

Academic Year 2026-27

Semester 2

HKU

BSTC 2006 Buddhist Psychology and Mental Cultivation

(6 Credits)

(The course is open to students from all faculties as a free elective)

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Class Day and Time:

Class Venue:

Class Days:

[No tutorial classes]

Course Description

In this course, we will examine Buddhist discourses on the nature and operation of the mind. We will study basic Buddhist principles and diverse practices of mental cultivation based on ancient Buddhist texts and manuals that present unique perspectives on individual, family, and society at large and world. The main topics covered in this course include psychology of dhamma and the theory of “dependent co-arising”, relation between mind and body, sensory perception and obsession, intentional actions and human wellbeing, positive thinking and self-initiative, controlling emotions and mindfulness practice, selfless being and awakened mind.

Course Objectives

The course aims at training the students to:

- Learn the Buddha’s basic teachings on mind and its operation accurately while developing an enquiring mind within oneself.
- Learn to live a positive life while appreciating one’s own life and the lives of others.
- Look at the life and the world in a novel way “going against the currents” while developing interests in a conflict-free, stress-free, simple lifestyle.
- Identify the Buddha’s psychological terms and concepts while relating them to daily life.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students are expected to develop the ability to:

- Explain the Buddhist teachings on the nature and operation of the mind.
- Identify basic Buddhist psychological terms and concepts and relate them to understand one’s own life and the lives of others.
- Explain the reason for the existence of diverse Buddhist meditation techniques and practices as to cater to different personality types.

- Relate Buddhist ideas and principles in understanding and finding perpetual solutions to complex psychological, social, political, and environmental issues in the modern world.
- Develop an appreciative and positive attitude towards one's life, family, society, and the world.

Course Outline: Topic and Guiding Questions

Class 1 – 20 January 2027

Dhamma and Psychology

Syllabus discussion + Lecture

Topic Focus:

Relationship between Buddhist teaching (Dhamma) and psychology; central role of right view.

Guiding Questions:

- **Introduction to Key Concepts**
 - What is psychology? In what sense can the Buddha's teaching be understood as a form of psychology?
 - What is "right view" (sammādiṭṭhi) in the Buddhist path?
- **Right View and Well-Being**
 - Why is right view essential for our own and others' well-being and happiness?
 - What are the main obstacles to developing right view, and why do they arise?
- **Application and Method**
 - In what ways can understanding the Dhamma actually make us better people?
 - Can the arising and cessation of suffering be fully understood and verified through externally driven, "objective" methods alone?
 - How should we study Buddhist scriptures: what methods (textual, historical, psychological, experiential) are most appropriate, and why?

Class 2 – 27 January 2027

The Theory of Dependent Co-Arising (Paṭicca-samuppāda)

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

Buddha's theory of causation and its relevance to psychological processes.

Guiding Questions:

- **Introduction to Dependent Co-Arising**
 - What is Dependent Co-arising? In what way is the Buddha's view of causation distinctive?
- **Psychological Significance**
 - How does this theory help us understand psychological phenomena such as perception, emotion, habit, and suffering?
- **Standard Formulation and Its Implications**
 - How does the standard twelve-link formulation explain the arising of present suffering?
 - How does it also show the possibility of interrupting this process so that the arising of suffering can cease?

Class 3 – 03 February 2027

Human Effort, Intention, and Life Goals

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

Intention (cetanā), kamma, and the role of effort and initiative in shaping life outcomes.

Guiding Questions:

- **Fundamental Concepts**
 - What is intention (cetanā) in Buddhist psychology?
 - Why is intention considered the essence of kamma?
- **Thought, Action, and Outcomes**
 - Is thinking alone sufficient to reach our life goals? Where does mere wishing end and effective action begin?
- **Effort and Initiative**
 - What is the role of human effort and self-initiative in achieving our desired goals?
- **Cause and Effect**
 - How should we understand the correlation between actions (kamma) and their results (vipāka)?
 - In what ways is this correlation regular, and in what ways is it not simplistic or mechanical?

Class 4 – 17 February 2027

The Problem of “My Self”

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

Distinguishing “self” from “my self,” and examining the Buddha’s not-self teaching.

Guiding Questions:

- **Conceptual Distinctions**
 - How does “self” (as an abstract concept) differ from “my self” (as personally owned)?
 - Why do we cling to a *belief in* self rather than to a clearly defined, permanent self?
- **Perception and Personal Identity**
 - Who can see “my self” as “my self”?
 - What makes experiences count as “my personal experiences”?
 - What, in Buddhist terms, is a “person”?
- **Illusion and Its Effects**
 - How does the conceit “I am” (asmi-māna) become the basis for belief in a substantial self?
 - How does the Buddha’s not-self (anattā) teaching differ from rationalist or materialist “no-self” theories?
- **Psychological and Existential Implications**
 - In what sense is “self” ambiguous, and how does this ambiguity generate anxiety and worry?

