

**Kansas Zen Center**  
*Compass of Zen*  
course syllabus

**based on a course by Stan Lombardo (Zen Master Hae Kwang)**  
**adapted by Judy Roitman (Zen Master Bon Hae)**

This course was first developed for Dharma Teachers in Training, to prepare them to become full Dharma Teachers. It has been adapted to include people who have taken 5 precepts or have had an introductory course in Zen practice. Each lesson consists of assigned readings and focused homework. Class consists of discussions

The readings basically follow the development of *The Compass of Zen*, supplemented by various books. Class sessions will consist of discussions based on the readings.

Except for the first class, every class has essentially two main questions: *what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?* There is also more defined homework to help us focus on specific topics and to help us learn forms, but the main questions are most important. Please do not try to find definitive answers to the questions. They are designed to open our minds, not close them.

**Required texts:**

Zen Master Seung Sahn, *The Compass of Zen* (Shambala), *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* (Grove) and *The Whole World is a Single Flower* (Tuttle; Primary Point Press)

Richard Shrobe (Zen Master Wu Kwang), *Don't-Know Mind: the Spirit of Korean Zen Chanting book* of the Kwan Um School of Zen

*The Sutra of Hui Neng*, also known as *The Platform Sutra*, available in a number of translations

for looking up terms: Damien Keown, *Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford), Robert Buswell and Donald Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Wikipedia and other Web resources. In most cases, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* is your best source. Spellings vary. When the difference is mild (e.g., Hui-Neng or Huineng?) no note will be made. When differences are confusing (e.g., Pai-chang or Baizhang?), variants will be noted.

**Terminology:** We will follow the terminology of *Compass of Zen*, while recognizing its controversial nature (e.g., Hinayana instead of Theravada).

**Without a teacher:** If you're doing this course without teacher, I encourage you to do it with a small group. Whether with a group or on your own, I encourage you to discuss any questions you have with a teacher. If none are available to you, feel free to contact me over e-mail through the Kansas Zen Center address.

*Judy Roitman (Zen Master Bon Hae)*

## Lesson 0

In this lesson we get to know each other by talking about our own experience with practice. If you're doing this course on your own, you might want to think about how you came to practice, what your practice has been, and how it's changed over time.

## Lesson 1

Readings:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 13 — 84. (e-text: 7 sections: The Purposes of Buddhism through Insight into Nonself)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Siddhartha Gautama, Hinayana, Sravakayana, anatman, triratna, Buddha, dharma, samgha<sup>1</sup>

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

How would you tell the story of Gautama Buddha to someone who knows nothing about Buddhism?

Summarize the fundamental insights of Hinayana Buddhism, as outlined in *Compass of Zen*.

## Lesson 2

Readings:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 85 — 96. (e-text: Dependent Origination and The Twelve Links in the Chain of Dependent Origination)

look up (in a dictionary or online): pratiya-samutpada, karma, Nagarjuna, Mula-madhyamakakarika

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

Describe *mutual causality* to someone who doesn't know what it is.

Rearrange the 12 links in the chain of dependent origination. Compare with the original.

## Lesson 3

Readings:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 97 — 111. (e-text: 4 sections, from The Four Noble Truths through Three Kinds of Practice)

look up (in a dictionary or online): four noble truths, dukkha, eightfold path, sila samadhi, prajna<sup>2</sup>

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

Find at least four distinct formulations of the four noble truths. (Google is helpful.)

What are the three seals of existence?

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<sup>1</sup> No, this is not a misspelling.

<sup>2</sup> Not the Indian monk

## Lesson 4

### Readings:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 113 — 123. (e-text: introduction to Mahayana Buddhism)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Mahayana, middle way, arhat, bodhisattva, karuna  
*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

### Focused homework:

Memorize the four great vows.

What, in the formulation of *The Compass of Zen*, are the major differences between Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism?

for 10 precepts people: Memorize the evening bell chant.

## Lesson 5

### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 125 — 139. (e-text: The Diamond Sutra, The Maha Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Vajracchedika sutra, Heart sutra, sunyata, skandha

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

### Focused homework:

What is your understanding about *emptiness? skandha? impermanence? non-self?* and their relationships (or not) with each other.

Memorize the English heart sutra.

(for 10 precepts people): memorize the Korean heart sutra; practice both versions of the heart sutra with a moktak.

## Lesson 6

### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 140 — 149. (e-text: The Mahaparinirvana-sutra, The Lotus Sutra)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Hui-neng, Mahaparinirvana sutra, Lotus sutra, nirvana, One Mind, T'ien-t'ai

from *The Sutra of Hui Neng*: the first chapter, Hui Neng's autobiography

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

### Focused homework:

Why study sutras?

Summarize the chant *Homage to the Buddhas* (see the translation in the chanting book, one sentence or phrase per stanza.

(for 10 precepts people): practice this chant with a moktak.

## Lesson 7

### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 150 — 163. (e-text: The Hua-Yen (Avaramsaka) Sutra, The Song of Dharma Nature)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Avatamsaka Sutra, Hua-yen, Amitabha, Amitabha Sutra, Sukhavati-vyuhā Sutra, Vairocana, kalpa

from our chanting book: translation of the morning bell chant (see handout)

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

### Focused homework:

What is the Hua-Yen school?

Read the translation of the morning bell chant.

The morning bell chant is syncretic, combining elements of the Hua-Yen school, Pure Land Buddhism (Amitabha) and Zen. Identify each within the chant.

(for 10 precepts people) Lead the morning bell chant.

## Lesson 8

### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 164 — 197. (e-text: The View of Mind-Only and Karma, Karma)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Alaya-vijnaya, yogacara, samsara, dharani

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

### Focused homework:

How would you explain the following to someone who is unfamiliar with them:  
*karma, storehouse consciousness, dependent origination?*

Chant the great dharani.

