

## East Asian Buddhism: Worshipping the Bodhisattva of Compassion



Guanyin of the Southern Sea, Chinese, 11th/12th century, Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, USA

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Buddhism has been widely accepted in East Asia for over two thousand years, and the worship of bodhisattvas has been a central feature of East Asian Buddhism. This course is designed as an introduction to the histories, practices, arts and literature related with the worship of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, the most widely venerated Buddhist bodhisattva. We will examine a wide variety of media through which Avalokiteśvara became imagined, domesticated and celebrated in East Asian countries. We will look at Buddhist scriptures, miracles tales, popular literature, as well as other forms of artistic representations of Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara's Chinese, often female, form) from China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea for a better understanding of how these materials helped to construct local hagiographies and images for the bodhisattva in their respective regions. We will also look at the temples, festivals, rituals and pilgrimages associated with the deity's worship in the aforementioned regions, which will give us a glimpse into the grand popularity the bodhisattva. The study on the worship of Avalokiteśvara, in many ways, will serve as an important case study that allows us to better understand the bigger issue of the domestication of Buddhism in East Asian countries. We will also read comparative studies on Guanyin and Virgin Mary, as well as other cults of goddesses that were "born" as extensions of Guanyin. We will also encounter other types of supernatural female figures as we venture into folk literary works. In so doing, this course aims at deepening our understanding of the notion "divine feminine."

## COURSE MATERIALS

*Articles will be available online. Books will be available on reserve in the library and for purchase at the campus bookstore. All readings will be in English or English translation, although familiarity with Chinese, Japanese or Korean will prove helpful.*

### **Required Book:**

 Yü, Chün-fang. *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara.*

### **Recommended Books:**

 *Theory and Method in Religious Studies: Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion (Religion and Reason)* edited by Frank Whaling;

 John Blofeld's *Bodhisattva of Compassion: the Mystical Tradition of Kuan Yin;*

 Daniela Schenker's *Kuan Yin: Accessing the Power of the Divine Feminine;*

 *Kannon - Divine Compassion: Early Buddhist art from Japan* edited by Katharina Epperecht;

 Martin Palmer, Jay Ramsay and Man-Ho Kwok's *The Kuan Yin Chronicles: the Myths and Prophecies of the Chinese Goddess of Compassion*

 Sarah Alizah Fremerman's *Divine Impersonations: Nyoirin Kannon in Medieval Japan.*

### *Key to Symbols:*

 Reading from books.

 Electronic article available online.

 In-class film screening.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Class attendance and Participation (worth 10% of overall grade)**

Regular class attendance is an important part of the course. The class participation grade will be based on your preparation for and contribution to class discussions.

### **Online Response Posts (worth 15% of overall grade)**

Please complete the assigned readings before the scheduled sessions. You are required to write a minimum of five online postings (200-250 words) of your reflection on the course readings. Each post should be followed by 1-2 discussion questions you would like to raise to the class.

### **Individual Pre-class Research (worth 15% of overall grade)**

You are encouraged to do some quick online/library-based researches on lecture-related topics. You will share in class your findings of Guanyin images, temples, and miracle stories. Details are given in the schedules for Week 7, 9 and 12.

### **Midterm Essay (worth 25% of overall grade)**

You are asked to write one short essay of 5-6 pages unpacking the role indigenous hagiographical legends or local miracle tales served in the domestication of Guanyin. This assignment is an opportunity for you to analyze and reflect on the course reading of your choice in detail. No

additional research is necessary for this essay. See Week 8's schedule for more details. Essay guidelines and sample topics will be given.

### **Final Presentation (worth 10% of overall grade) and Essay (worth 25% of overall grade)**

You are asked to write one longer essay of 8-10 pages on a Guanyin related topic of your choice. In the last two sessions, you will each make a short presentation of your topic, work-in-progress, and a tentative argument, to the entire class. This is a good opportunity to invite others in the class to evaluate your topic and to try organizing your ideas before you write the actual essay. Additional research is strongly encouraged. Essay guidelines and sample topics will be given. See Week 14's schedule for more details.

## **COURSE POLICIES AND GRADING CRITERIA**

**Late Policy:** All assignments (including response posts) are due on the scheduled day and time. I will grant a single 2-day extension, no excuses necessary, which you can use for any written assignment. Outside of this extension, one full letter grade will be deducted for each day the assignment is submitted late.

