

COURSE OUTLINE

PHIL-111

Introduction to Japanese Zen Buddhism

1 Semester Hour

HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Description

An interdisciplinary introduction to Japanese Zen Buddhism using the categories and methods of philosophy but including the historical and cultural milieu of Japan, Zen painting, haiku, and sand gardens, and ancient, medieval, and modern Zen wisdom texts from around the world. Prerequisite: Eligible to enroll in ENGL-121. (1 hour weekly)

Overall Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the development of Zen as a religion and philosophy in Japan.
2. Analyze Zen's worldview or metaphysics with respect to human existence, the cosmos, and ultimate reality.
3. Analyze Zen's epistemology or knowledge theory.
4. Analyze Zen's axiology or values system with respect to ethics and the moral life.
5. Compare and contrast Zen and Western philosophy under the categories of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.
6. Define and explain the significance of Zen practices, including zazen or sitting meditation and the lifelong pursuit of enlightenment.
7. Read Zen literature, both instructional and poetic, by mastering its specialized vocabulary and approach Zen art with intelligence and insight.
8. Critically examine the influence of Zen on Japanese life and thought.

Major Topics

- I. History of Zen
 - A. Buddhist beginnings (Four 'Noble Truths'; Eightfold Path)
 - B. Chinese transformations (Ch'an, Taoism, Lao-tzu, Kung-Fu-tze)
 - C. Japanese adaptations (Zen, 'Shogunism')
 - D. Basic Zen tenets
- II. Zen Practice
 - A. Meditation or zazen
 - B. Oneness
 - C. Impermanence
 - D. Emptiness
 - E. Koans or thought-stopping riddles

III. Zen Arts

- A. Poetry (renga, haiku)
- B. "Fine Arts" (Painting, Sculpture, Calligraphy)
- C. Martial Arts ("Bushido")
- D. "Social Arts" (Tea Ceremony)
- E. Performing Arts (Noh, Kabuki)

IV. Zen Masters

- A. Ancient (Bodhidharma, Hue-neng, Sengsten, Dogen)
- B. Modern (Joko Beck, Kapleau, D.T.Suzuki)

Course Requirements

Grading/exams: Grading procedures will be determined by the individual faculty member but will include the following:

Reflective or analytic papers based on Zen philosophy and/or practice.

Final grades will be based on essay exams or papers in combination with informal writing assignments and active student participation in class discussions.

Writing: Specific writing assignments will be determined by the individual faculty member but will include at least 1000 words of formal writing.

Other Course Information

This course meets the College definition for **Cultural Diversity**.

This course is a Humanities elective and an Arts and Sciences elective.