskis); *Old Boy* (Chan-Wook Park); *Buddha's Lost Children* (Verkerk); *The Cup* (Khyentse Norbu); *The Dhamma Brothers* (Philips); *Enlightenment Guaranteed* (Dörrie); *Kundun* (Scorcese); *Seven Years in Tibet* (Annaud); *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring* (Kim Ki-Duk); *Transgression* (Kim Ki-Young); *Travelers and Magicians* (Khyentse Norbu); *Unmistaken Child* (Baratz); *Wheel of Time* (Herzog); *Zen Noir* (Rosenbush); *Samsara* (Nalin); *OK Batong* (Nimibutr); *Little Buddha* (Bertolucci)
- *The Go-Your-Own-Way:* Write whatever you want, provided it (1) uses something we have read about or discussed as a point of departures; (2) involves a sustained engagement with Buddhist themes, texts, or subjects.

## Other Issues

*The Writing Center.* Emory's Writing Center (<http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu/>) is a superb resource for writers of all levels. Through the Writing Center, you may schedule convenient and confidential meetings with highly qualified tutor to brainstorm paper topics, review drafts, and improve your writing skills overall. As appropriate, part of your paper preparation process may include a required visit to the Writing Center.

*Plagiarism.* As students and scholars, drawing on sources plays a key role in formulating your own ideas, and citing them makes your writing more persuasive and enhances your credibility as a thinker. By the same token, using sources improperly or copying from them wholesale constitutes plagiarism, and is unacceptable. Although we will review the mechanics of citations in class, it is *your* responsibility to be familiar with the Code ([www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor\\_code.html](http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html)) and to represent in your writing all ideas or phrases which are not your own through the appropriate forms of citations. Plagiarism will result in automatic failure of this course and will set in motion administrative investigations and potential sanctions as outlined in the Code. If you feel that time pressures or other issues may be overwhelming you, rather than plagiarize (which, arguably, takes up as much time as actually writing your own work), *talk to me*.