(for 10 precepts people) Chant the great dharani with a moktak.

(advanced Focused homework) Memorize the great dharani and use it as a fast mantra during meditation.

## Lesson 9

### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 198 — 204 (e-text: The Six Paramitas)

look up (in a dictionary or online): paramita, Avalokitesvara

from the *Chanting Book*: translation of the 10,000 eyes and hands sutra

[Note: The beginning of this chant is not translated in the chanting book. It reads: “Today in my unified mind infinite bodies appear; all of them are the great, holy Kwan Um. Each day I bow countless times.”]

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

### Focused homework:

Memorize the six paramitas and the eightfold path.

Chant the 10,000 eyes and hands sutra.

(for 10 precepts people): Chant this sutra with a moktak.

## Lesson 10

Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 205 — 243. (e-text: Introduction to Zen Buddhism, The Classifications of Meditation, Utmost Vehicle Zen)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Five Houses, Lin-Chi I-hsuan (Linji Yixuan), Lin-chi (Linji) School, Yun-Men Wen-yen (Yunmen Wenyan) [we know him as Unmun], Chao-chou (Zhaozhou) [we know him as Joju], Ch'an (Chan), Seon (Son) [not in *Princeton*], Zen

from *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*: chapter 32, Five kinds of Zen

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

What types of Zen are described in the reading? Give examples of each kind from your own life or the lives of people you know.

Have you had any experiences you would call enlightenment? Samadhi? What were they?

Learn the correct forms for mudras, bows, and prostrations

## Lesson 11

Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 244 — 261. (e-text: Nonattachment to Language, The Special Transmission, Pointing Directly to Mind, See your True Nature, Become Buddha)

look up (in a dictionary or online): zazen, samadhi, dhyana

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

What would you say to somebody who asks, "What is Zen?"

What would you say to somebody who asks, "What is samadhi?"

Work on your sitting posture so that it feels firm and balanced.

## Lesson 12

Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 268 — 290. (e-text: 5 sections: from Sitting in Zen Meditation through Effort in Zen)

look up (in a dictionary or online): shikantaza

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

What is your experience of the four basic practice forms: sitting, bowing, chanting, walking meditation?

Try at least two different sitting meditation forms fairly extensively throughout the month.

What is your experience of the various sitting practice that you've tried?

### Lesson 13

#### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 291 — 300. (e-text: The Zen Circle)

look up (in a dictionary or online): five degrees of enlightenment (five ranks; in *Princeton Dictionary* the second entry for wuwei)

from *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*: The Zen Circle

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

#### Focused homework:

Become comfortable eating formal 4-bowl style

What is your experience of 180 degrees? 270 degrees?

(for 10 precepts people) Learn how to lead 4-bowl style.

### Lesson 14

#### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 262 — 267, p. 301 — 314. (e-text: Kong-an and All Cases, What is Buddha-nature?, Three Prajna Things)

look up (in a dictionary or online): koan

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

#### Focused homework:

Go to a kong-an interview.

### Lesson 15

#### Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 315 — 347, p. 355 — 389 (e-text: 8 sections, from The Human Route through Just-Like-This is Buddha; The Ten Gates)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Gateless Gate, Blue Cliff Record

from *The Whole World is a Single Flower*, p. 233 — 237

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

#### Focused homework:

How do you experience kong-an practice? [Note: in discussion it will be very important not to give any hints about which kong-ans we've passed or not passed, and not to give any hints about answers.]

Memorize *The Human Route* [<http://www.kwanumzen.org/?teaching=the-human-route> — contrary to what the web page says, it dates from approximately the 10<sup>th</sup> century]

### Lesson 16

#### Reading:

from the *Chanting Book*: Temple rules

look up (in a dictionary or online): Vinaya Pitaka

The 10 precepts (see next page)

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

#### Focused homework:

How do you experience the temple rules?

Compare Zen precepts to vinaya.

Observe how you hold precepts and break them.  
(for 10 precepts people) Lead as both moktak master and as head dharma teacher.

## Lesson 17

Reading:

from *The Compass of Zen*: p. 349 – 353, p. 393 — 394 (e-text: Conclusion, Zen Master Seung Sahn's Lineage)

from *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*: chapter 66 (The Story of Kyong Ho), chapter 99 (The Story of Seung Sahn Soen-Sa)

from *Don't-Know Mind*: The Modern Period (p. 75 – 141)

pdf article on women ancestors (on the Kansas Zen Center website, under *Resources*)

look up (in a dictionary or online): Mahakasyapa, Bodhidharma, Hui-neng, Ma-tsu (Mazo) [we know him as Majo], Pai-chang Huai-hai (Baizhang Huaihai), Huang-po His-yun (Huangbo Xiyun), , Chinul (Pojo Chinul), T'aego Pou, Wonhyo, So Sahn (Chongho Hyujong), Korea (in Keown's *Dictionary*; or online search for Korean Buddhism), and (online only): Asvaghosa, Kanadeva, Vasubandhu, Prajnatata

*what struck you about this material? what questions do you have?*

Focused homework:

Why lineage?

Read a substantial part of the writings/sayings of one of the following: Hui-neng, Huang-po, Lin-chi (a.k.a. Rinzai).

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## The 10 precepts of the Kwan Um School of Zen

1. I vow to abstain from taking life
2. I vow to abstain from taking things not given.
3. I vow to abstain from conduct done in lust.
4. I vow to abstain from lying.
5. I vow to abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.
6. I vow not to talk about the faults of others.
7. I vow not to praise myself and put down others.
8. I vow not to be covetous and to be generous.
9. I vow not to give way to anger and to be harmonious.
10. I vow not to slander the three jewels (Buddha, dharma, sangha).