

RELS 240.1/2 Buddhist Traditions (Spring 2019)

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Course Description

It's time to wake up! The goal of this course is to familiarize you with the religious traditions that derive from the teachings of the Buddha, the "Awakened One." Such a survey course is not intended to steer you toward or away from any particular Buddhist tradition, nor is it intended to foster any spiritual search in which you might be personally engaged. Rather, its goal is for you to achieve an accurate understanding of the Buddhisms practiced in India, Thailand, Tibet, and America on those societies' own terms, and to evaluate their traditions in a manner that is both sympathetic and properly critical. In this course you will discover how Buddhism is a diverse tradition of great complexity and you will see how its dimensions evolved to answer the needs of people of different cultures and historical periods. We will also work to undo a few of the common misunderstandings in the West about Buddhism being a timeless form of universal wisdom, or a spiritual practice intended to reduce stress and foster inner peace and "oneness."

This course will introduce a number of enduring themes relating to Buddhist philosophy (e.g. the status of the self and enlightenment), Buddhist practice and ethics (e.g. monastic life, meditation, making merit and rituals), and politics and society (e.g. Buddhist kingship, Buddhist gender roles, and race). We will trace the transmission and transformation of Buddhist beliefs and practices from India into Thailand, Tibet, and America. We will rely extensively on primary texts in the required readings, but we will also read two compelling books (a spiritual travelogue and a novel) about western spiritual seekers. We will also watch documentaries that illustrate how Buddhist ideas and practices are woven into many aspects of life in Asia. You should consider these films as "texts," for their content will be covered in exams.

Course goals and student learning outcomes

- to acquire religious literacy in the key ideas and practices of Buddhism and a familiarity with how they have changed and developed over time;
- to recognize the diversity of Buddhisms by reading primary sources, placing them in their social context, and analyzing their multiple dimensions from different disciplinary perspectives;
- to foster an awareness of how religion and culture shape your perceptions and the values that you take for granted and to challenge any ethnocentric assumptions about Buddhism as a religion;
- to demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft an argument in defense of a thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources.

This course also satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**

- 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, and valued in various expressions of human culture;
- 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These 2 General Education learning outcomes will be demonstrated on the **final take-home exam essay.**

Required Texts (available at the College of Charleston Barnes & Noble Bookstore)

- Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction 2nd edition*, Oxford, 2013
- Donald S. Lopez, *The Story of Buddhism*, Harper Publishing, 2001
- John Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations 3rd edition*, Cengage, 2008
- J. D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*. Little, Brown and Co., 1961
- Tim Ward, *What the Buddha Never Taught*, Changemaker Books, 2013--20th Anniversary edition.

There are also **20 Electronic Readings**, pdf selections from Buddhist texts, scholarly articles and creative short stories on Buddhism, available on **OAKS** under **RELS 240**, which registered students can access after they login to **MyCharleston** (<http://my.cofc.edu>) Please download all 20 pdf files onto your computer or on a memory stick, **print out each article**, and bring it to class on the day that it is due. *The correct ER# for each article is listed in the syllabus and OAKS, not on the first page of the article itself.*

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Course Requirements

This course presumes no previous experience in Buddhism or religious studies, but it has as a prerequisite the desire to read challenging and unusual materials about Buddhism and Asian cultures and to engage in conversation about these readings. These expectations are explicitly identified in the following points.

- **Completion of required reading assignments prior to lecture**

You should read the assignment *before* we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures and absorb new ideas. When there is an assignment from the ER material on OAKS you should print it out and bring it to class. We pay close attention to these readings and “unpack” their content.

- **Regular attendance at lecture and participation in class discussions**

Whatever you get out of this course is directly related to how much you put into it. Please come to class with ideas and questions that can help our class engage in meaningful discussion. Attendance records will be kept for each class. There will be **3 allowed absences**; **4 or more** absences will negatively affect your grade. At **8** absences you will be **dropped** from the course and earn a **WA grade**. If you have a legitimate excuse (illness, emergency) please contact the **Absence Memo Office** in the Lightsey Center, Suite 101, to document the reason for your absence. You are responsible for making up any absences; please ask a classmate for any notes on missed lectures before you approach me with questions about lecture content.

