World Religions 1st Semester 2022

**Socratic Seminar #2 on Buddhism**

**Overview:**

Today’s Seminar is worth a 50-point Test/Seminar Grade

Don’t forget your essay is worth a 150-point Test/Seminar Grade

**DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

1. How would Buddhism answer Big Question #1: What is the meaning of life? Why are you here?
2. How would Buddhism answer this?
3. What are your thoughts about Buddhism’s answer?
4. Let’s read some words by famous Vietnamese Buddhist monk- Thich Nhat Hanh- and how it relates to the meaning of life. Open my website to “Week 7 You are Here Part 1”
5. Only read pages 1-2: Then discuss the main ideas and how it relates to what is the meaning of life from a Buddhist perspective.
6. Only read pages 8-9: Then discuss the main ideas on these pages and how it relates to the meaning of life from a Buddhist perspective.
7. Finally read pages 10-13: Then discuss the main ideas on these pages and how it relates to the meaning of life from a Buddhist perspective.
8. How would Buddhism answer Big Question #2: What is 'God'? How can you 'know God?' What is the importance of God?
9. Is Buddhism theist, atheist, or transtheist?
10. What do you think about Buddhism’s ‘transtheistic approach’?
11. How would Buddhism answer Big Question #3: How should you approach and understand 'death'?
12. Let’s read some more Thich Nhat Hanh on this question: Open my website now to “Week 7 You are Here **Part 2”…**
13. Only read pages 83-85 (starting at “Beyond Birth & Death); Then discuss the main ideas on these pages and how it relates to ‘death’ from a Buddhist perspective? And what are your thoughts about this?
14. Let’s think about the different types of Buddhism- Theravada Buddhism vs. Mahayana Buddhism vs. Vajrayana/Tibetan Buddhism vs. Zen Buddhism
15. Which of these types of Buddhism do you personally like the best and why?
16. Which of these types of Buddhism do you personally NOT like as much and why?
17. Some people criticize Mahayana Buddhism for turning the teachings of Shakyamuni into a “formal religion”, which is the opposite of what Shakyamuni wanted. Do you agree or disagree with this criticism and why?
18. Taiwan is considered the best place on earth to witness and experience Mahayana Buddhism. What are your thoughts about this? What do you think about what you have learned about Buddhism in Taiwan? What are your own personal experiences and questions about Buddhism in Taiwan?
19. Discuss Mr. Ciambarella’s PhD Dissertation topic (that he never finished because he was a lazy student!):
20. What do you think about Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen’s version of Buddhism?
21. Some people (especially Dharma Drum Mountain founder Sheng Yen) have criticized Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen for changing Buddhism too much and putting too much emphasis on volunteer work and recycling. What are your thoughts about this?
22. Let’s talk about Tibetan Buddhism, The Dalai Lama, and Tibet since China’s invasion in 1950:
23. What do you think about what you have learned about Tibetan Buddhism and Tibet overall?
24. Tibetan Buddhists look at the Dalai Lama as the actual manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. It would be the same thing for a Christian if Jesus was reborn as a human and you could meet him. What are your thoughts about this strong belief of Tibetans?
25. What do you think about what you learned about China’s invasion of Tibet and the situation of Tibet today?
26. Why is this an important topic for Taiwan to be aware of? Explain….
27. Some people criticize the Dalai Lama for his 100% nonviolent and compassionate approach to China. Critics say that China’s Communist Party will NEVER give Tibet their freedoms back and therefore the Dalai Lama’s approach of showing love for Chinese soldiers and government is a bad approach and will never work.
28. What are your thoughts about this?
29. Let’s read and discuss some more about this: Open my website to **“Week 8 Dalai Lama Articles”** Read the assigned pages and discuss
30. What are your thoughts about this very important Buddhist belief: Your enemy is actually your best teacher; obstacles in your life are actually your greatest blessings. Explain?
31. One reason we do the sand mandala projects is to keep Tibetan Buddhist culture alive. It is also a great example of a specific ritual you can use in your essay. Discuss your thoughts, reactions, and experiences of doing the sand mandala in class.
32. What do you think about the Buddhist meditation we have done in class this year so far?
33. Sitting breath meditation?
34. Sitting mediation while reciting “Calming Mind; Smiling Body; Present Moment; Wonderful Moment”
35. Walking meditation
36. Buddhist chanting
37. How is Buddhism similar and different to other religions?
38. What are 2 THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS you would like your group to discuss related to Buddhism
39. CLOSE READINGS- Mr. Ciambarella will assign close readings to discuss together.
40. What are your final thoughts about studying Buddhism? What are your 1 or 2 big TAKEAWAYS from studying Buddhism this last month?