

English 3723: The Beats & Buddhism
Fall 2021

Professor Todd Giles

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Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:00 & 12:00-1:00 / F 10:00-11:00 / Zoom by appointment



“It is only when we forget our learning that we begin to know.”
Henry David Thoreau

Required Texts

- Jack Kerouac. *The Dharma Bums*. Penguin, 2006. (9780143039600)
- Gary Snyder. *Mountains and Rivers without End*. Counterpoint, 1996. (9781582434070)
- Shunryu Suzuki. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Shambhala, 2020. (9781611808414)
- Carole Tonkinson. *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation*. Riverhead Books, 1995. (9781573225014)

Recommended Text

- D.T. Suzuki. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. Grove Press, 1994. (9780802130556)

Course Description

This course will examine several Beat Generation poets and their explorations of Zen philosophy, practice, and poetics. Once we begin to develop a basic understanding of Zen, we will then delve into the poetry and prose of the Beat writers, including examples of their correspondence, essays, poetry and fiction. Leave your preconceived notions behind; form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

My courses are organized around the Academic Seminar model pioneered in German universities in the 19th century, in which faculty and students work together to strive for new knowledge based on five pillars: interdisciplinarity; academic freedom; critical thinking; seeking knowledge as an end in itself; and integrating new knowledge while at the same time preserving and interpreting the past.

My pedagogy is founded on the intrinsic value of questioning and reflection, including the questioning of my own assumptions. As a student in my class you will develop your higher-order thinking skills through active learning—clarifying and challenging your own perspectives and those of others through the critical analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of theoretical and literary texts. We will examine and discuss challenging questions and complex realities, learn to think for ourselves, and connect to the world in rich, subtle ways.

Course Requirements (Scholarly Project)

| Assignments | Grade Percent |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Homework/Discussion | 30% |
| Annotated Bibliography | 20% |
| Paper Proposal | 20% |
| Final Paper | 30% |

Grading Policy

In this class, the following numerical equivalents for final grades are used: A = 100-90%; B = 89-80%; C = 79-70%; D = 69-60%; F = 59-0%.

Weekly Writing Activities

These weekly writing activities will be graded on a plus/check/minus scale: a plus for doing a thorough job (100%), a check for completing the work in an acceptable fashion (70%), and a minus for not completing the work or for obvious lack of effort (0%). Some assignments, depending on length and difficulty, will count for more than one daily grade.

Class Preparation and Participation

To succeed on your daily writing you must show that you've closely read, have at least a cursory understanding of the material, and address, to the best of your ability, the writing prompts. Specific examples from the work always help get the point across. It is

also good to try to tie in any relevant terminology or critical concepts from class discussions. Read the assigned material by the date listed on the schedule of readings. As you read, take notes and underline/highlight what you believe are key passages in the text (a climactic scene, crucial lines for understanding the work, a summary of the argument, etc.), or things you have trouble understanding.

Paper Submission Format and Policy

All out-of-class assignments must be typed in Times New Roman 12-point black font with one inch margins using MLA format. By enrolling in this class, the student expressly grants MSU a “limited right” in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The “limited right” shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student’s work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and for educational purposes. **Note:** You may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that already has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in another course, unless you obtain the explicit written permission of me and the other instructor involved *in advance*.

Late Paper and Assignment Policy

Unless arrangements are made *in advance* for extenuating circumstances, you will automatically lose a letter grade for each day a paper is late, including weekends. A paper that is more than a week late will automatically receive an F, regardless of the quality of work. **All major assignments must be turned in to pass the class. You will not be able to make up daily work and there is no extra credit.**

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing in “Works Cited”)—whether you use that material in a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. It is a theft of intellectual property and will not be tolerated, whether intentional or not. I have a zero tolerance for any type of plagiarism. **All incidents of plagiarism will be penalized (the paper will receive an automatic F), reported, and kept on file. The second incident of plagiarism in class by the same student will result in the student receiving an F for the course.**

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

Safe Zone Statement

I consider this classroom a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is

appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

Grade Appeals

I will be happy to try to explain the rationale behind any grade; however, I absolutely do not negotiate, haggle, or argue about grades. Part of my job is to evaluate your work and to assign a written grade to it. I do that to the best of my ability the first time. The bottom line is that you have to take responsibility for your own education.

