

# **Art as Moral Action: *Interdisciplinary Dunhuang***

WAC 100B • Summer 2016 (Session C)

**Peter Sellars**

Distinguished Professor, World Arts and Cultures/Dance

**Haines Hall 39**

Mondays 6:30 pm – 8:50 pm • Tuesdays 7:30 pm - 8:50 pm

**Sections:** Tuesdays 6:00 pm – 7:20 pm

For centuries, Dunhuang was the western frontier of China, the terminus of the Great Wall, and the gateway to the rest of the world - peoples, goods, cultures, and religions. Buddhism arrived in China through Dunhuang, and for one thousand years, pilgrims and grateful devotees created over 600 immersive art installations in sacred caves on the edge of the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts. These caves represent the evolution of Buddhist iconography and ritual as created by populations on the move. This course explores the multicultural and interdisciplinary implications of this astonishing body of work for contemporary culture, spiritual practice, geopolitics, environmental, and immigration issues.

Interdisciplinary Dunhuang will pay particular attention to the ongoing transformation of Buddhism itself in our lifetime, as populations forced to move across frontiers adopt newly imagined practices and vocabularies. Students will explore the Cave Temples of Dunhuang exhibition, concurrently on view at the Getty, and create projects that take them into Los Angeles' diverse international communities.

## **Course Requirements:**

- Total engagement
- Presence is essential
- Participation in all in-class discussions
- Participation in discussion section each week
- Participation in small group project in discussion section
- Meeting with Professor Sellars
- Visit the Getty Center's *Cave Temples of Dunhuang* exhibition
- Final Project: 8-10 page paper due in last class

**Office:** Kaufman Hall, Room 140I

**Office Hours:** by appointment (sign-up sheet in class on Mondays)

**Prof. Sellars email:** [psellars@arts.ucla.edu](mailto:psellars@arts.ucla.edu)

**Required Texts:**

Hạnh, Thích Nhất. *The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajñāparamita Diamond Sutra*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax, 2010.

Rinchen, Sonam. *The Six Perfections: An Oral Teaching*. Trans. Ruth Sonam. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1998.

Śāntideva, trans. Padmakara Translation Group. *The Way of the Bodhisattva: A Translation of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Boston: Shambhala, 2006.

Whitfield, Roderick, Susan Whitfield, and Neville Agnew. *Cave Temples of Mogao at Dunhuang. Art and History on the Silk Road. 2nd, Rev. Ed.* Los Angeles: Getty Trust Publications, 2015.

**Teaching Assistants:**

Alex Anderson • MFA Ceramics  
UCLA Department of Art  
Email: alex@alexanderson.us

Andrew Martinez • PhD Culture and Performance  
UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance  
Email: a.mike.martinez@gmail.com

**Class Advisor:**

Susan Pertel Jain, PhD  
Executive Director, UCLA Confucius Institute  
Email: spjain@arts.ucla.edu

**Boethius Initiative:**

Julia Carnahan, Associate Director  
Email: jcarnahan@arts.ucla.edu

## **The Nature of Buddhist Art**

In order to understand the nature of the Buddha image and its meaning for a Buddhist, we must, to begin with, reconstruct its environment, trace its ancestry, and remodel our own personality. We must forget that we are looking at “art” in a museum, and see the image in its place in a Buddhist church or as part of a sculptured rock wall; and having seen it, receive it as an image of what we are ourselves potentially. Remember that we are pilgrims come from some great distance to see God; that what we see will depend upon ourselves. We are to see, not the likeness made by hands, but its transcendental archetype; we are to take part in a communion. We have heard the spoken Word, and remember that “He who sees the Word, sees Me”; we are to see this Word, not now in an audible but in a visible and tangible form. In the words of a Chinese inscription, “When we behold the precious characteristics, it is as though the whole and very person of the Buddha were present in majesty...”

-Ananda K. Coomaraswamy  
*Traditional Art and Symbolism*

**Week One:       Generosity**  
**Visual Art**  
**The Human Eye**

“The Human Eye is the eye we all have that can see flowers, the blue sky, and the white clouds.”

