

RELI 206

BUDDHISM: THE NOBLE PATH



SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

SUMMER 2007 - 2008

RELI 206

BUDDHISM: THE NOBLE PATH

Course co-ordinator:	Michael Radich michael.radich@vuw.ac.nz
Tutor:	Michael Teitelbaum teknocore11@mac.com
Where and when:	Lectures: HU 220 Wednesdays 5:30 – 8:30 Tutorials: tba

Religious Studies is in the Hunter Building. The programme administrator, Alikí Kalliabetsos, is in room HU 318 (ext 5299). **Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the notice board outside her office.**

Office Hours: The main office is open Monday - Friday, 9.30 – 12:00 and 2:30 – 4:00pm. You can arrange to meet with Michael Radich by email or phone appointment: michael.radich@vuw.ac.nz; extension 9477 (from outside the university, 463-9477).

Course outline

- 1 The course and its objectives:** This course will introduce participants to some key aspects of the history, doctrines and practice of Buddhism, and to scholarly approaches to the study of this religious tradition. It is made up of eight 2 - 3 hour lecture times, seven 1 hour tutorial discussions, and a final session for of two hours for the in-class test.

The course is divided in two parts. Part I sketches the origins of Buddhism and its early diffusion throughout Asia. Among later developments, we will look in particular at the rise of the Mahāyāna, a "Buddhism of faith" (Pure Land Buddhism), and the ways Buddhism changed when it spread into new cultures, using the example of Tibet. Part II examines the encounter between Buddhism and modernity, and Buddhism and the West. In this part, we examine some case studies of 'Western constructions' of Buddhism both as an object of study and as a religion that has captured the interest of many people in the USA, New Zealand, Brazil, and all over the planet.

- 2 By the end of the course** students should be familiar with important features of Buddhist history, doctrine and practice, and they should have a sense of the range of cultures and phenomena encompassed by this old, rich and vast religion. They should also have developed skills in approaching the subject critically, and in evaluating scholarly sources.
- 3 The lecture programme** follows. Lectures may be varied from time to time. As much notice as possible will be given when changes occur and, if necessary a revised programme will be issued at lectures. The lecture programme does not cover the entire course content. Lectures are important, but they must be viewed as complementary to your own reading in the field and to tutorial discussions.
- 4 Tutorials are held weekly.** Tutorials deal with topics which complement the lecture programme and they provide an opportunity to discuss aspects of the course in a small group and develop the ability to contribute to discussions.

5 **The course is internally assessed** by means of 2 written essays, 7 short tutorial assignments and a class test as follows:

- a first written essay on a topic of your choice (see topic guidelines below in this document), of no more than 2,000 words, to be submitted by **Friday December 14** worth **30%** of the final grade. Please note carefully: No extensions granted, unless a medical certificate is presented.
- a second written essay on a topic of your choice (see topic guidelines below in this document), of no more than 2,000 words, to be submitted by **Friday January 18** worth **30%** of the final grade. Please note carefully: No extensions granted unless a medical certificate is presented.
- seven short tutorial assignments of no more than one page, each consisting of a thoughtful response to a given tutorial question. The seven tutorial assignments are together worth a total of **10%** of the final grade, and are to be handed in during the tutorial class in the week following the one in which the topic was discussed
- final in-class test, worth **30%** of the final grade, Wednesday Jan 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

6 **The assessment of this course relates to these objectives in the following ways:**

The tutorial assignments are designed to facilitate student reflection on the required readings, and to allow students to develop skills in critical reading and analysis necessary for essay writing and continued study.

The essays will encourage students to pursue their own interests in Indian religions through formulating their own research question(s) in an exploration of primary sources and secondary sources. By focussing on primary sources, students will be exposed first-hand to the issues raised in scholarly analysis and will develop the knowledge and the skills necessary to critically evaluate scholarly studies of materials they have studied for themselves.

The differing percentage value for the essays is designed to allow students the opportunity to improve their skills without negative repercussions for their final grade.

The class test allows students to demonstrate their grasp of the material covered in the course and their understanding of the themes addressed, and creates an opportunity to review and reflect on what they have learned in the course as a whole.

