

Buddhist Thought

PHL 244A

MWF 10

The Buddha maintained that we can learn to live at ease in the world, free from stress, despair, depression, anxiety, and suffering in general. He taught that our own ignorance or delusion is the source of most of the unsatisfactoriness we experience in life and we can learn to re-condition ourselves in healthier and more skillful habits. Investigating the operations of our hearts and minds, recognizing the patterns and observing the effects will show us more skillful and happier ways to live.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen Master says, "Buddhist practice is a very clever way to be happy in this life."

These are very radical claims. They challenge the predominant beliefs of western culture, particularly the belief that controlling or changing one's environment is the most effective way to create a better life.

Buddhist thought also challenges other ideas we hold dear including the idea that we have permanent selves or essences that remain the same throughout our lives. This particular belief is argued to be the most significant source of suffering in our lives. How then should we view ourselves? What do we lose and what do we gain in adopting this perspective?

In this course, we will be examining all these issues as well as queries about the nature of reality, the self, happiness, suffering, and human life in general. In order to better understand the ideas under examination, we will also experiment with some basic Buddhist practices – mindfulness, sitting meditation, walking meditation, investigation of our mental states, etc.

Buddhist Thought explores the nature of the mind and therefore is an excellent course for all individuals interested in psychology. It is also valuable for anyone who wants to learn ways of diminishing suffering and producing more happiness and ease in their own lives and in those of others.

Prerequisites for this course are PHL 101 or 110 or the permission of instructor.

Questions? Contact Dr. Paul at linda.paul@wilkes.edu.