- **Weekly Reflection Cards (15% of grade)**

Every day marked **RC# due** you are to bring to class a thoughtful written reflection and/or question related to the assigned reading for that week. The reflection should be written or typed on a 3x5 or 5x7 card and be based on an issue that you have found thought provoking, challenging, or interesting. Questions should not simply ask for factual information, but raise questions of interpretation, while your reflections should explore significant issues or express concerns about the topic that are important to you.

Grades for RC are: + (100); √+ (90); √ (80); √- (75); and - (70)

- **Two Quizzes on 1/24 and 3/28 (5% each, or 10% of final grade)**

- **Midterm on 2/21 and Final Exam on 4/25 (20% each, or 40% of final grade)**

The Quizzes and Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, identification and explanation of scriptural passages, and exams will also have a short essay. If you miss a quiz or exam and provide a legitimate excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they are harder than the original tests. An unexcused missed exam counts as a **0**. Review sheets will always be provided before any quiz or exam.

- **Two Short Essays of 2 pages (7.5% each, or 15% of final grade)**

These two essays will be based upon assigned topics and may not exceed two pages each. The first paper will focus on the practice of meditation in a Thai Buddhist monastery (based on *What the Buddha Never Taught*) and it is due on **2/7** in class; the second paper will be based upon the novella *Franny and Zooey* and it is due in class on **3/7**. *Late papers are not accepted* since the essay topic will be discussed in class.

- **Term Paper of 6 pages based on an assigned topic due without fail on 4/9 (20% of final grade)**

- **Academic Integrity and Course Resources**

There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a **failing grade for the entire course**. A student found responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a **XF** in the course, indicating failure due to academic dishonesty.

I encourage you to utilize the academic support services offered by the **Center for Student Learning** for assistance in study strategies and essay writing consultation. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs through their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information on the Center for Student Learning: <http://csl.cofc.edu>

* **SNAP students:** If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please provide me with a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information on the SNAP program, see: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu>

Grading Scale:	A	96-93	(4.0)	B-	82-80	(2.7)	D+	69-67	(1.3)	
	A-	92-90	(3.7)	C+	79-77	(2.3)	D	66-63	(1.0)	
	B+	89-87	(3.3)	C	76-73	(2.0)	D-	62-60	(.70)	
A+	100-97	(4.0)	B	86-83	(3.0)	C-	72-70	(1.7)	F	below 60

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Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

The following abbreviations will be used in listing the schedule or required readings for each class:

ER#1 refers to the 1st Electronic Reading assignment on OAKS; **RC#1** due = 1st Reflection Card; **BVSI** refers to *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*; **SoB** refers to *The Story of Buddhism*; **EB: 7-23** refers to pages from *The Experience of Buddhism* anthology; **WBNT** refers to *What the Buddha Never Taught*.

Introducing the Academic Study of Buddhisms

A Zen Parable on Learning about Buddhism

Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a college student who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, then kept on pouring. The student watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. "It's full! No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in replied, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

1/8 What is "Buddhism?" How do we study it at a secular school? How can we empty our "cups?" (Review syllabus, exercise in oral transmission about the "essence" of Buddhism)

1/10 On Blind Men and Elephants: How is Buddhism like (and not like) an Elephant? (ER#1: "The Blind Men & Elephant;" BVSI: Chapter 1; and SoB: Introduction) **RC#1 due**

Life of the Buddha as Sacred Story and Drama

1/15 Comparing Versions of Buddha's Biography: From Fruitful Dreams to the Awakened One (BVSI: Chapter 2; and ER#2-3: "Buddherotica" & "Life of Gotama Buddha;" EB: 7-23)

1/17 The Ministry of the Buddha and His First Disciples (ER#4-4a: "The Early Life of the Buddha;" "Prince of the Ascetics;" and EB: 56-60) **RC#2 due**
In class viewing of film excerpts from *Little Buddha* (w/ Keanu Reeves as Buddha Himself!)

