

Course Syllabus

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DVPR 32100/RLST 22100/HREL 32100/EALC 22100/EALC 32100:

Zen Before Zen: Chan Buddhism in China

Instructor:

[Brook A. Ziporyn \(http://divinity.uchicago.edu/brook-ziporyn\)](http://divinity.uchicago.edu/brook-ziporyn)

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Office Hours: By Appointment

This course will consist of the close reading and discussion of primary texts (in translation) of the Chan and Zen Buddhism of China and Japan, with a few secondary descriptions of Zen institutions and cultural influences. This will be done both with an eye to the historical development of these schools of thought and practice within the context of East Asian Buddhism in general, and for whatever transhistorical valences we care to derive from the texts.

This course is part of a two-sequence series, to be followed by a course on Japanese Zen Buddhism taught by Professor Stephan Licha in Winter 2025. "Chan" is a partial Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit word "Dhyana," meaning meditation practice; the same Chinese character is pronounced "Zen" in Japanese. This course will consist of the close reading (in English translation) and discussion of both the Indian Buddhist scriptures and indigenous Chinese sources that form the core of the tradition spanning Chan and Zen, with a few secondary descriptions of Chan institutions and cultural influences. Our focus will be on the development of ideas concerning the nature of sentience and the implications this has for understanding the existential predicament of sentient beings, touching on central themes of dependent co-arising, non-self, Emptiness, consciousness-only, Buddha-nature and original enlightenment, and the methods of realization (doctrinal, non-doctrinal, and indeed anti-doctrinal) proposed to redress this existential predicament at each stage of Chan history. This will be done both with an eye to the historical continuity of these sometimes seemingly contradictory forms thought and practice, and also to extract from them whatever transhistorical philosophical and spiritual valences we care to derive from the texts.

TA:

Yeti Kang

Office Hours: By Appointment

Three 1-hour long discussion sections will be held throughout the quarter, during Weeks 4, 6, and 9. Each enrolled student is required to attend two of the three discussion sections throughout the quarter, but they are encouraged to attend all three. The larger class will be split up into two smaller discussion sections. Groups, locations, and times TBD. Please respond to this Doodle poll by the start of class Week 2:

<https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/dNpW6WKa> ⇨ <https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/dNpW6WKa>

In addition to discussion sections, we will also be hosting an optional, bi-weekly Chinese reading session starting from Week 3, over Zoom on Friday afternoons from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., in which we closely read some text from class in the original Chinese. You're welcome to reach out to Yeti with suggestions if you'd like to have input on what we read from week to week.

The following text is a required purchase:

Red Pine, *Zen Roots* (Counterpoint, 2020).

It is recommended that students acquire the following texts:

Brook Ziporyn, *Emptiness and Omnipresence*. Indiana, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-0253021120.

Sekida, translator. *Two Zen Classics: The Gateless Gate and The Blue Cliff Record*. ISBN-13: 978-1590302828. Shambhala, 2005.

Photocopied materials of required readings ("Coursepack") and e-texts will also be made available on CANVAS.

Though the readings for this course are in English, students with proficiency in classical Chinese are encouraged to read original texts whenever possible and bring up any issues arising from discrepancies or extra resonances discovered thereby in class, time permitting.

This schedule is subject to change depending on the pace of our stride during the course; if we find some topics more worth discussing or more interesting to the present company, we will stretch the time allotted thereto. Our schedule is roughly as follows.

9/30/2024: Introductions, Basic Buddhism, Daoism

Emptiness and Omnipresence, pp. 1-85. (Or: "Basic Buddhist Doctrines" on CANVAS).

Recommended:

Daoist Roots: "Interpreting the *Daodejing*: The Minimally Discernible Position":

<https://voices.uchicago.edu/ziporyn/interpreting-the-daodejing-the-minimally-discernible-position-supplement-to-liveright-edition-2023/>

Zhuangzi Chapter 22 (on CANVAS)

10/7:

Mahāyāna Scriptures (*The Heart Sutra*, "*The Diamond(-cutter) Sutra*," (*Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*), *The Lankavatara Sutra* (selections) and *The Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (selections)). All in Red Pine, *Zen Roots*, pp. 8-109.