**Academic Integrity:** In all of your assignments, including your response posts and papers, you must always make clear where you have borrowed from others by identifying the original source and extent of your use of another's work. This obligation holds whether the sources are published or unpublished and whether they are in print or on the internet. Plagiarism or other breaches of academic integrity will be reported and can result in a failing grade for the course.

**Academic Support Services and Disability Resources:** I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please notify me as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester of any special accommodations needed.

**Religious observances:** Please notify me in advance if you need to miss class or reschedule assignments due to participation in religious holidays.

### **Grading criteria are as follows:**

- 1) An "A" paper is clearly written and well organized, and most importantly, contains a thoughtful, original and analytical central argument supported by illustrations and evidence drawn from course materials. It demonstrates that the student has grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings and discussions, and formulated a compelling, independent argument. An "A" paper is polished and grammatically fluid.
- 2) A typical "B" paper is a solid work that demonstrates that the student has a good grasp of the course materials. This type of paper provides a mastery of ideas and concepts covered in the readings and discussions, but with little evidence of independent thought or synthesis. Other "B" papers do give evidence of independent thought but do not present an argument clearly or convincingly.
- 3) A typical "C" paper provides a less thorough or accurate summary of course materials, or a less thorough defense of an argument. A paper that receives a grade less than "C" typically does not respond adequately to the assignment, is marred by frequent errors, unclear writing, poor organization, evidence of hasty composition, or some combinations of these problems.

The grading scale utilized in this class is as follows:

98+ = A+

94+ = A

90+ = A-

87+ = B+

84+ = B

80+ = B-

77+ = C+

74+ = C

70+ = C-

67+ = D+

64+ = D

60+ = D-

< 60 = F

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

### Part I Foundational Concepts

#### Week 1

##### Session 1: Introduction to the Course

📖 Handouts on basic Buddhist terms and major characteristics of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

##### Session 2: Basic Concepts in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

📖 Paul William, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, Ch 9, 10

📖 Michael Pye, *Skillful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism*, 18-36.

#### Week 2

##### Session 3: Theories and Methods in Comparative Religious/Cultural Studies I

📖 Frank Whaling, “The Study of Religion in a Global Context” in *Theory and Method in Religious Studies: Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion (Religion and Reason)*, 191-252.

##### Session 4: Theories and Methods in Comparative Religious/Cultural Studies II

📖 William E. Paden, “Gods” in *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion*, 121-140.

📖 Shu-mei Shih, “Comparison as Relation” in *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 79-98.

#### Week 3

##### Session 5: Scriptural Sources of the Bodhisattva I

📖 Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 1.

📖 Kogen Mizuno, “Introduction”, 13-21, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development, Transmission*.

##### Session 6: Scriptural Sources of the Bodhisattva II

📖 A.L. Bashan, “The Evolution of the Concept of the Bodhisattva,” in *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism*. Edited and Introduced by Leslie S. Kawamura, 19-59.

📖 Luis O. Gomez, “The Bodhisattva as Wonder-Worker,” in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*. Edited by Lewis Lancaster, 221-261.

### Part II Who is Guanyin: Hagiographical Origins of the Bodhisattva

#### Week 4

##### Session 7: Guanyin in “Apocryphal” Sutras

📖 Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 2.

📖 Robert E. Buswell, “Introduction: Prolegomenon to the Study of Buddhist Apocryphal Scriptures,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1-30.

##### Session 8: Concepts and Function of Indigenous Sutras

 Kyoko Tokuno, “The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues,” 31-74.

### Week 5

#### Session 9: Hagiographical Formation of the Chinese Guanyin

 Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 8, 10, 11.

#### Session 10: Stories of Princess Miaoshan

 Idema, W. L. *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes*.

### Week 6

#### Session 11: Hagiographical Legends of Kannon in Japan

 Sarah A. Fremerman’s “Goddess Genealogy in the Ono Shingon Tradition,” in *Divine Impersonations: Nyoirin Kannon in Medieval Japan*, 24-96.

#### Session 12: The Cult of Gwaneūm in Korea

 Daniel Sungbin Sou, “The Gwaneūm (觀音) Cult in The Three Kingdoms Period (三國時代) of Korea” in *The Cult of the Bodhisattva Guanyin in Early China and Korea, Sino-Platonic Papers*, edited by Victor H. Mair, 55-73.