**Sutra:** The Lotus Sutra

**Cultural Lens:** Central Asia in Tang Dynasty China

**Monday, August 1: Course introduction**

Principles of Six  
Images of Dunhuang  
Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion  
Wonderful Sound

**Tuesday, August 2: Studio Visit**

**Class Guest:** Gronk, visual artist, co-founder of *Asco* Chicano artist collective  
Chicano artists take back the streets  
Processions and performance art  
Living with the dead  
Painting on walls / graffiti  
Instantaneous art / discipline of calligraphy  
Covering every inch of the surface  
Inter-penetrating cosmologies

**Location:** Gronk’s studio in downtown Los Angeles  
(Illuminated caves of downtown LA)  
Walk down Broadway  
Dinner at Grand Central Market  
(Dunhuang and Los Angeles as meeting points of cultures, commercial interests, food, and creative exchange)

**Recommended Reading:**

*The Six Perfections: Chapter One, Generosity*, pp. 13-25

*The Diamond Sutra: Part One, Dynamics of Prajnaparamita*, pp. 29-48

The Setting • Subhuti's Question • The First Flash of Lightning •

The Greatest Gift • Signlessness

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, pp. 31-52

Chapter One, *Excellence of Bodhichitta*

Chapter Two, *Confession*

Chapter Three, *Taking Hold of Bodhichitta*

**Recommended Pilgrimages:**

Saturday • August 6 • 1:00pm

Craft and Folk Art Museum, Free, [rsvp@cafam.org](mailto:rsvp@cafam.org)

*A Conversation with Peter Sellars and Gronk*

**Week Two: Ethical Discipline, Moral Action  
Poetry, Literature, Sutras  
The Divine Eye**

“The Divine Eye is the eye of the gods that sees very near and very far and also sees through darkness and through obstacles.”

**Sutra:** The Vimalakirti Sutra

**Cultural Lens:** Tibet in Tang Dynasty China

**Tang Dynasty Poet:** Wang Wei

**Monday, August 8 – Cultural Mapping and Food**

**Class Guest:** Jonathan M. Hall, Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Pomona College

**Project:** Intersecting Westwood Geographies: the World in Los Angeles

**Location:** Qin West Chinese Cuisine at the corner of Westwood & Santa Monica Blvds.  
(Western Chinese pulled noodles in Westwood)

**Tuesday, August 9 – Tibetan Culture On the Road**

**Class Guest:** Robert Thurman, Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Columbia University

Tibetan Buddhism arrives in America  
Visionary businessmen  
Sickness and Buddhist practice  
The equality of women  
The perfumed universe  
Inconceivability  
Silence – the lion’s roar

**Recommended Reading:**

*The Six Perfections:* Chapter Two, *Ethical Discipline*, pp. 27-41

*The Diamond Sutra:* Part Two, *Language of Non-Attachment*, pp. 49-64

A Rose Is Not a Rose • Entering the Ocean of Reality •  
Non-Attachment

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, pp. 53-76

Chapter Four, *Carefulness*

Chapter Five, *Vigilant Introspection*

**Recommended Pilgrimages:**

Sunday • August 7 • 11:00 am • Free

Hammer Museum Screening: *Cave of the Yellow Dog*

Sunday • August 7 • 7:00 pm • Free

Grand Performances: Sanubar Tursan- The Diva of West China's Uyghurs

Wednesday • August 10 • 7:00 pm

Getty Center • Harold Williams Auditorium • Free, Advanced Tickets Required

*Hidden Illumination in Dark Times and the Secret Ambrosia of Great Compassion*

*A Conversation with Peter Sellars and Robert Thurman*

Thursday • August 11 • 4:00 pm

Arts in Society Conference • UCLA Broad Art Center • Free

*Climbing the Razor-Path Mountain and Leaping Into the Fire: Next Steps in Charged*

*Times — The Humanities and the Aesthetics of Delight Shape and Awaken Political*

*Consciousness*

**Week Three: Patience  
Dance  
The Eye of Insight**

“The Eye of Insight is the eye that can see the true nature of non-self in living beings and the impermanent nature of all objects of mind.”

