

**Tibetan Buddhist Thought**  
**Philosophy 323**  
**Professor Carol J. Moeller**  
**Spring 2012**

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Office: Comenius 110, 610-625-7881, [moeller@moravian.edu](mailto:moeller@moravian.edu)

**Required Texts:**

Gehlek Rimpoche, *Good Life, Good Death*

Jean-François Revel and Matthieu Ricard, *The Monk and the Philosopher*

Reginald Ray, *Secrets of the Vajra World*,

Recommended Text: Robert Thurman, *Essential Tibetan Buddhism*

Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:10-2:20, Comenius 411

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:15-8:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., and by appointment.

**Course Description**

This course focuses upon Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, worldview and spiritual practices. It examines Tibetan Buddhist answers to questions traditionally asked in Western philosophy, at times looking at contrasts and parallels to Continental and British-American traditions in Western philosophy.

**Course Requirements (as percentage of final grade)**

Class engagement and discussion participation, attendance at videos and possible field trip	5%
Five 1-2 page response essays, 2 oral presentations, quizzes and other in-class work	5%
Mindfulness Practice and log (at least 30 minutes per week) or Alternative	10%
Two 5-6 page essays (15% each)	30%
Exam 1	10%
Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	<u>20%</u>
	100%

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To understand and appreciate Tibetan Buddhist thought;
- 2) To understand Tibetan Buddhist thought in contrast and in connection with Western philosophical views;
- 3) To develop greater reading, writing, reasoning and speaking ability in the context of Tibetan Buddhist thought;
- 4) To appreciate Tibetan Buddhist worldviews and gain more perspective on Western ones.

**Course Requirements Further Explained**

**Engagement and participation (5%):** Attendance and discussion participation are required at class and at video showings and field trip. Unexcused absences or failure to participate will detract from your grade. (Participation need not be overtly verbal; however, students ought to be present and attentive, engaging in the material somehow even if silently.)

**Five 1-2 page response essays and two oral presentations (5%):**

**Five 1-2 page response essays:** reflective papers on the readings for the class meeting at which you hand it in. That is, the essay should be about your reaction to the readings, not a review or extension of the class discussion. Of the 24 or so class meetings, you need to hand in five response essays. I would suggest you try to do a brief essay at least once every week or every other week, so that unexpected life issues or other coursework won't interfere with your completing all five essays. These essays are for your benefit, to practice engaging critically with the readings; they will not be graded except for Pass/Fail, simply marked for credit toward your assigned total of five.

**Two oral presentations,** The two oral presentations are to give an overview and exposition of the readings for that day, giving your questions, criticisms or comments in response. They should be about five minutes minimum.

**Quizzes and other in-class work** These are occasional quizzes and in-class assignments, individual and group.

**Mindfulness Practice and Log, at least 30 minutes per week (10%):**

Outside of class, students will do and log at least 30 minutes per week of mindfulness practice, a variety of which will be introduced in class, in videos, and in the readings. These must be done each week as we go along; submit simple logs each Tuesday during class (noting time, place, type of meditation/mindfulness practice, and any comments). Alternatives may be arranged, if the student is not comfortable with undertaking this kind of practice, whether for religious, philosophical, or other reasons.

**Two Essays (15% each):** 5-6 double-spaced pages on topic selected from those I distribute, or your own proposed topic with my written approval. Please use 10-12 font (no decorative fonts please), use 1 inch margins (top/bottom/sides) and properly document sources. Use a complete bibliography, using footnotes or endnotes or giving parenthetical references (name of author, page of reference), in the body of the paper. Be sure to cite the page in question, so your documentation is complete. Also, please be careful about Internet use and proper references with it. With the use of any Internet source, you must submit a hard copy of the article as well as the web address. Come see me for any help or for feedback on outlines or drafts of your essay.

**Exam 1 (10%):** The exams will cover the readings, videos and other materials covered in the class. It will require students have a good understanding of the material, can reflect coherently about it, and can draw connections to other philosophical issues.

**Exams 2 and 3 (20% each):** The exams will cover the readings, videos and other materials covered in the class. Each will require students have a good understanding of the material, can reflect coherently about it, and can draw connections to other philosophical issues.

\*This syllabus and schedule may be revised with notice from the professor.

\*\*Students with physical or learning disabilities should contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations may be arranged.

<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
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TH	1/19	Gehlek Rimpoche, <i>Good Life, Good Death</i>	ix-xxii, 1-22	_____
T	1/24	<i>Good Life, Good Death</i>	23-80	_____
TH	1/26	<i>Good Life, Good Death</i>	81-142	_____
T	1/31	<i>Good Life, Good Death</i>	143-181	_____
TH	2/2	Review		
T	2/7	<b>Exam 1</b>		
TH	2/9	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	v-xvi; 1-65	_____
T	2/14	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	1-65 (cont.)	_____
TH	2/16	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	66-125	_____
T	2/21	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	66-125 (cont.)	_____
TH	2/23	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	<b>Essay 1 Due</b> 126-176	_____
T	2/28	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	177-229	_____
TH	3/1	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	230-257	_____
T	3/6	Spring Recess: No Class		
TH	3/8	Spring Recess: No Class		
T	3/13	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	259-293	_____
TH	3/15	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	294-359	_____
T	3/20	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	360-425	_____
TH	3/22	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World</i>	426-487	_____
T	3/27	<i>Secrets of the Vajra World,</i>	Review of entire book	
TH	3/29	<b>Exam 2</b>		
T	4/3	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	vii-23	_____
TH	4/5	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	24-117	_____
T	4/10	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	<b>Essay 2 Due</b> 118-170	_____
TH	4/12	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	171-213	_____
T	4/17	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	214-262	_____
TH	4/19	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	263-305	_____
T	4/24	<i>The Monk and the Philosopher</i>	306-351	_____
TH	4/26	Review	<b>Final Exam: Thursday, May 3: 8:30 a.m.</b>	