Mandatory course requirements: the submission of two essays, 7 tutorial assignments and sitting the class test. Attendance at 80% of tutorials.

7 **Required Text:** All of the readings are contained in the Course Reader to be purchased from the Student Notes Shop at a cost of approx \$40.00.

8 **Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences)**
For 200-level 22 points one trimester courses, the working party on workloads and assessments recommends 15 hours per week. An average student should spend 12 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and tutorials.

[200 – level 1 trimester 22 points 15 hours]

9 General University statutes and policies

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the VUW homepage at:

http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically at:

http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/downloads/course_outlines_general_information.pdf

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

10 Academic grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances

11 Student and staff conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct

12 Students with Impairments (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070

email: disability@vuw.ac.nz

The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

13 Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contacts are **Dr Allison Kirkman, Murphy Building, room 407** and **Dr Stuart Brock, Murphy Building, room 312**. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Māori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme

This programme offers:

- Academic mentoring for all Māori & Pacific students at all levels of undergraduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social Sciences. Contact Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses
- Postgraduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities
- Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact; Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz or phone 463 5842.

Manaaki Pihipihinga is located at: 14 Kelburn Parade, back court yard, Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year Commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Māori Studies mentoring is done at the marae.

Student Services

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: student-services@vuw.ac.nz) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/

VUWSA employs Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at education@vuwsa.org.nz) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

14 Taping of Lectures: All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use audio-tapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please

see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form which advises of copy right and other relevant issues.

- 15 **Use of Turnitin:** Student work provided for assessment in this course *may be* checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. *At the discretion of the School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin.* You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.
- 16 **Class representatives:** Class representatives are elected in the first week or two of the term. They are supported by the VUW Students' Association, and have a variety of roles, including assistance with grievances and student feedback to staff and VUWSA. Contact details for your class rep will be listed on the Religious Studies notice board.
- 17 **Aegrotat regulations** apply to internally assessed courses. Students who are ill, or who have difficult personal circumstances may be having problems completing assessment. The aegrotat provisions apply to all courses and apply to assessment which falls within the last three weeks of teaching or the final examination period, including preparation time for final tests and examinations. Aegrotat provisions are detailed in section 4.5 of the Assessment Statute (*2007 Calendar*, p. 96) and also on p. 23 of the *2006 Assessment Handbook*. Students can refer to the University's website for further information: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/timetables/aegrotat.aspx>. Application forms and information pamphlets should be obtained from the Faculty Student and Academic Services Office (MY 411) or the Manager, Student & Academic Services (MY 410).
- 18 **Student Learning Support Services:** A range of workshops, drop-ins and other assistance is provided by SLSS, covering such things as study techniques, essay writing, exam preparation and note taking skills. They are at 14 Kelburn Parade, tel: 463 5999
- 19 **Supplementary Materials:** A website of materials related to RELI 205 is being maintained in Blackboard. You can find it by visiting <http://blackboard@vuw.ac.nz>. Your user name is the one issued to you by Student Computing Services. Your password is your Student ID Number. If in doubt, please contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk, 463-6666 (extension 6666 from VUW phones) or by email scs-help@vuw.ac.nz
- 20 **Evaluation:** This course will be evaluated by UTDC.

Lecture Programme

The required readings are essential background for the lecture/seminars and must be done **before each lecture**. The readings will be further discussed in the tutorials. The readings are all found in the Course Reader.

NOTE: Because this is a summer (Trimester 3) course, it has been compressed into 2/3 of the time over which it would be presented in other Trimesters (1 and 2). The reading loads each week are proportionally heavier (approx. 150% of what students might expect on the basis of T1 and T2 experience). Students are urged to keep up with the reading nonetheless, to avoid short-changing themselves on the course.

This course falls into two even parts. In the first half of the course, we will examine some key dimensions of the Buddhist tradition as it existed in various parts of the pre-modern world. In the second half of the course, we will look at what has happened to Buddhism in the modern era.