10/14:

Begin "Northern School" of Chan: **Coursepack, pp. 28-74**

Including: Bodhidharma ("First Patriarch"), "Two Entrances," trans. McCrae, pp 102-107;

"Daoxin's" ("Fourth Patriarch") "Methods of Bodhisattva Discipline," trans. Cleary ([Records of the Lanka, Zen Dawn](#)), pp. 47-65;

"Hongren's" ("Fifth Patriarch") "Treatise on the Essentials of Cultivating the Mind," McCrae, pp. 121-137;

Shenxiu's ("Sixth Patriarch" of Northern School) "Contemplating Mind," Cleary, pp. 81-102;

Shenxiu's "Five Expedient Means," McCrae, pp. 171-197).

10/21:

Southern School of Chan: The figure of Huineng, the new "Sixth Patriarch": "[Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch](#)," (in *Zen Roots*, pp. 135-209)

10/28:

Southern School continued.

Heze School: **Coursepack, pp. 76-90**

(Peter Gregory, [Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism](#), pp. 224-252.)

Chinese Apocryphal Scripture: *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (on CANVAS)." Pp 24-96, 139-145..

11/4:

Śūraṅgama Sūtra continued.).

Hongzhou School: **Coursepack, pp. 91-100** (Mazu (Ma-tzu) (pp. 148-152), Baizhang (Pai-chang) (pp. 62-75), from Chang, Original Teachings of Chan Buddhism.

Huangbo (Huang-po) teachings (Red Pine, pp. 239-280)

Blofeld, The Zen Teachings of Huangpo, 87-93, 103-121. (**Coursepack pp. 120-130**)

Coursepack 120-156

11/11:

Linji (Rinzai), in Luk, Chan and Zen Teachings, pp. 84-126. (**Coursepack pp. 135-156**)

"Shi'tou School": **Coursepack, pp. 157-196.** (Dongshan and Caoshan (Tung-shan and Ts'ao-shan) in Luk, pp. 127-180.)

Ziporyn, "The Use of the Li Hexagram in Shitou Xiqian's "Concordance of the Same and the Different," Dongshan's "Five Ranks," and the This-Worldly Turn in Chinese Buddhism," on CANVAS.

11/18:

Relations with Broader Buddhism: **Coursepack, pp. 275-292.**

Chappell, "From Dispute to Dual Cultivation: Pure Land Responses to Ch'an Critics," pp. 163-194.)

Contexts of Chan Practices of Meditation: **Coursepack, pp. 197-203, 232-248**

Bielefeldt, "Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse's *Tso-Ch'an I* and the 'Secret' of Zen Meditation," pp. 129-153, 159-160.)

Approaches to Meditation: **Coursepack pp. 347-370.** (Yuan Wu selections ("essentials of mind," pp. 57-63), Dahui (Ta-hui) selections, Hongzhi (Hung-chih) selections (pp. 85-98).

11/25

Assignments and Grading:

Students will be expected to write one substantial final term paper at the end of the term, of approximately 2500 words, due December 5, to be submitted over email to me at ziporyn@uchicago.edu (<mailto:ziporyn@uchicago.edu>).

All students are expected to do all the assigned reading, and to participate actively in class discussions.

In addition, every student will post a paragraph response to the week’s reading on CANVAS. These need not be well-worked-out arguments or conclusions, but can be simply responses to the readings or discussions that we did not have time to address in class discussion, including questions, confusions, inspirations, excitements, disappointments, irritations, sparked ideas and personal elaborations. Each should be no more than 300 words long. These will not be graded, but I will read them to help me gauge both where each of you individually and where the class as a whole is coming from intellectually. You are welcome and encouraged also to respond to each others’ posts.

- Attendance: 10%
- Class Participation: 10%
- Weekly Posts: 30%
- Final Paper: 50%

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
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