ARTH 420/EAST 493

Buddhist Art in Medieval China: The Iconology of the Dunhuang Caves

Fall 2010, Mondays 11:35 am - 2:25 pm, Arts-W 5

Instructor:
Prof. Lidu Yi
Office: 3434 McTavish, room 404
Office Hours: Mondays 2:30-4:00 or by appointment
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Course Description:
The course studies the Dunhuang Caves, one of the greatest Buddhist monuments in human history. It examines the close connections between literary history and art history; words and images. It looks into Buddhist literature and explores how written words are narrated visually throughout time along the Silk Road by different peoples. The focus of the course will be on influential Buddhist literature such as the biographies of the Buddha, the Lotus Sutra, the three Pure Land sutras (the Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra, the Small Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra and the Sutra on Contemplation of Amitayus), and their visual narratives. The most important question to be explored in this course is how artists combined Buddhist doctrines and visual representations into an integral whole in historical and religious context. The course emphasizes the museum experience, class discussion, presentation and team work.

Course Readings and Materials:
Readings for the course include one course reader, one recommended book: The Land of Bliss—The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light trans. by Luis O. Gomez; one
Students are required to do their assigned readings prior to class!

Course Requirements:
Attendance and in-class participation are required for this course. The final grade will be based on attendance, class discussion, response to readings, test, presentation, and final project work.

Required work and due dates:
1) Attendance and in-class participation 20%.
2) Critical Reading Response 15% (Oct. 4)
3) Analysis of 8 Images 25% (Nov.1)
4) Final Project Presentation 10% (Dec. 3)
5) An Interpretive Final Project 30% (Dec. 10)

Written work must be submitted to my office by 4 pm on the day on which it is due. Late work will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Course Outline:

Week 1 (Sep. 13)
Introduction to the Course
International Dunhuang Project—Silk Road online http://idp.bl.uk: Buddhism & the Silk Road; The Transmission of Buddhism; Silk Road to China; Dunhuang Caves; Monks and Merchants; Buddhist Iconography.
Week 2 (Sep. 20)
The Silk Road—Trade, Travel, Faith, Art and Cultural Dialogue
http://idp.bl.uk/: British, French, German, Japanese and Russian Explorations and their
collections; Dunhuang through the eyes of Duan Wenjie.
Russell-Smith, Lilla. “Hungarian Explorers in Dunhuang,” in Journal of the Royal
Asiatic Society,
Huntington, John C. “A Note on Dunhuang Cave 17, "The Library," or Hong Bian’s
Ma, Shichang. “Buddhist Cave-Temples and the Cao Family at Mogao Ku, Dunhuang,”
Hopkirk, Peter. “Tun-huang- the Hidden Library,” in Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search
for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia, pp. 156-176.
Fraser, Sarah E. “Formulas of Creativity: Artist’s Sketches and Techniques of Copying at

Optional Readings:
Giles, Lionel. “Tun Huang Lu: Notes on the District of Tun-Huang,” in
_____.. “The Tun Huang Lu Re-Translated,” in Journal of the Royal Asiatic
Society of Great Britain and Ireland, (Jan., 1915), pp. 41-47.
Hopkirk, Peter. “Aurel Stein—Treasure Seeker Extraordinary” “Pelliot—the
Gentle
Art of Making Enemies,” in Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the
Lost Cities
and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia, pp.68-80; 177-189.

The Class will be conducted in the CJK library.

Week 3 (Sep. 27)
Dunhuang— The Buddha, the Story and Visual Narratives
Foucher, Alfred. “Introduction,” “The Nativity,” and “Childhood and Youth,” in The
Life of
the Buddha, 1-10; 13-49 and 50-82.
Bulletin,

Optional Readings:

Week 4 (Oct. 4)
Dunhuang—Life Story and Visual Narratives Cont’d

Optional Readings:

Reading Response due today 15%

Week 5 (Oct. 18)
Dunhuang—Later Life and Visual Narratives

Optional Readings:


**Week 6 (Oct. 25)**

**Dunhuang—Life Before and After in Visual Art**


**Week 7 (Nov. 1)**

**Dunhuang—The Land of Bliss and the Visual Representations**


**Optional Readings:**


**Analysis of 8 Images due today 25%**

**Week 8 (Nov. 8)**

**Dunhuang—Faith, Ritual, Donors and Artists**


**Week 9 (Nov. 15)**

**Dunhuang—The Earnest Wishes**


**Week 10 (Nov. 22)**

**Dunhuang—Visualization of Images**


Optional Readings:

Week 11 (Nov. 29)
Dunhuang—Matching Words with Images

Optional Readings:

Week 12 (Dec. 3)
Issues and Reflections
The final project presentation 10% due today
Final Project due on Dec. 10, 30%