

Content Objectives for Introductory Unit

By the end of this introduction you should be able to describe:

1. the structure of this team-based learning course.
2. (a) the terminology used to analyze culture in this course &
(b) what to focus on when studying religion, culture & the sacred.
3. (a) three different branches of Buddhist tradition &
(b) some forms of Buddhism thriving in America today.

Overview of Readings

1. Primary Source (download from SacCT under “Assignment Resources”):

selections from Diana Eck, "American Buddhists"

2. "Essential Elements of Culture" (@ course content site)

3. In EGBT (*Explorer's Guide to Buddhist Traditions*):

introductory & closing scenes: p.1-3, 52-54

three key terms: p.11-12

map & timeline: p.60 & 67

(in these pages, locate **terms marked with an *** on the pages below)

STUDY GUIDE KEY:

RED = study questions for each section of the assigned source

GREEN = terms to study for the TRA

IMPORTANT:

*** = look in the relevant EGBT pages
for essential additional information about the term**

Course Structure & Team-Based Learning (TBL)

(a) in what ways do the policies for this course differ from what you are used to?

classroom etiquette
attendance

(b) what are the main assignments involved in TBL?

study guide
team readiness assessment (TRA)
application exercises for teams

terminology for the academic study of religion

“Essential Elements of Religious Life (@ course content site)

(a) Why study Buddhism without becoming a Buddhist, & how does the academic study of religion suggest we do so? (intro & section I)

objectivity empathy neutrality

(b) What precise language can be used to describe the unseen things about which religious people dynamically reflect and come to trust? (sections II & III)

belief vs. reflection
invisible beings cosmic forces unseen worlds

(c) What analogies help picture the relationship between reflection, practice and the communities involved? What specific questions help study each of these? (remainder)

practice actions objects words spaces
community specialists

“American Buddhists:* The Ganges and the Mississippi”
(under “Assignment Resources” in [SacCT](#))

Shakyamuni Buddha* Three Refuges (=Triple Gem*) Dharma*

(a) what are different aspects of the Hsi Lai Temple community
does Diana Eck highlight in her description? (p.142-48)

Buddha Hall Kuan Yin Amitabha (=Amida)
four-year old girl Baby Buddha Venerable Man-Ya Al Gore

(b) what places, teachers and practices does Eck spotlight in
her overview of the Vipassana movement? (p.194-97)

Barre, Massachusetts Spirit Rock Center Joseph Goldstein *shamatha*

(c) what are the main similarities and differences between the three
Vajrayana teachers profiled in Eck’s description? (p.197-200)

Dalai Lama Trungpa Rinpoche Tsoknyi Rinpoche Wisdom House mind essence

passages to locate and study in the primary source:

"...we all sat in silence for a while. Then he began speaking slowly and clearly above the low sawing of the crickets outside. 'Imagine a white, eight-petaled lotus. On it sits the Buddha, golden, his right hand touching the earth in front of him, his left hand in his lap. A brilliant light issues from his forehead, and it touches your forehead, eliminating all defilements of speech, that we may speak only words of compassion. Light from his heart touches your heart, eliminating all defilements of mind. The Buddha dissolves in pure light. That light suffuses your whole body...'"

"I heard a woman's voice on the loudspeaker...'Two thousand five hundred years ago the Buddha was born in the Lumbini Garden in present-day Nepal. The Buddha is like a lamp in this world of suffering, shining the way for us. Today we have a special ceremony in which we symbolically bathe the image...we also purify defilements such as greed and anger that are within ourselves.' As she spoke, people began to rise and line up for this simple ceremony. I fell in line with the mother and her ponytailed daughter....It was...her first time at the temple."

"...the daily routine consists of sessions of sitting meditation, walking meditation, work-practice in the kitchen or dining room, silent meals, and a daily evening Dharma talk. The only speech during the entire three-month period is during the periodic instruction interviews each participant has with one of the resident teachers. Even reading and keeping a journal are discouraged, as these tend to provide a diversion from the primary focus on moment-to-moment awareness. These three months are a time-out, constructed in such a way as to intervene in the rush of activity, thinking, planning, grasping, self-aggrandizement, and self-recrimination that dominates most of our lives."