

RLST203D SPRING 2020 COVID RESPONSES

Final discussion prompt:

Please take a few minutes to reflect on the course. Write a post that discusses what you learned this session. If a friend were to ask what *they* should know about Buddhism, how would you respond?

Finally, what advice might Buddhism help you deal with our current situation? Use at least three Buddhist terms in your answer.

Respond to some of your classmates.

Lucas Brunel:

Before this class, I had a fairly elementary knowledge of Buddhism, but wanted to learn more which is exactly what this course afforded me. I can confidently say that I learned more about Buddhism than I ever thought I would, and I like it! Buddhism is cool, man. I think that do much of your life and how you fit into society depends on how you act, your mental health, and the way you compose yourselves around others and through Buddhism, you can take care of all of your personal problems first and by simply practicing Buddhism. Then when you go out, you have a set of values and virtues that spreads respect for everybody and everything. You don't have to complain about anything because nothing bothers you. Conflicts can be solved peacefully, at least on your end. Anyways, I think a lot of Buddhism's values can act as a baseline for everybody in this world to improve themselves.

Buddhism can help us with our current situation through the three poisons. In this time, if we act through raga, dvesa, or moha, then we might put ourselves, our families, our friends at risk of infection. If I go to Target for some clothes shopping because I think I need to, I'm greedily putting my family and myself at risk. If we can put behind us our wants and our hope for better times and just enjoy what we have and where we are, then we can more easily avoid those risky times.

Awesome course! So glad I took it!

Jessy Clinch

Throughout this class I've learned a deeper understanding of what buddhism stands for and how I can incorporate that into my life. I think the biggest take away from this class has to do with karuna, because even though I most likely won't start meditating or practicing the religion, I can always be compassionate and kind towards my friends and enemies. With all the craziness and uncertainty that's going on right now, Buddhism has taught me that the best thing I can do right now is have empathy and sympathy for others during this difficult time. We are all going through this together, so tolerant and kind towards each other then it'll make things easier on all of us.

Joshua Delaney

I was very excited going into this course as I had only really been exposed to Buddhism through a quick lecture in my World History class and I was ready to learn more about a worldview that is different from the one I am accustomed to. This class taught me a lot of different ideas, and at times seemed almost like I was enrolled in a philosophy class. Overall, if a friend asked what they should know about Buddhism, I would tell them that it is like any other religion, there are lots of variations on it (with many sutras and different schools of teaching), and that there are good and bad members of it. During this unprecedented time, it is interesting to see how the Buddhist ideas we have learned fit into it. The easiest one we could practice is karuna, or compassion for others. If we treat others with this compassion, it's easy to see how our lives during this time would become easier. I could also see how the idea of interbeing, the idea that all things are dependent on other things in order to happen, could help us get through our current situation.

River Hancey

While beginning this course, I knew little to nothing about the practice of Buddhism. While exploring all of the beliefs behind it, I have become very interested and invested in everything that goes into this belief system. If a friend were to ask about Buddhism I would be honest with them. I would explain that while playing out to be a very peaceful religion, it has its faults. But I would also explain that the morals and ethics behind it make more sense to me than any other religion I've studied.

While dealing with our current situation, I definitely think of Tich Naht Hahn's words on remembering your sense of self. In a time of panic like right now, it is important to understand everything that you can control, and everything else that is out of your hands. When we remember this, we can start to settle our uneasiness about all that is causing us fear, anger, or anxiety.

Eric Johnson

At the beginning of this semester, I only had a vague stereotypical view of Buddhism. I knew they meditated sometimes, tried to transcend suffering, and were generally kind and compassionate(not in Myanmar, as I now know), but I didn't know hardly anything else.

Now, however, if a friend were to ask me what they should know about Buddhism, I would have plenty to say. I would tell them that Buddhism is about more than just transcending suffering, it is about escaping the cycle of reincarnation. In addition, although Buddhists try not to overindulge in worldly pleasures, it goes a lot deeper than that. Buddhists can enjoy the pleasures of life, but they are supposed to avoid becoming attached to those pleasures so that they won't suffer when those pleasures are taken away. Buddhists also try to live in accordance with certain virtues such as wisdom, loving-kindness, compassion, and many more. There is also a great deal of misunderstanding among Western cultures on what karma is. Karma isn't good or bad luck as many Westerners believe, but rather it is the simple concept that good actions will naturally lead to good results, and vice versa. Luck has absolutely something to do with it. It would take a book to explain everything I learned about Buddhism this semester, but these are some of the bigger takeaways.

Buddhist teachings can help us deal with the current situation in several ways. First, Thich Nhat Hanh's idea of the interconnectedness of everything can help us to realize that we're all in this together and that we need to work together to get through this, rather than be greedy and selfish(*cough* *people

who hoard toilet paper* *cough* *and sanitizing products* *cough*). We can also learn from Buddhism's idea of anatman, or no-self, to help us realize that we shouldn't let the pandemic and social-distancing guidelines make us overly sad or disappointed. Finally, it's important that we avoid succumbing to the three poisons, raga, dvesa, and moha.

