Module Title: PHIL 0162 The Self in Classical Indian Philosophy

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Course Description

In this module, we will consider debates about the nature of the self in classical Indian philosophy. We will look at two Buddhist (Abhidharma and Madhyamaka) theories of the self. We will then examine some arguments that the non-Buddhists (especially the Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā philosophers) gave against these theories. Along the way, we will also discuss some of the questions that these debates raise in epistemology and ethics: for example, whether our memories give us any reason to believe in an enduring self, and whether denying the existence of the self can help us justify altruism.

Course Objectives

Through reading and careful analysis of key Sanskrit and Pali texts on the self (in translation), study of this module is intended to give students an overview of classical Indian metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology.

Intended Learning Outcomes

In this module, students will develop the general skills appropriate to a theoretical philosophy module at this level. They will also learn to engage with challenging classical Indian texts: they will familiarize themselves with the key concepts used in these texts, reconstruct the arguments offered in them, and critically assess these arguments.

Assignment Structure

The final grade will depend (i) attendance and participation (10%), (ii) 5 short fortnightly writing assignments (10%), and (iii) a summative essay (3500 words for undergraduate students).

Attendance
Please see UCL's Attendance Policy (for more information see https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/chapters/chapter-3-registration-framework-taught-pro grammes/section-3-attendance-and-absence)

Attendance of seminar meetings by students is mandatory. UCL recognises that students may sometimes miss seminars due to genuine extenuating circumstances, such as illness or bereavement. Therefore, provided that a student has an attendance record of 70% or higher, the student is eligible for the summative assessment in a module, and can gain credit for that module. If, for whatever reason (even illness or bereavement), a student's attendance is lower than 70%, then they can potentially be barred from summative assessment in the module, which will mean they are 'incomplete' in it. If a student is incomplete and it is their first attempt at the module, they have to resit. If it is their second attempt, they can't graduate.

Readings

All readings for this course will be made available on the Moodle site for the module.

Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Required Primary Texts:


Required Commentary:


Week 2: The Abhidharma Theory of Selves and Persons
**Primary Texts:**


**Required Background Reading:**

SEP article on Vasubandhu

**Optional Commentary:**


**Week 3: The Nyāya Argument In Favour of the Self**

**Primary Text:**


**Optional Commentary:**


**Week 4: The Abhidharma Response to the Non-Buddhist**
Primary Texts:


Required Background Reading:

SEP article on Vasubandhu, Section 2.1.

Optional Commentary:


Week 5: Ethical Consequences of the Abhidharma View

Primary Text:

Crosby, Kate and Andrew Skilton (trans.). The Bodhicaryāvatāra. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Excerpts from Chapters 6, 8, and 9]

Required Background Reading:

SEP article on Śāntideva [Section 3].

Optional Commentary:


Week 6: The Mīmāṃsā Defence of the Self, Part 1


Week 7: The Mīmāṃsā Defence of the Self, Part 2


Required Commentary:


Week 8-9: Uddyotakara’s Renewed Nyaya Defence of the Self, Part 1

Primary Text:


Required Commentary:


Week 10: Šāntarakṣita’s Arguments Against the Self

Primary Text:


Required commentary:


Background:

SEP article on Śāntarakṣita.