

World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

Teacher Name: Patrick Meegan

Humanities Discipline: World History

Date: December 9, 2016

World Religion: Buddhism

Teaching Module Title: The Origins and early years of Buddhism

Teaching Module Goals:

1. Introduce students to the basic religious scriptures and the time frame of their origin.
2. Examine the cultural and religious environment that led to the spread of Buddhism.
3. Familiarize students with the basic components of Buddhist dharma.

Assigned Readings and/or Websites:

1. Duiker and Spielvogel, *The Essential World History,, Volume I: to 1800*, Chapter 2.
2. Bowker, John, *World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored & Explained*, pp 58-81

Study Questions and/or Discussions Prompts for Students:

1. What was the cultural background of Siddhartha Gautama?
2. What was the political situation at the dawn of Buddhism? Who ruled India?
3. What are *The Four Noble Truths*?
4. What is *The Eightfold Path*?
5. What is Theravada Buddhism, and how does it differ from Mahayana Buddhism?

Written Assignments and/or other Assessment Instruments:

Come to class with written responses to these questions. We will discuss the answers together and have a brief lecture in preparation for a quiz, which I will give the students after this class session.

Important points to stress in classroom discussion:

1. Buddhism drew largely, but not exclusively, from the faith and philosophy of Hinduism.
2. Siddhartha Gautama's teachings differed in an important way from Hinduism in that he denied the existence of an individual soul (Atman).
3. Buddhism has egalitarian elements and in its origins implicitly challenged the class system and hierarchy of Indian society and Hinduism, but like all religions, it too developed hierarchies over time
4. Buddhism spread from India to East and Southeast Asia over the course of centuries.