

## Appendix 19: Sample of Graded Papers

# Reflection Paper

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Dr. Trung Huynh  
RELS 2360  
10/31/2021

### Buddhism, Modern Psychology, and Mindfulness Practice

Mental health and other psychological issues have been rampant in recent years around the world. Many people find it extremely difficult in dealing with common mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, to name a few. Buddhist practices have shown to reduce symptoms of mental health issues and sometimes get rid of them altogether. The lifestyle that Buddhists live and the beliefs they hold are proven to give one peace of mind over time. Buddha has taught that the concept of mindfulness and meditation can vastly improve one's life psychologically.

Psychology is the study of the mind, such as how people think and behave (McLeod, 2019). In the modern day, it is quite common to see both young people and adults struggling with mental disorders, whether they are mild or severe. Seeking professional help has become more acceptable among society, as it was first seen as taboo. However, it is evident that people may feel lost and hopeless when they feel as if they cannot control their symptoms of a mental illness. Modern research has proven that practicing mindfulness meditation is a way in which people can become at ease with themselves without the use of medication (Scotti, 2020).

The concept of mindfulness arises from the awareness of one's own self, being attentive and concentrating on what the mind is focusing on (Xiao et al., 2017). Meditation is related to mindfulness in that one focuses on their mind and breathing, taking note of each **inhalation** and **exhalation** (Trainor, 2001). Sometimes the mind may wander, but it is important to acknowledge that the thought occurred and focus on the breath again. The goal of meditation is to reach a state of **trance**. **While doing meditation, you don't suppress, but transforming mental afflictions.** When one sits down to meditate, there are five thoughts one must suppress to have a proper meditation session. One must restrict sensual desire, resentful thoughts, laziness, **and** frustration when struggling to focus, and feelings of doubt (Trainor, 2001). The process of

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meditation should involve an open mind, so that one can properly focus on their breathing and the mind.

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems that people of all ages deal with. Normally, it is recommended for one to seek therapy and possibly take medication to help lessen the symptoms of anxiety. However, it has been proven, through science, that a great form of treatment for anxiety is meditation. Meditation can be such a strong tool in helping one reduce feelings of nervousness (Trainor, 2001). Meditating occasionally can relieve one of pressure and excess anxious thoughts. Furthermore, meditating daily for five to ten minutes can greatly reduce one's anxiety over time.

Another one of the most common mental health issues is depression. The topic of suffering, sadness, and depression is a big concept in Buddhism. The main idea of Buddhism and what Buddha taught was how one can get rid of their suffering. This concept is explained through The Four Noble Truths (Xiao et al., 2017). The First Noble Truth states that one should recognize and know that all life is suffering. The Second Noble Truth states that craving and desire causes suffering. The Third Noble Truth says that for one to remove craving and desire, one must remove suffering. Finally, The Fourth Noble Truth states that for one to end their suffering, they must follow The Noble Eightfold Path (Trainor, 2001). The Noble Eightfold Path leads one to 'nirvana' or enlightenment. This path involves three main aspects, including meditation, morality, and wisdom (Trainor, 2001). Once one understands what Buddha taught about life and suffering, one can begin their journey to end their feelings of depression and sadness. Like how one can reduce anxiety through meditation, one can also reduce feelings of gloom through meditation as well. Loving-kindness meditation is a form of meditation where one thinks of positive thoughts. Since negative thoughts are quite common among those who

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have depression, loving-kindness meditation can help reduce the negative thoughts. Being mindful about what the mind is thinking about and trying to focus one's thoughts on affirmations can help one to reduce suffering and depression (Scotti, 2020).

Another aspect in which the concept of mindfulness and meditation can help is in aiding one towards better attention and focus (Scotti, 2020). Unlike symptoms of anxiety and depression, symptoms of attention deficit cannot be helped in one day through meditation. Although, meditation can relieve one of excess stress and sadness by simply meditating once, bettering one's attention and focus will improve after meditating consistently. It has been proven that daily meditation for weeks to months will vastly improve one's concentration (Scotti, 2020). Since mindfulness involves one to focus on their mind and breathing, it makes sense that one's attention can improve over time through this practice.

Overall, mindfulness and meditation can greatly improve one's quality of life in a psychological aspect. When people suffer through mental illnesses, the most common response is to seek a psychiatrist for medication. However, through the practice of mindfulness and meditation, one can lessen their symptoms of mental health issues. Buddha's lessons and teachings have shown Buddhists how they can achieve enlightenment through mindfulness, and live a life free of suffering.

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# Reflection Paper

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# Reflection Paper

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GRADEMARK REPORT

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FINAL GRADE

**/40**

GENERAL COMMENTS

**Instructor**

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**USER'S WORK**

- User's Comments Reflection%20Paper
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**FEEDBACK TO USER**

Grade  out of 40

Comments 

You have three grammatical errors. Also, you should provide your own reflection about this topic.

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Posted Date:

October 20, 2021 1:47 PM

Status:

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Overall Rating:

Hi,

I, too, think that some of these statements should be taken with a grain of salt. Problematic news sources run rampant across the internet with headlines designed to merely catch people's attention leaving verifiable information as a last resort. There is much truth to be found in traditions and some scripture, and denouncing this as untrustworthy seems drastic. Of course, not all religious scripture must be taken literally, but the ideas present might hold valuable information not to be written off. All in all, I'm not certain how literally these statements are to be taken, though the main idea that one should question everything and be mindful of how they absorb information seems plausible to me.

