

Buddhism: Text and Material Culture (A005126)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 2)

English

Gent

group work

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Anderl, Christoph

LW21

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

Master of Science in Teaching in Languages(main subject Oriental Languages and Cultures)

crdts

6

offering

A

Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China)

6

A

Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures

6

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Chinese Buddhism, Buddhist Chinese, religion and philosophy of China, material culture, manuscripts, digital editions

Position of the course

The course discusses issues related to the development of Buddhism in China, on the basis of primary and secondary sources. Each academic year, a specific topic will be focused on, and will be approached with relevant research questions, relying (also) on knowledge previously addressed in other courses. Research results are discussed in class. In addition, students analyze one topic of their choice and write an essay on it (in a group and individually), and/or produce an annotated edition of a small part of a manuscript.

Contents

The course focuses on material related to the development of Buddhism in China. The focus will be on primary sources in the form of texts, manuscripts, and iconographical material. The material is discussed in a historical, religious-philosophical, and sociocultural context. Within this framework, every term a few topics are selected for study. The topics are approached on the basis of research questions, selected methodologies, and relevant primary and secondary sources. A focal point is also the impact of Buddhist textual and material culture on contemporary society, and on interreligious influences. Research results are discussed in class.

Related to the overall themes, students choose a topic of their own choice, or are assigned a topic, and analyze it individually and in small teams. The results are presented in the form of an essay (with a common and an individual part), and are also part of the (individual) oral examination. Instead of an essay, students can also be assigned to produce an annotated digital edition and translation of a small part of a manuscript (under supervision). In this context, the students will be introduced to the basics of digital editing (XML and TEI standards).

Initial competences

The course 'Buddhism: Text and Material Culture' requires a thorough knowledge of 'Classical Chinese' (BA 3 level), and a good knowledge of the history of China and of East Asian religions/philosophy (particularly Confucianism and Buddhism).

Final competences

- 1 To be able to translate, analyze and interpret Buddhist Chinese texts.
- 2 To be able to interpret selected Buddhist iconographic material.
- 3 To have a basic understanding of Buddhist material culture.
- 4 To have the ability to deal with primary sources such as handwritten manuscripts.
- 5 To be able to relate primary sources to a historical, religious-philosophical, social and cultural context.
- 6 To be able to discuss the impact of Buddhist themes on contemporary China.
- 7 To be able to use academic secondary literature.
- 8 To be able to report on research results in a critical and academic way.
- 9 To be able to produce a scholarly research paper.
- 10 The use of digital reference tools and online databases.
- 11 Basis knowledge concerning the production of annotated digital editions of historical texts (XML, TEI based)

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

Buddhist texts and items of material culture in manuscript and iconographic form are interactively related to previously acquired knowledge, and are discussed on the basis of scholarly studies. Students are intensively involved, and receive guidance for the interpretation of primary sources. In small groups, themes are discussed. In addition to the oral examination, an essay is produced.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Powerpoint presentations
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Handouts

Name: Handouts
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

References

Course content-related study coaching

Discussions in class provide a constant feedback. The essay that needs to be presented can be discussed with the lecturer during the course of the semester, as well as during individual sessions.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

During the semester one or two essay(s) are written in groups, with an individual aspect for each student.

The results of the research are presented in class.

The oral examinations focuses on the knowledge of the text/manuscript/iconography selection studied in class, on the context of the topic studied, and on the essay written in a team.

Calculation of the examination mark

Essay(s) (50%)

Presentation(s) (30%)

Oral Examination / active participation in class (20%)

In case one does not participate in one or more parts of the evaluation, one cannot pass the examination. If the average final score totals 10/20 or more, the score will be reduced to the highest nonpass score (= 9).

Facilities for Working Students**Facilities:**

- 1 Student attendance during educational activities is required.
- 2 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year.
- 3 Feedback can be given during an appointment during and after office hours.

Extra information:

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the Faculty of Arts and philosophy