PART ONE: THE BUDDHIST TRADITION IN THE PRE-MODERN WORLD

Buddhism first arose in India, probably some time during the fifth century BCE. Over the subsequent two millennia, it spread to most of South, South-East, Central and East Asia. It gave rise to dozens of major schools and religious movements, and its history is studded with hundreds if not thousands of luminaries remembered by the tradition for their various contributions to ideas or practice, their saintliness, their artistic genius, and so on. Buddhism in the pre-modern era thus presents us with a very rich and complex picture, and an inexhaustible source of religious forms for study.

In this half of the course, we consider four major aspects of the tradition as it developed in these two millennia.

Lecture 1 (November 21):

"The Buddha and his Basic Teachings"
Lecturer: Hugh Kemp

This week, we will look at the earliest traditions about the person of the Buddha himself, and his basic teachings. We will also consider in this connection the problems involved in determining what "the original" Buddhist teaching and practice may have been.

Lecture 2 (November 28):

"The Mahāyāna and a Sampling of Buddhist Philosophy"
Lecturer: Michael Radich

In this second week, we will look at a sea-change that occurs in Northern Buddhism, beginning around the turn of the Common Era, which saw a sudden rash of new movements and ideas that became known collectively to history as "Mahāyāna" Buddhism or the Buddhism of the "Greater Vehicle". In this connection, we will look at two examples of high Buddhist philosophy.

Lecture 3 (December 5):

"Buddhism of Faith and Grace: The Pure Land"

Lecturer: Hugh Kemp

This week, we will look at a further dimension of the Mahāyāna, a Buddhism of faith and salvation by external grace. This movement, known as "Pure Land" Buddhism, has been particularly significant in the history of East Asian Buddhism, where it has arguably been more dominant and central to the lives of millions of Buddhists through history than many ideas better known in our stereotyped ideas about Buddhism in the West. Pure Land Buddhism thus provides a number of interesting challenges to preconceptions about Buddhism that have dominated popular Western perceptions of Buddhism, and also, in different ways, the academic study of Buddhism in the West.

Lecture 4 (December 12):

"The Spread of Buddhism Beyond India: The Case of Tibet"

Lecturer: Hugh Kemp

This week, we will look at the spread of Buddhism beyond the Indian sub-continent into other Asian cultures. Buddhism began to spread beyond India around the turn of the Common Era. It was ultimately to spread throughout most of South-East, Central and East Asia, as far afield as Java, Afghanistan, Siberia, Korea and Japan. Buddhism became an important dimension of the thought and daily life of the massive civilisation of China, and it became a mainstay of culture, politics and thought in Tibet and Sri Lanka.

As when any religion moves into a cultural arena significantly different from that of its origin, the problem repeatedly arises in this process of the geographic spread of Buddhism: What changes about Buddhism when it becomes part of a new culture? What remains the same? How does Buddhism change any new culture it enters? What parts are played by the original culture and by "essential" Buddhist ideas in the hybrids that result? This week, we will examine these questions through the case study of Tibet. However, the same questions will occupy us, *mutatis mutandis*, in the second half of the course, when we turn our attention to the processes whereby Buddhism spread to the West.

PART TWO: BUDDHISM IN THE MODERN ERA**Lecture 5 (December 19):**

"Buddhism in New Zealand"

Lecturer: Hugh Kemp

CHRISTMAS BREAK

Lecture 6 (January 9)

"The Modernisation and Globalisation of Buddhism"

Lecturer: Dr Ronan Pereira

Lecture 7 (January 16)

"Contemporary Buddhism: Emic Perspectives"

Michael Radich and Invited Guests

This week, we will have two to four shorter talks by invited representatives of the various Buddhist communities present in Wellington. We will take this opportunity to find out how Buddhist teachings and practices are represented differently by exponents internal ("emic") to the tradition, in comparison to the perspective from which we examine Buddhism in the context of the academic study of religion. We will also take the opportunity to consider the ways the representations of Buddhism among these various contemporary groups exemplify some of the historical and cultural processes that have been our larger concern throughout this course.

Lecture 8 (January 23)"Conclusions. The Varieties of Buddhism, Past and Present;
Current Trends in the Study of Buddhism"

Lecturer: Michael Radich

In-class test (2 hours) (January 30)

- a class test, covering all the material presented in the course, and held in class time on **Wednesday January 30 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.** (2 hours duration), worth **30%** of the final grade.