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Discussion Week 9

Post:

[Discussion Week 9](#)

Author:

Posted Date:

October 20, 2021 1:42 PM

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Overall Rating:

I found some of these statements to already align with my internal thought process while others strike me as somewhat radical. For example, not trusting the knowledge **preposed** by rumors and news sources seems prudent. But one of the statements declares that one should not even trust experts. Of course, experts are bound to **err** just like anyone else in reasoning, but when it comes to matters such as the esteemed opinions of one's doctor or even professor, it is frightening to meander over the possibility that the knowledge they are feeding you is untrustworthy. I don't mean to say that one should not always question the world including even those higher up on the intellectual hierarchy. Doctors can be wrong and that's why people often seek out second opinions to confirm diagnoses. But I, rather, think that this rule should be taken with a grain of salt, else one might become overwhelmed by the apparent reality that little in this life can be

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trusted to many degrees of certainty. For monks, this is a reasonable burden to bear and meditate through but for the average person, I don't find it feasible to think this way.

The biggest difference between western religion and in the Kalama I found was the statement that advised one not to trust even scripture. Christianity and other western religions treat their scripture as the ultimate source of truth, and it is certainly interesting to observe this dichotomy.

I do think the themes in the Kalama could enhance the degree to which people are open to other religions and ways of belief. Liberated from the idea that there is only one implacable truth in this world, I think people of all religions could be more harmonious and come to see that there is some truth in each but no absolute certainty either. The number of incidents at the hands of religious violence would likely plummet, and people could better see that perhaps the most trustworthy truth was that within themselves.

# Field Trip Report

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**Submission date:** 30-Oct-2021 09:02PM (UTC-0500)

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RELS 2360

Dr Thich Hang

Dat 10/31/21

***Abstract***

### **Field Trip Report**

The professor of the Buddhism class invited everyone in the class to visit a special Buddhist celebration at his temple in Sugar Land. While the field trip was not mandatory, the professor offered extra credit as an incentive for the class to attend. Even without the incentive, I still would have gone to see the temple. The name of the temple is Enlightened Buddha Temple. The temple is located almost forty minutes from downtown Houston, Texas. The temple had held a special celebration in appreciation of parents. This paper will highlight three themes I had learned with my time at the Enlightened Buddha Temple.

***Introduction***

One may think Buddhism is very different from other religions, but Buddhists pray just like other religious people do. This means Buddhism needs a place of worship just like other religions do. For example, Christianity has the church, while Buddhism has the temple. While Buddhists use the term "temple," both places foster a community and allow the town to gather and practice its religion (Lion's Roar Staff). One aspect in which Buddhism is different however is that Buddhism is non-theistic (Cohen). This means that Buddhists do not directly pray to a God. This separates Buddhism as one of the few religions that does not worship a God. Even though the Buddha is seen as a cosmic being, this does not mean the Buddha is the God of all things. While Buddhists do pray, these prayers are instead regarded as chants or mantras.

Buddhist chants are meant to help the person find enlightenment. This is done through repeating scripture rhythmically. These chants or mantras are meant to help free us of our delusions (Learn Religions).

### ***Materials and Methods***

I was surprised to see that the Buddhist temple seemed to be held within a modest house. I will admit I expected something more akin to the stereotypical representation you would see on television or in the media. I expected a grand temple complete with Asian architecture. But the Enlightened Buddha Temple just proved a Buddhist temple does not have to be some grand building, it could be located anywhere. A place of worship is not dependent on what it looks like on the outside, but instead what happens on the inside. Regardless of what I was expecting, the temple was still quaint and cozy.



In this picture, you can see the main room of the temple. At the front of the room was a beautiful shrine adorned with fruits of multiple varieties. There were also a couple speakers with a microphone attached so people could do karaoke. The room had a combination of chairs and traditional mats so people could either choose to sit completely on the floor or they could choose to sit in a chair. In the corner I was sitting in, there was a shrine dedicated to people that had passed away recently. And finally, in the back room, there was a small kitchen, as well as tables to sit down and eat at. Also, I really liked the pieces of art that decorated the walls of the temple. I assume they said something about the Buddha's teaching, but since I can not speak Vietnamese, I was not able to read them.

### ***Discussion***

As soon as the service started, someone passed out pamphlets that contained the material we would be reciting that day. While some parts of the pamphlet were in English, most of it was in Vietnamese. So when the temple performed the chants, I, sadly, could not chant with them. They did do a few chants in English but it does not sound the same as it does in Vietnamese. The chants in Vietnamese sounded so beautiful. If I did not know that they were chanting scripture, I would have almost thought it was a song. Apparently, this is done on purpose. It is purposefully chanted in a rhythmic way so as to sound like a song. The first theme I immediately noticed at the service was tradition. It seemed like everyone there knew the chants by heart and barely even looked at the paper. These chants must have been carried on throughout history and it really showed that day. Occasionally throughout the service, a few kids that were a part of the service would get up and perform a few karaoke songs for the people in attendance. This leads me to the second theme I noticed. I immediately noticed the sense of community the temple had. As the kids would sing, people would listen tentatively and clap afterwards. It was amazing to see the

love everyone has for each other and even though I was an outsider, it really did not feel like I was one. I was welcomed with open arms. The third and final theme I observed was compassion. The theme of the service was in celebration of parents and the sacrifices they have to make for children. In the middle of the celebration, they handed out flowers that were meant to represent how many parents you still had alive. Both of my parents are alive so they gave me a red flower. I attached this red flower to my chest. The service and flowers were meant to teach us to be compassionate and appreciative of what we have.

In this picture you can see the red flower on my shirt.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, even though I had never been to a Buddhist temple before, I still felt welcomed there. I was given food to take home after the service and a beaded bracelet. I could feel the compassion from others while there and I look forward to possibly attending again in the future. I would even like to invite some of my friends to attend as well. So they can experience the same compassion, tradition, and sense of community that I did.



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# Field Trip Report

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GRADEMARK REPORT

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FINAL GRADE

**/40**

GENERAL COMMENTS

**Instructor**

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