

World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

Teacher Name: Barry LeBlanc

Humanities Discipline: Introduction to Ethics (PHIL 102)

Date: 16 Feb 2017

World Religion: Buddhism

Teaching Module Title: Buddhist Ethics

- Note: This module is intended as one lesson in a multi-lesson, auto-instructional unit on Religion & Ethics. (The unit is one of several Term Assignment options; others include Term Paper, Presentation, and Ethics at the Movies.) All of the content is accessed and completed on Blackboard.

Teaching Module Goals:

1. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of Buddhist ethics by answering questions that highlight its salient features.

Assigned Readings and/or Websites:

PHIL 102 Introduction to Ethics required textbooks:

- Louis Pojman, *How Should We Live? An Introduction to Ethics*
 - pp 89-105 ("Religion and Ethics")

Other Books / Websites:

- John Bowker, *World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored & Explained*
 - pp 60-81 ("Buddhism")
- Peter Kreeft, *Ethics: A History of Moral Thought – Course Guide*
 - pp 81-83 – Lecture 13
- *Encyclopedia of Ethics*: [Buddhism](#) (scroll to "5. Buddhist Ethics")

Study Questions and/or Discussions Prompts for Students:

To answer questions 1-5 below, read Peter Kreeft, *Ethics: A History of Moral Thought – Course Guide*, pp 81-83 – Lecture 13, #2. Buddhism.

1. **Multiple choice:** Buddha's ethics are largely summarized in his
 - A. theory of Brahman and Atman.
 - B. Noble Eightfold Path. [CORRECT ANSWER]
 - C. Nirvana.
 - D. four *yogas* (deeds, or works, or ways of life).
2. **True/False:** Since Nirvana means "extinction," once you reach Nirvana you are not good or bad, you simply are not. [ANSWER: True]
3. **Fill-in-multiple-blanks:** While Christianity teaches salvation from [ANSWER: sin], Buddhism teaches salvation from [ANSWER: suffering].
4. **True/False:** There is no notion of sin, divine law, or a personal God in Buddhism. [ANSWER: True]
5. **Multiple choice:** The two greatest virtues for Buddhists are
 - A. happiness and contentment.
 - B. suffering and desire.
 - C. wisdom and compassion. [CORRECT ANSWER]
 - D. Brahman and Atman.

To answer questions 6-10 below, read *Encyclopedia of Ethics*: [Buddhism](#) (scroll to "5. Buddhist Ethics").

6. **Fill-in-the-blank:** It is the ethics of [ANSWER: mental] actions that constitutes the main concern of the Buddha's teaching.

7. **Short answer:** List here the ten “bright” or wholesome actions of early Buddhist ethics:
- 3 *bodily* actions: Abstaining from _____, _____, _____.
[ANSWER: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct]
 - 4 *verbal* actions: Abstaining from _____, _____, _____.
[ANSWER: false, divisive, harsh, and useless speech]
 - 3 *mental* actions: Abstaining from _____, _____, _____.
[ANSWER: covetousness, ill-will, and dogmatic views].
8. **Fill-in-the-blank:** The fundamental moral law of the universe according to early Buddhism is what is popularly called the “law of [ANSWER: karma]”: good actions produce good consequences, and bad actions lead to bad consequences.
9. **Essay:** From *Encyclopedia of Ethics*: [Buddhism](#): “A common objection to early Buddhist ethics is how there can be freewill and responsibility without a permanent self that transmigrates through lives. If there is no self, who is the agent of actions? Who experiences the consequences of actions? Is the person who performs an action in this life the same person that experiences the consequences of that action in a future life? Is it a different person?” Summarize your understanding of the Buddha’s answers to these questions as explained in the reading.
10. **Short answer:** Buddhist ethics is considered to be a unique combination of which three ethical trends?
[ANSWER: deontological, consequentialist, and virtue]