1/22 The Buddha's Final Days and "Passing Away:" Making His Absence Present (ER#5: "Final Days;" and EB: 1-7, 45-48)

Teachings of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of the Dharma

1/24 The Buddhist Cosmos: The Wheel of Life, Death, and Rebirth (BVSI: Chapter 3; and EB: 36-41, 110-113) **RC#3 due** handout: The Tibetan Wheel of Life
Quiz #1 on the life and death of the Buddha

1/29 The Buddha's First Sermon on the Middle Way (BVSI: Chapter 4; EB: 42-45, 98-99; and WBNT: Chapter 1)

1/31 Missing Persons Report: The Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self and Nirvana (WBNT: Chapter 2; and EB: 99-104) **RC#4 due**

Meditation: Putting the Dharma into Practice

2/5 Two Types of Meditation: The Practice of Calm and Insight (BVSI: Chapter 7; ER#6: "Buddhist Meditation;" EB: 128-136) **RC#5 due**
film: *Footprints of the Buddha*

2/7 Embodying the Dharma, Taming the Monkey Mind, and Samadhi Suicide (WBNT: Chapters 3-4; and Chapter 9, pp. 166-179)
2-page essay due in class: What the Buddha Never Taught about practicing meditation

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The Buddhist Monastic Community: Bodily Discipline, Social Discipline

- 2/12 Buddhist Councils and Economics: Making Merit and Money for the Sangha
(WBNT: Chapters 7-8 & 10; and EB: 126-128) video: “The Buddha as Businessman”
- 2/14 The Monastic Code: Ritualized Rules and Regular Transgressions
(WBNT: Chapter 5; ER#7-8: “Vinaya Vignettes” & “Memorizing the Buddha;” EB: 78-81, 88-91) **RC#6 due**
- 2/19 Monks and Nuns: Buddhist Attitudes towards Gender and Sexuality
(SoB: pp. 151-165; EB: 63-70; ER#9-10: “Gotami’s Story” & “Bowling Not Scraping”) **RC#7 due**
- 2/21 **Midterm in Class**

Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy and Practice

- 2/26 Retracing the Footsteps of the Buddha, Looking Ahead to Mahayana Buddhism
(BVSI: chapter 5; EB: 173-175, 179-181; begin reading *Franny and Zooey*)
- 2/28 The Ethics of the Bodhisattva: Compassion and Skillful Means
(SoB: 64-72, “Hinayana and Mahayana;” EB: 145-151; and ER#11: “Adam Yauch”) **RC#8 due**
- 3/5 Mahayana Philosophy: Emptiness, Illusion, and Non-Dualism
(EB: 154-162; SoB: 72-83, “The Bodhisattva;” read more from *Franny and Zooey*) **RC#9 due**
- 3/7 Compassion and Skillful Means revisited
(Finish *Franny and Zooey*) **2-page essay on *Franny & Zooey* due in class**
Visiting Lecture by Prof. Grieve on “Cyber Lamas” (time and location TBA)

The Mahayana Multi-verse: Visions of Pure Land Paradises & Zen Monastic Life

- 3/12 The Mahayana Pantheon and Visions of Amitabha’s Paradise
(SoB: 83-92, “Other Buddhas, Other Worlds;” and EB: 188-190, 197-200)
- 3/14 Pure Land Buddhism: Faith in an “Other Power”
(SoB: 230-242, “The Pure Land;” and EB: 318-320); **RC#10 due**
- 3/19-21 **Spring Break: Find Your Zen**
- 3/26 Zen Monasticism: Site of Enlightenment or Buddhist Boot Camp?
(SoB: 242-248 on “Zen;” EB: 296-300; ER#12-12a: “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk” and “Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra”) **RC#11 due**

