

# PURE LAND BUDDHISM

## EAS 389 Spring 2009

Class Time and Location: MW 2:45–4:05 in PH 123

Instructor: Mark Blum

Office: HU 254E

Office Hours: TTh 1:00–2:00

Phone: 442-4183

e-mail: [mblum@albany.edu](mailto:mblum@albany.edu)

ERes password:

### Required Textbooks:

*The Land of Bliss* tr. by Luiz Gómez (University of Hawaii Press, 1997)

*Approaching the Land of Bliss* ed. R. Payne & K. Tanaka (University of Hawaii Press, 2004)

Course Reader

### Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites, however as the course involves considerable cultural and philosophical readings in East Asian Buddhism, some knowledge of either area will be helpful. All reading materials will be in English.

### Course Description:

This course will discuss the historical development of one school of East Asian Buddhism known as Pure Land. The Pure Land school is the largest form of Buddhism practiced today in China and Japan, though it's study in the West has only recently been undertaken in earnest. There are literally thousands of books on this topic in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese in the past 100 years, but limited materials are available in English.

The curriculum is divided into three sections: India, China, and Japan. We will begin with a reading of the core scriptures the form the base of this belief system and then move into areas of cultural expression. As there has been a particularly strong cultural flourishing of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, most of our cultural studies will focus on that nation's history, particularly the medieval period.

### Grading:

Assessment will be based on four areas of performance: class preparation and participation, a midterm exam, a research paper of 5-8 pages, and a final exam based on readings and class discussions. The research paper may be on any relevant topic subject to approval by the instructor. There must be a proper bibliography with footnotes or endnotes as necessary for citation and/or explanation, and of course plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Classwork will include each student choosing a day to lead class discussion, and preparing a short written statement with relevant questions for that particular topic to be typed and handed in.

Class preparation and participation:	20%
Midterm	30%
Research Paper	20%
Final	30%

**Schedule:**

Readings are all in the required texts: *The Land of Bliss* (LB), the *Approaching the Land of Bliss* (ALB), and the Course Reader (CR).

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Jan. 21	Distribution of Syllabus, course outline	
Jan. 26	Buddhism as a religion of decline	LB: ix-13
Jan. 28	Buddhism as a religion of hope	CR: 1
Feb. 2	<b>India:</b> Mahāyāna as conceptual ground for cults, miracles, and worship	CR: 2 ( <i>Vimalakīrti sūtra</i> )
Feb. 4	Encountering a buddha: <i>samādhi</i>	CR: 3 ( <i>Pratyutpanna samādhi sūtra</i> )
Feb. 9	Imagination before experience: paradise and saṃsāra	LB: 15-22 Shorter <i>Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra</i>
Feb. 11	Faith and myth; henology	LB: 23-59 Longer <i>Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra</i>
Feb. 16	<b>Winter Break</b>	
Feb. 18	<b>Winter Break</b>	
Feb. 23	<b>China:</b> An escape from karma: Pure Land as postmortem ideal	LB: 125-143
Feb. 25	Longer <i>Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra</i> in Chinese	LB: 153-188, 194-222
Mar. 2	<i>Contemplation/Visualization Sutra</i>	<a href="http://buddhistfaith.tripod.com/purelandscriptures/id5.html">buddhistfaith.tripod.com/purelandscriptures/id5.html</a>
Mar. 4	PL as alternative path: sudden/gradual debate, emptiness, & non-emptiness	CR: 4 Tanluan, Daocho
Mar. 9	Shift from mind to voice: Shandao	CR: 5 Shandao
Mar. 11	Pure Land and Chan/Zen	CR: 6
Mar. 16	Worship, meditation, & deathbed visions	CR: 7 & 8
Mar. 18	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
Mar. 23	<b>Japan:</b> New paradigm for faith and praxis; sectarianism & conflict	ERes download
Mar. 25	Pure Land biography as scripture	CR: 9 Ōjōden
Mar. 30	Nenbutsu as the key to dying well	ALB: ch 3 – deathbed nenbutsu
Apr. 1	Hōnen and the henology of nenbutsu	CR: 10 <i>Senchakushū</i>
Apr. 6	Shinran and the faith of failure	CR: 11 <i>Tannishō</i>
Apr. 8	<b>Spring Break</b>	
Apr. 13	<b>Spring Break</b>	
Apr. 15	Women as the buddha's focus	ERes download
Apr. 20	Imaging wisdom: medieval Pure Land art	ERes download
Apr. 22	Story-telling & return of Queen Vaidehī	ALB: ch. 5 – the Chūjōhime legend
Apr. 27	The Suicide tradition in Pure Land Buddhism	CR: 12
Apr. 29	Ethics of demythologization: Kiyozawa Manshi & modern Shin thought	ERes download
May 4	<b>Research papers due.</b> Review	
May 14	<b>10:30AM–12:30PM Final Exam</b>	