Tutorials

Weekly Tutorial Assignment Questions

Week 2

Please attempt your own brief Madhyamaka analysis of the object or existent of your choice. Examples: yourself, your cat, your car, a flower, George Bush, the universe.

Week 3

Choose an aspect of Pure Land Buddhism that seems not to be in keeping with earlier Buddhist ideas (as studied in Weeks 1 and 2), and consider how it might be justified in Buddhist terms.

Week 4

Identify one aspect of Tibetan Buddhism that is different from the kinds of Buddhism we have examined so far in this course. Is it still "Buddhist"? If so, why? If not, why not?

Week 5

Identify one dynamic of change you think you see at work in the transmission of Buddhist ideas and/or practices to New Zealand. Does the idea or practice concerned remain "Buddhist"? If so, why? If not, why not?

Week 6

Identify one dynamic of change you see at work in Buddhism in Brazil that you think is shared with the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet and/or New Zealand, and briefly explore each side of the comparison.

Option: If you think there are *no* shared dynamics of change in these situations, consider why these various cases might be so different.

Week 7

Play devil's advocate. How might the "celebration of self" discussed by Heelas and slammed by Carrette and King as indicative of the sell-out of Asian spiritualities in the West be reconciled with the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self"?

Week 8

Identify the thing you have learnt about Buddhism in this course that has surprised you most. Consider what stereotypes may have informed the view of Buddhism that was challenged by this new information. What forces may be at work shaping and propagating such stereotypes about Buddhism in our culture?

Essays

The essays should be a thoughtful treatment of a well-defined topic, based on your own thinking and research. The participants are encouraged to come up with their own essay topics, but it is essential that they first discuss their plans with the lecturer.

1 Essays and assignments must be placed in the locked assignment box located near the programme administrator's office (HU 318), and students must date and sign the essay register when submitting an essay. **No responsibility will be taken for assignments for which there is no record.** Students should keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.

2 Due dates:

The first essay to be submitted by **Friday December 14.**

The second essay to be submitted by **Friday January 18.**

3 Penalties for late essays / assignments:

- 1 percent point per 24 hours will be deducted for late essays, up to 2 weeks from due date.
- to avoid these deductions, an extension may be sought with an explanation in writing. The reason for the extension does not need to be medical; in the event that it is, a medical certificate must be submitted.
- requests for extensions may be made to the tutor or the course co-ordinator.
- if an essay is handed in 2 weeks after the due date and an extension has not been sought the matter will be referred to the course co-ordinator who will make the final decision as to whether the essay shall be accepted for assessment or not.

4 Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning,
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course,
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html

Essay Topics

Possible essay topics and ideas are provided below. Other topics may be chosen, but must have approval from your tutor or lecturer prior to submission. Essays should ideally include consideration of some primary sources (texts, iconography, field trips, self-accounts of adherents to a tradition, interviews with religious specialists, ritual, etc.). Secondary sources (scholarly views on the topic or the text/ritual/icon, etc.) should be consulted and discussed in the essay, but the emphasis should be on your own analysis and interpretation of your source.

Ideas for Essay Questions: Essay 1

Is there a contradiction between the central Buddhist idea of impermanence (*anitya*, Ch. *wuchang* 無常, Jpn. *mujō*) and the clear Buddhist concern with preserving texts, monuments (*stūpas*), and institutional structures?

Explore one dimension of the relationship between Buddhist doctrine and Buddhist practice. Make sure you treat specific examples of each, and do not attempt to treat *all* Buddhist doctrine and practice.

Is Buddhism a "religion"?

Identify one aspect of Mahāyāna doctrine that seems to be new in Buddhist history. How did or might Mahāyāna texts have justified these "new" ideas?

Discuss and analyse one example of the ways Buddhism is said to have changed when it entered a new culture in the pre-modern world. (Good case studies: Tibet, Sri Lanka, Japan, China.) Consider the question: what is "cultural" in a given form of Buddhism, and what is "Buddhist"? How can we tell the difference?

Is karma the same thing as fate?

How might we use the Christian concept of "grace" to think about Pure Land Buddhism? What are the limitations, if any, of application of this concept to the Pure Land case?

Discuss one aspect of the place of women, or the divine conceived as feminine, in Buddhist traditions.

