Kathmandu University’s Centre for Buddhist Studies at Rangjung Yeshe Institute

Course Description

This course on “Madhyamaka Thought” is for those who are exposed to Mahayana doctrines previously. Through both traditional and modern secondary literature, students in this course will be introduced to MMK thoughts, as taught by the Buddha in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, and as explained/detailed by ancient Buddhist masters such as Nāgārjuna etc.

Once students are exposed to the foundational texts from India, this course will continue to make a survey of MMK thoughts embedded in Tibetan and Chinese tradition, extending it further to some of the modern interpretations and understandings of MMK thoughts in our time. It is important to recognize that it has inspired many philosophers and thinkers outside Buddhist world since the beginning. Hence, “David Ruegg has put this well by pointing out that, it has been variously described as nihilism, monism, irrationalism, misology, agnosticism, skepticism, criticism, dialectic, mysticism, acosmism, absolutism, relativism, nominalism, and linguistic analysis with therapeutic value.”

This list is not exhaustive, indeed, as it has percolated even among the modern scientific circles; the reception of Madhyamaka thought within the circle of Quantum Physics, for example, is something that we will explore a bit while making a survey of its influence and reception outside Buddhism.

Please note that one needs to fulfill these pre-requisites to enroll in this course: BSTD 203—Fundamentals of Buddhist Philosophy or permission of the instructor.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will gain:

1) an experience of the critical reading and evaluation of different kinds of textual sources related with the Madhyamaka thoughts.
2) historical awareness of the development of MMK thoughts in India, China and Tibet.
3) an understanding of the influence and percolation of MMK thoughts beyond Buddhism.

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<th>Course Requirements</th>
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| How do I succeed in the course? | - The topics of this class allow for ample class discussion in which you learn to develop an evidence-based evaluation of secondary and traditional sources.  
- Lectures will supplement the class readings. You are responsible for keeping up with all the materials covered in the lectures and in the readings.  
- Occasional quizzes and reflections will ensure that you grasp the key points of the material we cover. (Counted under class participation or pop-quizzes)  
- Active class participation and supporting of your classmates in discussions and groupwork is also an essential component of learning in this class  
- Participants are expected to come prepared in the class for the lessons given in advance. |

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<th>Assessments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>2. Recitation of the text and pop quizzes/ or weekly exams</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>3. Mid-term exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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| 4. Final assessment:  
  • Final written exam | 25%  
  • Final essay | 25% |