

Introduction to Buddhism

Study Guide

A MZMC Correspondence Course

“Bringing the Resources of MZMC to the People
of Minnesota, the Region, and Beyond”

Introduction to Buddhism: Course Outline

Part 1: The Great Awakening: The Buddha and His Legacy

- The Early Years of the Buddha
- The Buddha's Enlightenment
- The Buddha's Teaching Career

Part 2: The Three Vehicles of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana

- Early Development of Buddhism in India
- Theravada: The Southern Transmission
- The Dawn of Mahayana
- Mahayana's Growth in Eastern Asia
- Vajrayana in Tibet

Part 3: The Path to Enlightenment: Buddhist Beliefs

- Enlightenment: The Unconditioned State
- The Four Noble Truths
- Karma: The Law of Cause and Effect
- Rebirth

Part 4: Walking the Way: Buddhist Practices

- Meditation: The Means and the End
- Other Ways to be Mindful
- Compassion: Actualizing the Truth
- The Teacher-Student Relationship

Part 5: The Dharma Comes to the West

- A Buddhist Role in Shaping Christianity
- West Meets East: From Marco Polo to European Imperialists
- The Dharma Appears in English
- Madame Blavatsky and the White Buddhists
- Eastern Buddhists Come to the West
- Making it Official: The 1893 World's Parliament of Religions
- The Turning of the Dharma in America: 1893-1900
- Theravada: To Be or Not to Be Monastic
- Mahayana: Peaceful Legacy of War
- Vajrayana: The Dharma of the Diaspora

Part 6: Buddhism and the New Millennium

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Study Guide Outline

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Introduction to the Course

Introduction to Buddhism is an introductory-level review of Buddhist beliefs, practices, places, and people, not a course intended to convert anyone to Buddhism. There are many reasons for studying Buddhism: (1) to understand more clearly that all people of faith share a common goal, the betterment of humankind; (2) to have some understanding (and hopefully empathy for) other peoples' faiths; (3) to use Buddhism to see more clearly our own spiritual selves; (4) to explore Buddhism for its own sake; and (5) to deepen your own practice if you already have a fledgling Buddhist practice, for a well-rounded understanding of Buddhism requires that it be viewed within the broader landscape of the history of Buddhism.

The course attempts to satisfy these objectives in two ways. First, we examine the "essentials" of Buddhism in general by reading and answering questions about Jack Maguire's *Essential Buddhism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs and Practices* (Pocket Books, 2001). This Study Guide contains questions and vocabulary lists to focus your attention during your reading of Maguire's book. The six parts of this correspondence course correspond to the six chapters in Maguire's book.

And second, there is a wealth of information about Buddhism on the web today. However, we are particularly interested in having you look at visual information, such as what the place where the Buddha became enlightened in India looks like today, what the Dalai Lama or Thich Nhat Hanh look like, and what the contents of the web pages of the San Francisco Zen Center or some other Buddhist center are. You can find this kind of visual information easily by typing words and names you encounter in reading Mcguire's book into Google Image Search. This kind of information will make the world of Buddhism less abstract and more familiar.

Purchasing Course Materials. You will receive the course study guide by email soon after you enroll in the course. Maguire's *Essential Buddhism* can be ordered through most book stores or purchased on the Web. It costs approximately \$10-\$11, and less if a used copy is bought.

Working Your Way Through the Course. The study guide for each part contains a list of questions that you are to answer and return to the instructor. Each question contains page numbers in *Essential Buddhism*, so you do not need to hunt for the answers. Make your answers short and to the point; you don't need to write whole sentences or long essays. The goal is to familiarize you with the material. Write your answers out on your computer so that you can submit your assignments to your instructor via email. There are a very large number of terms listed and defined for each chapter. They are for your information. You are not expected to memorize these terms, but you should make an effort to become familiar with the basic terms, for you will encounter these terms in your reading when you read a Buddhist text.

Your Correspondence Course Instructor. The course guide was prepared by Guy Gibbon. Guy is a retired professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota and a

Zen priest in the Katagiri Roshi-Tim Burkett lineage. He and his wife Ann live at the MZMC in Minneapolis. Guy and others will make comments on your written assignments.

Submitting Your Assignments. The easiest way to submit an assignment is via email. Guy's email address is gibbo001@umn.edu.

Other Contact Information. The address of the MZMC is 3343 East Calhoun Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55408. Direct contact with the Center can be made by calling 612-822-5313 or emailing info@mznzcenter.org. The Web site for the Center is www.mznzcenter.org.

No Exams, But There are no exams in this course, for it is not for credit. Nonetheless, you are not going to attain a comprehensive understanding of the basics of Buddhism unless you take a course like this. Your motivation to complete the course should be based on this intention.

Form Your Own Study Group. A fun and productive way to take a correspondence course like this is to form a study group with others interested in a comprehensive introduction to Buddhism. The group can go over the questions and material for each of the six-parts of the course, and decide on what an appropriate answer is to a question.

Visit The MZMC. If possible plan to visit the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center. Since the Center is not always open, contact the office to set up a visit. You might also consider participating in one of our half-day or full-day retreats, take a class at the Center, or participate in many of the various activities and opportunities offered at the Center.

Study Tips. Many people who start a correspondence course do not finish it because life gets in the way. So here are a few tips on how to work your way through the course with the least amount of stress.

- Set realistic goals. Plan an initial routine and establish how long it will take you to complete each of the six parts, based on your experience with the first part.
- Make contact with the instructor. Don't be afraid to email your instructor if you have questions about the material or comments on the homework.
- Most of us travel or have other time-consuming activities in our life during which we do not have the time to work on an assignment. Just relax and pick the course up when that activity is over. Remember: there are no exams. You are taking this course to satisfy your own intention to learn more about Buddhism. That intention does not have to be satisfied within a month or two.

- Perhaps most important: have fun, approach the course with a spirit of inquiry. Buddhism is one of the world's great spiritual traditions. Its mindfulness practices are being widely adopted in our health care centers, schools, and businesses. It's a tradition that we should all be familiar with.