Tantra in India and Tibet

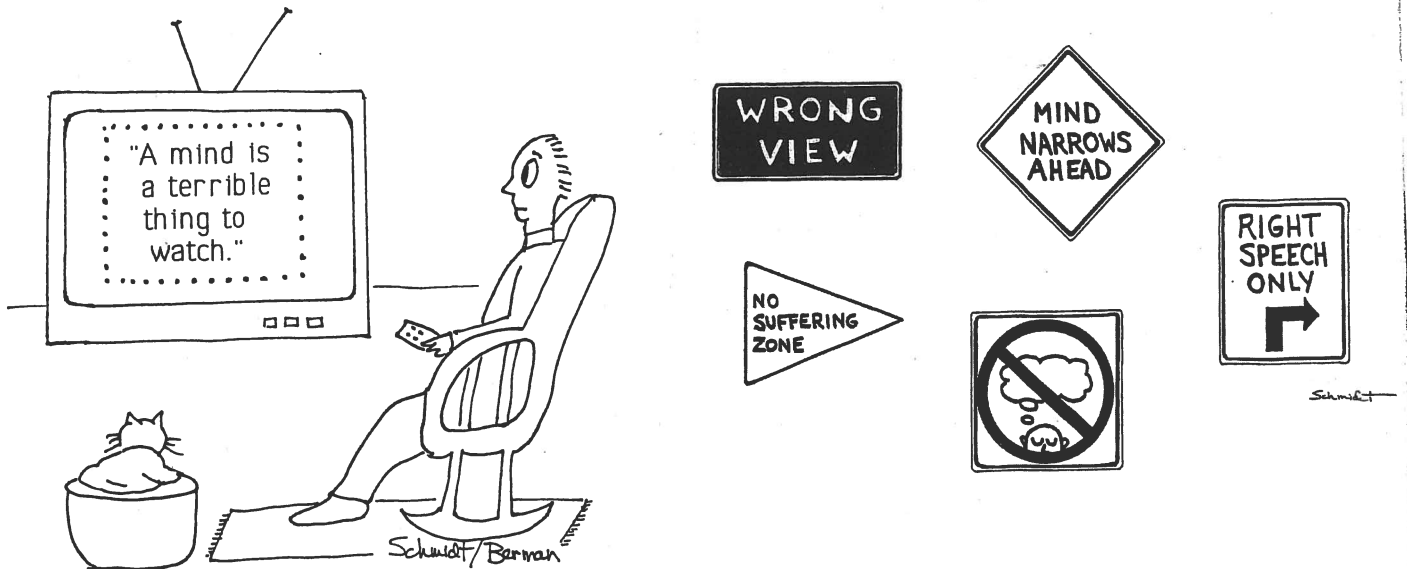
- 3/28 The Magic of Liberation: “Crazy” Saints and Tantric Iconoclasm
(SoB: 213-230 on “Tantra;” and EB: 206-210, 271-277) **Quiz #2 on Mahayana Buddhism**
- 4/2 Tantric Rituals: Mudra, Mantra, Mandala and Guru Devotion
(ER#13: Introduction to *The Guru Drinks Bourbon?* and EB: 210-20) film: *Wheel of Time*
- 4/4 The Tibetan Tulku Transplanted to America...via Greyhound
(ER#14-14a: “Divine Birth & Absent Mother;” “Greyhound Bodhisattva”) **RC#12** film: *The Tulku*

Re-Presenting Buddhism in America: Making the Familiar Seem Strange

- 4/9 Gaining Insight and Freedom from the Prison of Samsara in Alabama (ER#15: "Inside Donaldson") film: *The Dhamma Brothers*
Term paper due in class
- 4/11 Buddhist Modernism: Is Buddhism really compatible with science and psychology? (ER#16: "Buddhist Modernism;" and BVSI: Chapter 9) **RC#13**
- 4/16 Buddhism in America: Asian Immigrants and the Buddhist Syncretism of Smokey the Bear's Sutra (ER#17: "Visible and Invisible;" and EB: 341-45) **RC#14** **In-class course evaluations**
- 4/18 Dharma, Diversity & Race: Being Buddhist and a Minority in America (ER#18-20: "Waking Up to Racism;" "Why Buddhism for Black America Now?" and "Sweet and Sour Buddhism") **RC#15**

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE

- 4/25 240.001 (9:25) Exam on April 25 from 8:00-11:00 am in ECTR 219
- 4/25 240.002 (12:15) Exam on April 25 from 12:00-3:00 pm in ECTR 219



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List of Sources for Electronic Readings (pdf articles) on OAKS

Please use this information in your bibliography when you cite these sources for your term paper.
Sources listed in **bold font** are cited in multiple ER listings.