**Sutra:** The Flower Ornament Sutra

**Cultural Lens:** India in Tang Dynasty China

**Tang Dynasty Poet:** Du Fu

**Monday, August 15 – Movement, Mudras, Miracles**

**Class Guests:**

Hua Wenyi, Kunqu Opera master artist, NEA National Heritage Fellow

Michael Schumacher, choreographer, dancer, teacher

**Tuesday, August 16 – Body of the Buddha: Art of the Dunhuang Temples**

**Class Guest:** D. Neil Schmid, Guest Professor, Department of Art History, University of Vienna

**Location/Time:** Hammer Museum, 7:30 pm

**Recommended Reading:**

*The Six Perfections:* Chapter Three, *Patience*, pp. 43-62

*The Diamond Sutra:* Part Three, *The Answer Is in the Question*, pp. 65-89

Dwelling in Peace • Creating a Formless Pure Land • The Sand in the Ganges •

Every Land Is a Holy Land • The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion •

Abiding in Non-Abiding • Great Determination • The Last Epoch

*The Way of the Bodhisattva:* Chapter Six, *Patience*, pp. 77-96

**Week Four:      **Enthusiastic Effort**  
                          **Music**  
                          **The Eye of Transcendent Wisdom****

“A bodhisattva with the Eye of Transcendent Wisdom sees that he or she and all beings share the same nature of emptiness, and therefore his or her liberation is one with the liberation of all beings.”

**Sutra:** The Amitabha Sutra

**Cultural Lens:** Africa in Tang Dynasty China

**Tang Dynasty Poet:** Li Po

**Monday, August 22 – Celestial Music, Improvisation, and the Rain of Flowers**

**Class Guest:** Vijay Iyer, Composer; Pianist; Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts, Department of Music, Harvard University



## **Tuesday, August 23 – Performing the Silk Road**

**Class Guest:** Chuen-Fung Wong, Associate Professor, Department of Ethnomusicology, Hong Kong Baptist University

**Location/Time:** Hammer Museum, 7:30 pm

### **Recommended Reading:**

*The Six Perfections:* Chapter Four, *Enthusiastic Effort*, pp. 63-79

*The Diamond Sutra:* Part Four, *Mountains and Rivers Are Our Body*, pp. 91-115

Reality Is a Steadily Flowing Stream • Great Happiness • Thirty-Two Marks •  
Insight – Life • The Sunflower • The Moon Is Just the Moon •  
The Most Virtuous Act • Organic Love • A Basket Filled With Words •  
Not Cut Off From Life • Virtue and Happiness • Neither Coming Nor Going •  
The Indescribable Nature of All Things • Tortoise Hair and Rabbit's Horns •  
Teaching the Dharma

*The Way of the Bodhisattva:* Chapter Seven, *Diligence*, pp. 97-108

### **Recommended Pilgrimages:**

Sunday • August 21 • 7:00 pm

Hollywood Bowl • Ticketed event

*Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma*

Wednesday • August 24 • 7:30 pm

The Getty Center • Free, reservation recommended

*Screening – Cave of the Silken Web with Silk Road Ensemble*

## **Week Five: Meditative Concentration Architecture & Textiles The Buddha Eye**

“The Buddha Eye is the eye that can see clearly the past, the present, and the future, as well as the minds of all living beings in the past, the present, and the future.”

**Sutra:** The Diamond Sutra

**Cultural Lens:** Persia in Tang Dynasty China

**Tang Dynasty Poet:** Du Fu

**Monday, August 29 – Textiles on the Spirit Road**

**Class Guest:** Elena Phipps, Lecturer, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures;  
Senior Museum Scholar, Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Tuesday, August 30 – Imaginary Architecture**

**Class Guest:** Greg Lynn, Studio Professor, UCLA Department of Architecture and  
Urban Design; Greg Lynn Form

**Recommended Reading:**

*The Six Perfections*: Chapter Five, *Concentration*, pp. 81-94

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*: Chapter Eight, *Meditative Concentration*, pp. 109-136

**Recommended Pilgrimages:**

Sunday • August 28 • 4:00 pm

The Getty Center • Free, reservation recommended

*Neville Agnew: The Care of Time and the Dimensions of Conservation at the Mogao Grottoes*

Wednesday • August 31 • 7:30 pm

Hammer Museum Screening: *Cave of the Silken Web* with DJ Discostan

**Week Six:           Wisdom  
                          Film and Media, Awareness and Insight  
                          The Buddha Eye**