## Part III

### What’s She/He Like: Guanyin in Arts and Literature

### Week 7

#### Session 13: Miracle Stories: the Efficacious Guanyin I

 Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 4 and Ch 5.

#### Session 14: Miracle Stories: the Efficacious Guanyin II

 Robert F. Company, “The Real Presence,” in *History of Religions*, 234-272.

 Yoshiko K. Dykstra, “Tales of the Compassionate Kannon: The Hasedera Kannon Genki,” 113-143.

Additional Selections of stories testifying to Guanyin’s miracle working power during the revolution time in China, during the time of earthquakes/atomic bombings/tsunamis in Japan, and stories of Guanyin curing diseases from Korea and Taiwan will be provided.

\* You are required to look online or from other sources for other Guanyin related miracle stories prior to class.

### Week 8

#### Session 15: Indigenous Iconographies

 Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 6.

#### Session 16: Artistic Representations

 Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 7.

 Donald F. McCallum, “A Standing Kannon in the Tokyo National Museum,” 7-25.

\*Please look for pictures of statues, paintings, or any other art forms of Guanyin images before class.

### Week 9

#### Session 17: Guanyin in Chinese Popular Literature I

Selected Chapters from Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West*, translated by W. J. F. Jenner.

#### Session 18: Guanyin in Chinese Popular Literature II

Chün-fang Yü, "Images of Kuan-yin in Chinese Folk Literature." *Chinese Studies*. 8.1:221-285.

Additional Translations of Guanyin-related Popular Plays will be provided.

### Week 10

#### Session 19: Guanyin in Korean Literature

Selected Chapters from Iryŏn's *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*.

#### Session 20: Guanyin in Japanese Literature

Monika Dix, "Hachikazuki: Revealing Kannon's Crowning Compassion in Muromachi Fiction," 279-294.

## Part III

### How to Venerate: Goddess Worship in East Asia

### Week 11

#### Session 21: Guanyin Pilgrimage in East Asia I

Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin*, Ch 9.

Mark W. MacWilliams, "Temple Myths and the Popularization of Kannon Pilgrimage in Japan: A Case Study of Ōya-ji on the Bandō Route," 375-411.

#### Session 22: Guanyin Pilgrimage in East Asia II

In-class screening of a documentary film introducing two Guanyin pilgrimage sites: Hangzhou and the Putuo Island.

\*Your mid-term essay (5-6 pages) is due by the end of this week. For this essay, please cite relevant readings and write an essay unpacking the role indigenous hagiographical legends or local miracle tales served in the domestication of Guanyin in an East Asian country or region. Due of the limited length of the essay, try to narrow down your scope to either one legend, or less than three tales.

### Week 12

#### Session 23: Guanyin Festivals and Temples in East Asia I

Shinjo Kamimura, "The Asakusa Kannon Temple," 155-173.

#### Session 24: Guanyin Festivals and Temples in East Asia II

William M. Bodiford, "Sōtō Zen in a Japanese Town: Field Notes on a Once-Every-Thirty-Three-Years Kannon Festival," 3-36.

\*Please look for pictures and introductions of a temple contributed to Guanyin worship before class, and be prepared to share in class.

**Week 13****Session 25: The Divine Feminine: Guanyin and Other Female Deities I**

☰ Maria Reis-Habito, “The Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Virgin Mary,” 61-69.

☰ Brigitte Baptandier, “Introduction,” in *The Lady of Linshui: A Chinese Female Cult*, 1-42.

**Session 26: The Divine Feminine: Guanyin and Other Female Deities II**

☰ Nyitray, Vivian-Lee. “Questions of Gender in Tianhou/Mazu Scholarship” in *Contemporary Religions in Taiwan: Unities and Diversities*, edited by Zhang Xun and Ye Chunrong, 127-167.

**Week 14****Session 27 & 28: Presentation of Final Paper**

\*Your final essay of 8-10 is due in two weeks. For this essay, you can cite relevant readings we have covered in this course, or you are also strongly encouraged to do your own research on a Guanyin-related topic of your interest. In these last two sessions, you will each make a 15-minute in-class presentation of your topic of choice, main argument, and research progress.