Tutoring Support

Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, TASP's Learning center provides tutoring support in a number of core courses and subject areas. Please see our schedule for more information about times and offerings. Remember that you don't need an appointment to utilize these services. Some departments also provide tutoring. Check the "Tutoring at MSU" tab in the portal for more information about all campus tutoring opportunities. For Distance Education students, TASP has partnered with Thinkingstorm, an online tutoring company that provides you with high-quality, 24/7 tutoring support. Located at the top of your D2L course page, select the Distance Education Tutoring course to book an appointment with a tutor. If you are a distance education student (i.e. you live more than 50 miles from MSU and are in all online courses), but you do not see this course pop up under your courses, please contact Ashley Hurst.

Writing Proficiency Requirement

All students seeking a Bachelor's degree from Midwestern State University must satisfy a writing proficiency requirement once they have 1) completed 6 hours of Communication Core and 2) earned 60 hours. Students may meet this requirement by passing the Writing Proficiency Exam, passing two Writing Intensive courses, or passing English 2113. If you have any questions about the exam, visit the Writing Proficiency Office website or call 397-4131.

Reading Schedule

This schedule is tentative; I reserve the right to amend it with oral notice in class. If you anticipate a problem with due dates please speak with me well in advance.

PURPLE = Videos (Library Guide)

BLUE = *Big Sky Mind*

BLACK = Other Books

GREEN = Various (D2L)

Week 1 (8/23—8/27)

Big Sky Mind “Introduction” (1-20)

Michael McClure from *Scratching the Beat Surface* (D2L)

Watch “Soto Zen as a New Style of Living” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [9:06]

Watch “The Advancement of Soto Zen in North America” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [9:06]

Watch “Present!—Talks of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [26:19]

Listen to “D.T. Suzuki, What is Zen Part 1 of 4” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [31:50]

Watch “David Halberstam’s *The Fifties: The Beat*” (Beat Background in LibGuide) [44:51]

Week 2 (8/30—9/3)

Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* “Preface” & “Intro” & Part I (ix-46)

Watch “It was the Stultifying 1950s that Provoked the 1960s Rebellions” (Beat Background in LibGuide) [56:12]

Listen to “D.T. Suzuki, What is Zen Part 2 of 4” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [31:40]

Alan Watts, “Beat Zen, Square Zen” (D2L)

Watch “Alan Watts: Zen—The Best of Alan Watts” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [1:01:19]

Watch “Alan Watts: The Discipline of Zen” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [27:29]

Watch “The Path to Enlightenment by Alan Watts” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [53:38]

Watch “Alan Watts: It’s Only a Game” (Beat Background in LibGuide) [7:01]

Watch “Alan Watts: A Conversation with Myself” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [28:06]

Week 3 (9/7—9/10)

Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* Part II (49-113)

Listen to “D.T. Suzuki, What is Zen Part 3 of 4” (Buddhism in LibGuide) [34:29]

Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (1-71)

The Dharma Bums Pp (D2L)

The Dharma Bums Buddhist Terminology (D2L)

Watch *On the Road* and *Big Sur* trailers (Movie Trailers in LibGuide)

Watch “Jack Kerouac on *The Steve Allen Show*” (Poets in LibGuide) [5:31]

Watch “History Making: Desolation Adventure—Jack Kerouac” (Poets in LibGuide) [9:21]

Watch “The Beat Generation: An American Dream” (Beat Background in LibGuide) [1:24:28]

Week 4 (9/13—9/17)

Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* Part III (117-179)

Listen to "D.T. Suzuki, What is Zen Part 4 of 4" (Buddhism in LibGuide) [34:52]

Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (71-122)

Watch "The San Francisco Beat Poets" (Beat Background in LibGuide) [1:05:40]

Watch "The Source" (Beat Background in LibGuide) [1:28:25]

Week 5 (9/20—9/24)

Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (122-187)

Kerouac, "Alone on a Mountaintop" and "Desolation Blues" (D2L)

Kerouac, "Desolation Blues" (D2L)

Watch "Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats" (Poets in LibGuide) [1:11:24]

Watch "Pull My Daisy" (Beat Background in LibGuide) [26:15]

Week 6 (9/27—10/1)

Jack Kerouac (23-61 & 70-88)

Watch "What Happened to Kerouac?" (Poets in LibGuide) [1:36:56]

Week 7 (10/4—10/8)

Kenneth Rexroth (321-347)

Watch "Kenneth Rexroth, a Brief Biography" (Poets in LibGuide) [11:17]

ONE practice bibliography entry due

Week 8 (10/11—10/15)

Gary Snyder (171-191)

Watch "Northwest Stories: Gary Snyder" (Poets in LibGuide) [6:52]

Watch "Modern American Poets 3: Gary Snyder" (Poets in LibGuide) [29:04]

Week 9 (10/18—10/22)

Gary Snyder, *Mountains & Rivers without End* (155-160 and Parts I & II)

Watch "Friends of the Scranton Public Library: Gary Snyder" (Poets in LibGuide)

[1:28:56]

Annotated Bibliography Due

Week 10 (10/25—10/29)

Gary Snyder, *Mountains & Rivers without End* (Part III)

Watch “Gary Snyder at the Brockport Writers Forum” (Poets in LibGuide) [15:01]

Watch “USA: Poetry Episode Philip Whalen and Gary Snyder” (Poets in LibGuide) [29:26]

Week 11 (11/1—11/5)

Philip Whalen (193-230)

Watch “Philip Whalen Reads Three Poems” (Poets in LibGuide) [5:00]

Week 12 (11/8—11/12)

Lawrence Ferlinghetti & Michael McClure (305-318)

Watch “Iconic Beat Gen Bookseller & Poet Ferlinghetti Turns 100” (Poets in LibGuide) [51:28]

Watch “USA: Poetry Episode Allen Ginsberg & Ferlinghetti” (Poets in LibGuide) [29:29]

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Note on Poetry in San Francisco” (D2L)

Joanne Kyger (231-240) & Albert Saijo (241-247)

Watch “Joanne Kyger Reading” (Poets in LibGuide) [37:13]

Paper Proposal Due

Week 13 (11/15—11/19)

Allen Ginsberg (89-137)

Watch *Howl* and *The Life & Times of Allen Ginsberg* trailers (Movie Trailers in LibGuide)

Watch “Howl: Allen Ginsberg and the First Beat of a Generation” (Poets in LibGuide) [9:24]

Watch “Allen Ginsberg: Buddhism & the Beats” (Poets in LibGuide) [1:49:03]

Week 14 (11/22—11/23 Thanksgiving Break)

Diane di Prima (139-160) & Lew Welch (249-267)

Watch “Diane DiPrima” (Poets in LibGuide) [1:00:31]

Watch Peter “Coyote on Lew Welch Book Release” (Poets in LibGuide) [5:44]

Watch “Gary Snyder Closing Lew Welch Book Release” (Poets in LibGuide) [7:49]

Watch “Joanne Kyger at Lew Welch Book Release” (Poets in LibGuide) [15:30]

Week 15 (11/29—12/3)

Norman Mailer, “The White Negro” (D2L)

Paul O’Neil, “Beats: Sad but Noisy Rebels” (D2L)

Norman Podhoretz, “The Know-Nothing Bohemians” (D2L)

Watch all Beatspotation Trailers in LibGuide

**Final Papers are due at official Final Exam time. TBA.
(You are welcome to hand them in early if you like).**