**Sutra:** The Heart Sutra

**Cultural Lens:** Japan and Korea in Tang Dynasty China

**Sung Dynasty Poet:** Wang An-shih

**Video Installation Art:** Bill Viola

**Monday, September 5**  
**NO CLASS – Labor Day**

**Tuesday, September 6 - FINAL CLASS**

**Class Guest:** Hirokazu Kosaka, Artist; Artistic Director, Japanese American Cultural & Community Center

**Event:** Zen Tea Ceremony

**Location:** Japanese Cultural Room, JACCC

**Recommended Reading:**

*The Six Perfections:* Chapter Six, *Wisdom*, pp. 95-130

*The Way of the Bodhisattva:* Chapter Nine, *Wisdom*, pp. 137-161

**FINAL PROJECT DUE IN CLASS**

### **Office of Students with Disabilities –**

**It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any disability that would require accommodation in class.**

If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform your instructor and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, 310.825.1501, 310.206-6083 (telephone device for the deaf). Website: [www.osd.ucla.edu](http://www.osd.ucla.edu)

### **UCLA policy on absences**

According to university policy, there are extenuating circumstances that define excused absences in cases such as severe injury, loss of a family member, religious holidays, etc. If the student feels that she/he has missed/will miss a class that falls into this category, the student should immediately meet with the instructor to arrange completion of missed assignments. Students can review university absence policy. Additionally, it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor in a timely manner of any missed class due to the observance of a major religious holiday and arrange completion of missed assignments.

### **UCLA policy on Plagiarism**

\*Students must conform to the UCLA's rules on Academic Integrity and will be held responsible for transgressions of the policy. Please familiarize yourself with the *Student Guide to Academic Integrity* on the Dean of Students' website at: <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html>.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Copp, Paul F. *The Body Incantatory: Spells and the Ritual Imagination in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
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*Prajñāparamita Diamond Sutra*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax, 2010.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama. *For the Benefit of All Beings: A Commentary on The Way of the Bodhisattva*. Boston: Shambhala, 2009.

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Designed by UCLA Distinguished Professor of the Arts and award-winning director Peter Sellars, Art as Moral Action: Interdisciplinary Dunhuang continues Sellars' mission of showing the way art can serve as a force for social justice and moral development. Taking advantage of the Getty's landmark Cave Temples of Dunhuang exhibition, this course draws its inspiration and focus from Silk Road-era Dunhuang, particularly the Buddhist art and artifacts of the Mogao Caves and the city's role as a nexus of art, religion, and multicultural interaction. See more of Interdisciplinary Development Research and Action Center - IDRAC on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Interdisciplinary Development Research and Action Center - IDRAC on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account?Â Launched by Interdisciplinary Development & Action Research Center, "Tezhib" is a Turkish word and literally means "illumination". Find out more about this exciting project in the video! Umrat Khan Yusra Afzal. #UndergraduateResearch #Tezhib #IDRAC #HabibUniversity #ShapingFutures. See more. Interdisciplinary Development Research and Action Center - IDRAC updated their cover photo. 10 November at 08:40 Â. See all. 2 Week One " March 30 Course Introduction: Topics : Art as inquiry Art as encounter Art as challenge Art as shared space Art as transformation Art as negotiation Art as convener Art as motivator Art as informed, articulated action Art as multiple perspectives and understandings Art as ambiguity Art as access to hidden dimensions Art as a space of grieving Art as recovery and. renewal Art as creator of fluid identities Art as memory Art as prophecy Art as a location of hope You are now a member of the ruling elite. Get to know your fellow students. Get to know yourself.

Interdisciplinary Framework for Thinking about Contemporary Moral Issues. In our presentations, we will present summaries of three of the four foundations of Christian morality: Philosophy, Psychology, and Theology.Â influence behavioral actions we judge as moral or immoral. Clues to understanding why people act in certain ways come from recognizing that a person's spiritual state interacts with thoughts, feelings, habitual ways of acting, health, and social factors to influence our moral actions. Second, he summarizes research conducted by moral psychologists who study how people decide that some conduct is right and some is wrong. The Moral Psychology Interdisciplinary Conference aims to identify the most recent theoretical and methodological research challenges in morality research from various disciplines. This full-day conference will include a variety of short invited lectures, panel discussions, and working groups. The working groups will be assigned based on research area and will provide an opportunity to engage in a structured discussion on issues related to your current research and within an interdisciplinary team. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Sponsors. Supported by the Centre for Research in the A...