This course will immerse you in the extraordinary collection of Zen koans known as the Blue Cliff Record. Part poetry, part philosophy, part history, and always revolutionary, the Blue Cliff Record aims less at understanding than at personal transformation. We will supplement our reading of the koans with short readings in Zen philosophy by its practitioners and critics. We will complement our meditative reading of these texts with a simple form of meditation. Because the Blue Cliff Record is filled with subtle and ironic commentary on itself, on Buddhism, and on human life in general, our written work will also take the form of commentaries: on koans, on each other’s commentaries, and on the possibilities and limitations of this distinctively medieval form of writing.