If everything is empty, why bother?

The doctrine of *anātman* ("non-self" or "no-self") is one of the most challenging and difficult Buddhist ideas, and has given rise to multiple interpretations. Discuss at least two modern or traditional interpretations, and consider which is more plausible or accurate.

Is Pure Land Buddhism really "Buddhist"?

In what ways were some pre-modern Buddhist monastics political? What difficulties are there in the doctrines and strictures of the tradition for such monastics? How might such political monastics have justified themselves?

How is the Buddha or Buddhahood portrayed through narrative?

In addressing this question, you should select a particular text or set of texts (including visual “texts”) within which to study the problem. Examples might include the Lotus Sūtra, some Jātaka tales, the Lalitavastara, the Buddhacarita, or the friezes of Borobudur. You might like to consider such subsidiary questions as the particular effects of narrative presentation on the understanding of Buddhahood.

What is enlightenment, according to the story of the historical Buddha’s own enlightenment? In addressing this question, you should be aware of possible differences in understanding between the presentation of the Buddha’s enlightenment in different sources. You may confine your analysis to one presentation in particular, or you might like to compare representations given in more than one source.

How are we to understand the role of the Sangha in Buddhism?

Does the structure of the Sangha and its relations with the laity corroborate or undermine assertions that (early) Buddhism is a "selfish" religion?

How are we to interpret canonical celebrations of the value of solitude to monks, in light of what Vinaya texts and the historical record tell us about (collective) monastic living arrangements?

What was the relationship between the powers of church and state in traditional Tibetan society?

Discuss the history of the order of Buddhist nuns. What happened to it and why?

Ideas for Essay Questions: Essay 2

How have Buddhism and modern nationalism interacted in one Asian country (Japan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, China), or the diaspora of one Asian country?

Analyse one contemporary Buddhist movement or group in the West in the terms of at least one theory of the Westernisation of Buddhism. Do not forget to at least consider the possibility that your case study might require critique of the theory, and not just its mechanical "application".

Discuss one example of the commodification of Buddhist ideas, objects, or practices, and its implications for the Buddhism concerned.

Play devil's advocate. We have seen authors who critique some Western Buddhism as in some respects opposed to traditional Buddhist ideas and values, for example, in the celebration of self, or certain entanglements with economic realities. Choose ONE such dimension of modern or Western Buddhism, and ask: Is this really new in Buddhist history? What precedents can be found for it? How might it be justified in the terms of solid Buddhist doctrine?

Consider some dimension of the relationship between Buddhism and science, preferably using the texts of real-life Buddhist thinkers (or apologists) who have attempted to work that relationship out.

In what ways does "ethnic Buddhism" (Nattier's "baggage" Buddhism) in the West differ from modern Buddhism in its Asian homelands? Note: you are more likely to come up with a successful essay in answer to this question if you restrict your deliberations to ONE ethnicity and/or tradition (e.g. Sri Lankan Theravāda, Tibetan Tantra, etc.).

Analyse at least one text of "self-help" Buddhism. It might be interesting to compare the ideas of such a text with traditional sources (including perhaps sources cited in the text). It might also be interesting to consider such a text as a "New Age" rather than a Buddhist phenomenon.

Explore some of the traditional wellsprings and precedents for modern Buddhist militarism and jingoistic nationalism.

Consider how the feminist challenge has worked as one dimension of the modernisation of Buddhism in the contemporary era.

One distinctive feature of modern Buddhism has been the way modern technologies of communication and travel have brought into contact and put in communication with one another parts of the Buddhist world that were mutually isolated in the pre-modern era. Consider one such interaction between different parts of the Buddhist world, and the consequences of the shifted perspective such broader contact has produced in that case.

How has "Orientalism" operated in the study or perception of Buddhism in the West?

At the time of its release, much fuss was made of *The Matrix* as a film supposedly informed by "Buddhist philosophy". Analyse some aspect of the *Matrix* trilogy in comparison with Buddhist ideas. To what extent are claims that *The Matrix* is a kind of Buddhist allegory true? At what point does this claim break down, and what other values and ideas do we see supplementing or competing with Buddhist ideas in the film(s)?