

Buddhist Mindfulness and Spiritual Care



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

7-18 July 2025

Any general questions for the Summer School support team? Contact amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl.



Course Details

Title	Buddhist Mindfulness and Spiritual Care
Coordinator(s)	Prof. Dr. Bee Scherer; Annika Gabriel, MA b.scherer@vu.nl ; a.gabriel@vu.nl
Other lecturers	Dr. Riët Aarsse; Kasper Meulesteen, MA; Ulli Fischer, MA; Jacco van de Velden, MA; Dr. Jens Reinke; Paul van Gogh, MA; Annika Gabriel, MA
Form(s) of tuition	On campus, self-study
Approximate contact hours	50
Approximate self-study hours	40

Teaching staff (in order of appearance)

Prof. Dr. Bee Scherer; Dr. Riët Aarsse; Kasper Meulesteen, MA; Ulli Fischer, MA; Jacco van de Velden, MA; Dr. Jens Reinke; Paul van Gogh, MA; Annika Gabriel, MA

Course description

This course will introduce Buddhist mindfulness in theory and practice with special focus on Spiritual Care.

We will learn about the basics of authentic Buddhist practice and mindfulness in context of globalization; learn mindfulness meditation and practices; we further learn about Buddhist Chaplaincy in theory and practice and learn selected tools of applied Buddhist care such as Insight dialogue.

The course is guided by the Mitta Sutta (SN5 Magga) in the Pali Canon which discusses seven qualities of a noble/good friend:

1. Giving what's difficult to give
2. Doing what's difficult to do
3. Bearing up what's difficult to bear
4. Keeping others' secrets
5. Revealing one's own secrets
6. Doesn't abandon one in misfortune
7. Doesn't despise one in misfortune

These seven characteristics of a good friend are matched with real life and work requirements such as assessing spiritual needs of a person, assessing religious needs of a care-receiver, practicing ethically, confidentiality, communication skills, team working and maintaining one's own practice respectively.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. know and understand the foundations of Buddhist Mindfulness
2. have insight into the context and tools of Buddhist Mindfulness
3. Understand principles and some applications of Buddhist Spiritual Care
4. Have a deepened experience and understanding of lived Buddhist engaged practices

Assignments and Assessment

Attendance and **active participation** are obligatory and prerequisites for admittance to the final assessment.

- An attendance score of 90% or higher is the benchmark. If you need to be absent on more than one day of the summer school due to illness or other circumstances outside your control, please discuss with the course coordinator.

Assessment is by individual portfolio with oral presentation on the final day (100%).

The portfolio, total length *10-20 pages* (A4 norm) consists of

- daily short preparation notes with learning question(s); (Learning objectives: **1, 2, 3, 4**)
- daily after class reflection (**1, 2, 3, 4**)
- Oral in class presentation of learning experience and insight (no longer than 10 minutes) (**1, 2, 3, 4**)

Portfolio instructions

1. Preparation notes (not more than **1 page**):
 - a. you can use bullet points and keywords;
 - b. Formulate at least one question you want to ask in class
2. Reflection notes (one paragraph **100+ words** are enough; not more than 1 page)
 - a. After each day, write down your learning and personal experience.
 - b. Observe aha-moments (epiphanies): what was new, interesting? What is challenging? What did you enjoy? What has made you curious to learn more?
3. In-class presentation: share the most important insights and learning experience of this course!
 - a. You can talk freely or use PowerPoint or similar
 - b. If you do not like talking in front of the class, you can hand in a short, written summary equivalent to ten minutes (1-2pages).

Provisional reading list

Buddhism (General)

Keown, Damien 2013. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199663835.

Buddhist Mindfulness

Bodhi (Bhikkhu) 2011. What does mindfulness really mean? A canonical perspective, *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12:01, 19-39.

Analayo (Bhikkhu) 2021. Hearing, Reflection, and Cultivation: Relating the Three Types of Wisdom to Mindfulness. *Religions* 12: 441, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060441>.

Walking Meditation

Meulesteen, Kasper 2021. *Walking Meditations The potential role and challenges of walking meditation for Buddhist spiritual care*. MA thesis, VU Amsterdam, online at [Thesis-Walking-Meditations-Kasper-Meulesteen.pdf](https://thesis.walking-meditations-kasper-meulesteen.pdf).

MBSR

Bouw, N., Huijbregts, S. C. J., Scholte, E., & Swaab, H. (2019). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in prison: experiences of inmates, instructors, and prison staff. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(15–16), 2550 –2571, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624x19856232>

Kabat-Zinn, Jon 2011. Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps, *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12:01, 281-306.

Self-compassion

Kristin Neff: See <https://www.lionsroar.com/three-steps-for-self-compassion-illustrated/>

Buddhist Chaplaincy

Roloff, Carola. "Buddhist Chaplaincy and Care Practices." In: Grunge, Ann Hege, ed., *Complexities of Spiritual Care in Plural Societies* (Studies in Spiritual Care. 8). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2023, pp. 59 – 99.

Sanford, Monica. "Practical Buddhist Theology" in *A Thousand Hands: A Guidebook to Caring for Your Buddhist Community* edited by Nathan Jishin Michon and Daniel Clarkson Fisher, Sumeru Press, 2016, pp. 55-63.

Engaged Buddhism

Gleig, Ann 2021. Engaged Buddhism. *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion – Buddhism (ORE Religion)*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.755>.

Main, Jessica L, and Rongdao (Lai Lei Kuan Rongdao) Lai. 2013. "Introduction: Reformulating 'Socially Engaged Buddhism' as an Analytical Category." *The Eastern Buddhist* 44 (2): 1–34.

Course Schedule

Teaching Day	Time	Topic	Lecturer
Mo, 7 July	10.15-15:00	General Introduction to the course and to Buddhism; Buddhist Mindfulness I	Prof. Dr. Bee Scherer
Tu, 8 July	10:15-16.00	Buddhist Mindfulness II: <i>We don't walk this path alone</i> : the relational path to liberation	Dr. Riët Aarsse
We, 9 July	10.15-12.30	Walking Meditation	Kasper Meulesteen, MA
Th, 10 July	10:15-16.00	Introduction to MBSR and Self-Compassion	Ulli Fischer, MA
Fr, 11 July	10:15-16.00	Theory and Praxis of Buddhist Spiritual Care	Jacco van de Velden, MA
Mo, 14 July	10:15-17.00	Introduction Engaged and Humanistic Buddhism; EXCURSION: Visit to Hehua Temple, Amsterdam	Dr. Jens Reinke
Tu, 15 July	10:15-16.00	Buddhist Mindfulness and Compassion – Buddhist Military Chaplaincy	Paul van Gogh, MA,
We, 16 July	10.15-12.30	Care and Self-Care: Working with the Body	Annika Gabriel, MA
Th, 17 July	10:15-16.00	Acquiring wisdom through hearing, reflecting, practicing	Dr. Riët Aarsse
Fr, 18 July	10:15-15.00	Student Presentations and Assessments	Prof. Dr. Bee Scherer