Anonymous

This semester was a hard time to take Buddhist Traditions. With a class like this, most of the learning comes from class discussion. That being said, not being in a classroom and able to interact with peers on these topics posed a real challenge. However, I think there many lessons from Buddhism that are valuable to my progression through life and that everyone should know. One of the main things is that every action has a reaction based on the cause and effect principle. I loved these discussions in class because I think it is so important for everyone to realize that if there is the right intention behind an action, the consequence should be taken easily, and readily. This is great concept within certain forms of Buddhism. Another important piece of Buddhism is the three poisons, raga, dvesa, and moha. It is taught that these affect everyone at some point, however it is how they are handled and relieved that matters most to one's journey. When battling these, it becomes apparent that that individual is still attached to the idea of atman and denying dukkha. Advice I would take away from this class and the ideas of Buddhism to deal with our current situation would be that karuna should be the number one priority. Without compassion towards others, we would not make it out of times like these, and without compassion for ones self we would not be able to handle them at all. The ending outcome of true compassion could be no less than kusala.

Emma Reimann

This course was eye opening. I love expanding my mind. I have never traveled out of the country, been to the beach, not even over five states... so, naturally I love to "travel" by learning. This course opened my mind to new concepts and practices all over the world. Not to mention, I was able to apply various bits and pieces of what I learned to my own life. Since this course I have truly been practicing the idea of "inter-being". I am not an individual, but a moving part equal to that of all the energy around me. I am thankful for this, as working to become humble truly does make me feel so much more content and grateful. By taking a chance and stepping into this course, I have more willpower to engage in diverse pools of knowledge, concepts and learning.

If a friend were to ask me what they should know about Buddhism, my first response would be: Compassion or Karuna. Compassion is probably one of the most valuable and healing acts to exist. Compassion should be extended to ALL living creatures, even your enemies. If the world acted in such a way, so much growth would occur and people would flourish. Like many religions, Buddhism has been misrepresented, there are many misconceptions, so I would urge my friend to truly do the research before making any judgements. I have personally learned so much and I am thankful.

Advice from Buddhism that helps me deal with our current situation comes down to three concepts. The first being the three poisons. If we are fearful in this situation, we are only causing ourselves suffering. Translating to Moha, it could be considered rather delusional to be living a life of fear. To avoid

suffering, we must not fear, but still use caution. The next, meditation (anussati). I think it is beyond important to take the time to meditate on what is happening and what we have to be thankful for. Being reflective and at peace with our minds makes it much easier to take a calm and practical mindset to any situation. Happiness comes from inner peace and mental training, we must all stay positive in times such as this! The last piece of advice I really value right now is, nothing in life is permanent (annica). All is temporary, we must come to terms with this to be at peace with life and death. But aside from this large concept of life and death, obstacles and even success is impermanent. I am at ease knowing that this pandemic will not last forever, and I have hope in the brighter days yet to come.

Thank you so much for teaching this class, I cannot express my gratitude enough and I would easily say that this class changed my life and my mindset. This class did not turn me into a Buddhist or aim to do so, but the course DID make me a much more thoughtful and mindful person!

Anonymous

I came into Buddhist Traditions with a small amount of knowledge on their traditions and studies, as a family member of mine is in the process of studying the religion. I had to still come in with an open mind, because I knew there was a lot more to Buddhism than their practices. I was amazed at the traditions, and the overall differences between how modern westerners practice Buddhism compared to the devote followers who were born into it and chose to follow it. Everything we learned about their spiritual leaders, and how they conduct business was very impressive to me as well. The tales that we read were also very interesting, as they were mostly written in a way that could be comprehended by anyone who got the chance to hear or read them. Last, what really intrigued me was the vast differences in which people choose to study Buddhism, and the differences between the schools. Some people choose to be Ehi Bhiksu, and others may just meditate, but it does not matter what they choose, as they will still be accepted into the Buddhist practice.

If I had to tell someone what I think they should know about Buddhism, I would say that it is a religion not based on following a spiritual leader and instead a religion that is meant to bring peace to the individual. There are basic teachings that they follow called the Dharma, which is the The Four Noble Truths(Dukkha, Trsna, Nirvana, and Marga) and the 8 fold path(Prajna, Sila, and Saamadhi). I would tell them that these are teaching that are worth learning, as they are good for the mind and body of anyone who may choose to follow them. They would also need to know that the Buddhist believe in 3 poisons, Raga, Dvesa, and Moha. Once they know all of these concepts, it would be seem to me like they would either proceed into the history of Buddhism, or if they would be disinterested in the religion and culture altogether.

I do not use the teachings from Buddhism much in my daily life, but when things in life do get really stressful and disorderly, I have found it to be helpful to sit down and meditate, even if its just for 5 minutes. It is a wonderful action, that allows you to think about nothing but your own body. I believe in western culture we do not do this enough, and that it can be a serious issue for the mind and body. Sitting down and breathing deeply and letting everything fade away as you focus on your breath can be very refreshing and act like a sort of reset, and give you a chance to take a step back and approach your life from a different angle.