1. John Godfrey Saxe, "The Blind Men and the Elephant" in *Communications, the Transfer of Meaning* by Don Fabun (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 13.
2. Jeff Wilson, "Buddherotica," from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree and Other Works of Buddhist Fiction*, ed. by Kate Wheeler (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), pp. 59-61.
3. "Life of Gotama Buddha" selections from *The Buddhacarita* in *Anthology of World Scriptures*, ed. by Robert E. Van Voorst (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 3rd Edition, 2000), pp. 77-82.
4. Zeff Bjerken, "The Early Life of the Buddha" based on various biographies of the Buddha, pp. 1-8.
- 4a. Charles Johnson, "Prince of the Ascetics" from his *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice* (Boston: Shambhala, 2014), pp. 131-140.
5. John Strong, "Final Days, Parinirvana, and the Nirvana of Relics" in *The Buddha: A Short Biography* (Oxford: One World, 2001), pp. 125-141.
6. Shinzen (Steven) Young, "Buddhist Meditation," appendix of *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd edition, edited by Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson (Wadsworth, 1982), pp. 226-235.
7. Kate Wheeler, "Vinaya Vignettes: Or, Why the Buddha Had to Make Some Rules," from *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* Vol. 3.4 (Summer 1994), pp. 84-89.
8. Keith Heller, "Memorizing the Buddha" from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 149-166.
9. Jonathan S. Walters, "Gotami's Story," from *Buddhism in Practice* ed. by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 113-138.
10. Kate Wheeler, "Bowing Not Scraping" in *Tricycle* Vol. 3.2 (Winter 1993), pp. 26-32.

11. Adam Yauch, "Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys," in *Tricycle* Vol. III.4 (Summer 1994), p. 30.
12. Morinaga Soko, "My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk," from *Zen Tradition and Transition*, ed. by Kenneth Kraft (New York: Grove Press, 1988), pp. 13-29.
- 12a. Charles Johnson, "Kamadhatu, a Modern Sutra" in *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice* (Boston: Shambhala, 2014), pp. 151-160.
13. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, "Introduction" to *The Guru Drinks Bourbon?* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2016), pp. 1-23.
- 14a. June Campbell, "Divine Birth and the Absent Mother" from *Traveller in Space: In Search of Female Identity in Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1996), pp. 68-96.
- 14b. Francesca Hampton, "Greyhound Bodhisattva" from *Nixon Under the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 175-196.
15. Jenny Phillips, "Inside Donaldson" from *Letters from the Dhamma Brothers: Meditation Behind Bars*, (Onalaska WA: Pariyatti Press, 2008), pp. 3-31.
16. David L. McMahan, "Buddhist Modernism," from *Buddhism in the Modern World* ed. by David McMahan, (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 160-175.
17. Jan Nattier, "Visible and Invisible: The Politics of Representation in Buddhist America" from
18. bell hooks, "Waking Up to Racism," from *Tricycle* Vol 4.1 (Fall 1994), pp. 42-45.
19. Charles Johnson, "Why Buddhism for Black America Now?" in *Taming the Ox: Buddhist Stories and Reflections on Politics, Race, Culture, and Spiritual Practice* (Boston: Shambhala, 2014), pp. 63-78.
20. Victor Hori, "Sweet and Sour Buddhism," from *Tricycle* Vol 4.1 (Fall 1994), pp. 48-52.

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Terms and Concepts for the Study of Buddhism

Note: These are technical terms that you must know in order to do well on quizzes and exams. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments and write down their definitions and meanings. This list is subject to change: *sarvam anityam* or “everything is impermanent,” as Buddhists say.

Terms used in the academic study of Buddhism

7 dimensions of religion, empathy and bracketing, creed, demythologization, hagiography “Original Buddhism,” hermeneutics, exegesis, cosmology, purgatory, oral-aural transmission
Asceticism, cosmology, purgatory, orthodoxy, sect, exegesis, canon, creed, sectarianism
Reification, apophatic, sinicization, antinomian, iconoclasm, transgressive sacrality, iconography
Orientalism, spiritual materialism, neo-colonialism, therapeutic individualism, Buddhism & race

Life and Teachings of the Buddha

Upanishads, samsara, karma, Atman, moksha, yoga, caste, shramana, kshatriya
Shakyamuni, Siddhartha, Gotama, Bodhisattva, Jina, Tathagata, cakravartin
Ashvagoshya, *Buddhacarita*, *Mulasarvastivadina Vinaya*, Four Sights, Rahula, Yashodhara
Great Departure, Mara, bodhisattva-power, asceticism, 3 Watches of the Night,
Bodhi Gaya, Sangha, Ananda, Parinirvana, cult of relics
Relic veneration, stupa, Wheel of Life, 6 Rebirth Realms, Mt Meru, Three Defilements (kleshas)
Middle Way, Four Noble Truths, Three Marks of Existence, Eight-fold Path, Nirvana, Arhat

Buddhist Practice, Ethics, and Institutions in India

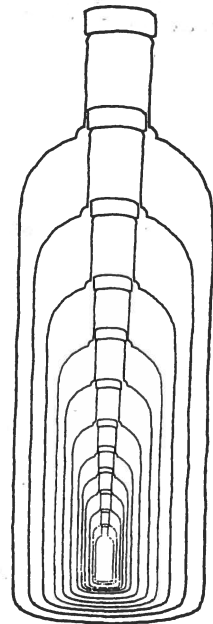
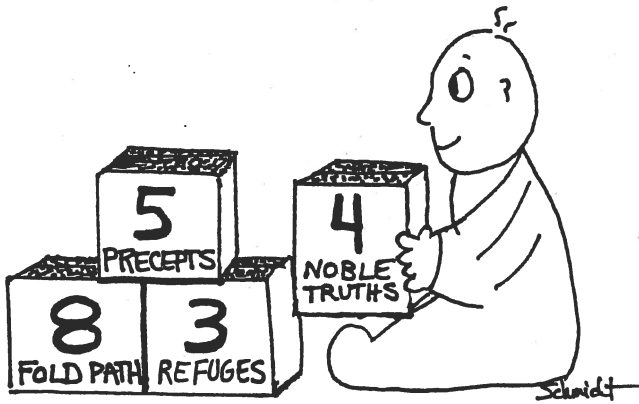
Mindfulness, vipashyana vs. shamatha, dhyana, supernatural powers, loving kindness meditation
Pali, Sanskrit, Five Aggregates (skandhas), Forest monks, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
Ananda, Sutra, Vinaya, Abhidharma, Tripitaka, schism
Ashoka, cakravartin, Nikaya, Three Councils, laity, merit-making rituals, merit transfer
Pratimoksha, ordination, Uposatha, Sangha expulsion, eremitic, cenobitic, laity
Mahaprajapati/Gotami, soteriological inclusiveness, ascetic misogyny, institutional androcentrism

The origins of Mahayana and the Perfection of Wisdom

Mahayana vs. Hinayana, Arhat vs. Bodhisattva, *Perfection of Wisdom*, *Heart Sutra*, mantra
Bodhisattva path/vow, *bodhicitta*, *upaya* and compassion/ethics, *Lotus Sutra*, Beastie Boys
Shunyata vs. *svabhava*, Nagarjuna, Madhyamika, Two Truths, non-dualism, unlocatable nirvana
3 Bodies of the Buddha, Amitabha/Amitayus, Pure Land/Buddha Field, Sukhavati, nembutsu
Self-power vs. Other-power, faith vs. works, Degenerate Era, mappo
Mahakashyapa, Bodhidharma, patriarch, the Zen “creed,” lineage, mind-to-mind transmission
Hui K’o and Hui neng, sudden and spontaneous enlightenment, niwazume, Roshi

Tantric Buddhism in India/Tibet and Buddhism in America

Tantra, Vajrayana, Marpa & Milarepa, Siddha, Guru/lama, twilight language, Lakshminakaradevi
Tantra as performing art, mudra, mantra, mandala, guru devotion, iconography and iconoclasm
Three Bodies of a Buddha, Tulku, rebirth vs. reincarnation, deity yoga/grasping the divine pride
Dharma Brothers, Elite Buddhism, Evangelical Buddhism, Ethnic Buddhism, Soka Gakkai
Gary Snyder, *Smokey the Bear Sutra*, bell hooks, Charles Johnson, Victor Hori



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