Class 5 – 24 February 2027

Psychological Analysis of Social Conflicts

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

Mental roots of conflict and Buddhist models of understanding and resolving disputes.

Guiding Questions:

- **Foundations of Conflict**
 - What are the psychological roots of conflict according to the Buddha?
 - How do lust, greed, hatred, jealousy, and stinginess operate as causes of mental agitation?
- **From Agitation to Violence**
 - How does internal mental agitation escalate into verbal disputes and, eventually, into physical or structural violence?
- **Understanding Conflict Fully**
 - What does it mean, in Buddhist terms, to “understand a conflict fully”?
 - What methods or steps does the Buddha recommend for seeing the full causal structure of a conflict?
- **Models of Resolution**
 - What models of conflict resolution appear in the Buddha’s teachings (e.g. within the Saṅgha, in lay society)?
 - To what extent are these models applicable or adaptable to conflicts in contemporary society?

Class 6 – 03 March 2027

The Problem of Suicide

Lecture + Quiz 1

Topic Focus:

Craving for being and non-being, and a Buddhist psychological understanding of suicide.

Guiding Questions:

- **Being, “My Self,” and Craving**
 - In what sense is our very existence experienced as being “I” or being “my self”?
 - How are craving for being (bhava-taṇhā) and craving for non-being (vibhava-taṇhā) related?
- **Craving and Its Misguided Solutions**
 - Can a worldling stop craving for non-being simply by intensifying sensual pleasure in the present mode of being? Why or why not?
- **Understanding Suicide**
 - From a Buddhist psychological perspective, why do some people come to see suicide as a solution?
- **Why “Un-being” Is Not Liberation**
 - How does the search for “un-being” actually recreate “being” and further suffering?
 - Why is suicide understood as a continuation of suffering rather than a genuine escape?
- **Cessation and True Resolution**

- What is meant by “cessation of being” in the Buddhist path?
- How does this cessation resolve the conflict between being and non-being without resorting to self-destruction?

Class 7 – 17 March 2027

Psychological Analysis of Human Experience

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

What “experience” is, and how consciousness, mind-and-matter, and feeling are involved.

Guiding Questions:

- **Defining Experience**
 - What do we mean by “experience” in Buddhist psychology?
- **Components of Experience**
 - Do we experience “mind and matter,” or “name-and-matter” (nāma-rūpa)? What is the difference?
- **Mechanisms of Experience**
 - What is the role of consciousness (viññāṇa) in experience?
 - Which physical and psychological factors must come together for an experience to arise?
- **Experience and Unpleasant Feelings**
 - Why do experiences so often give rise to mental unpleasantness or suffering?
 - Under what conditions can experience be free from this unpleasantness?

Class 8 – 24 March 2027

Sensory Perception, ‘I’, and Obsession

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

How sense experience constructs “my world” and “I,” and how this can lead to obsession and suffering.

Guiding Questions:

- **Experiencing “My World”**
 - How do we experience “my world”?
 - How do we come to know “I exist”?
 - Can there be an “I” that exists without any awareness of a world?
- **Order of Awareness**
 - In actual experience, what appears first: awareness of “I” or awareness of objects around me?
 - Can reflexive awareness (“I am aware that I am aware”) occur without a pre-given “I”?
- **The ‘I’ as Parasite**
 - Why might the “I” be described as a parasite in the structure of reflexive experience?
 - How could this “parasite” be removed?
 - Once it is removed, how does reflexive awareness function?
- **From Perception to Obsession**

- Why does repeated sense experience so easily lead to craving, clinging, and obsession?
- According to the Buddha, how can this process be brought to a stop?

Class 9 – 31 March 2027

Controlling Emotions and Dealing with Defilements

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

Nature of defilements, their clustering, and methods for transforming conduct and character.

Guiding Questions:

- **Understanding Defilements**
 - What are “defilements” (kilesas) in Buddhist psychology?
- **Patterns and Clusters**
 - Why do defilements tend to appear in clusters or groups rather than in isolation?
- **Motives, Conduct, and Character**
 - What is the relationship between motives (underlying intentions) and outward conduct?
 - How does repeated conduct shape one’s present character and future destiny?
- **Methods of Working with Defilements**
 - What methods does the Buddha offer for weakening and overcoming defilements (e.g., restraint, reflection, meditation, wise attention)?
 - Why are there many methods rather than a single technique?

Class 10 – 7 April 2027

Mindfulness Practice and Working with Memory

Lecture + Class activity

Topic Focus:

Right mindfulness (sammā-sati), its relation to reflection and memory, and its practical cultivation.

Guiding Questions:

- **Reflection vs Reflexion**
 - What is the difference between “reflection” (thinking about something) and “reflexion” (awareness turning back on itself)?
- **Why Right Mindfulness?**
 - Why does the Buddha emphasise right mindfulness as a key factor on the path?
- **Four Foundations / Approaches**
 - What are the four approaches to establishing right mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna)?
 - How does each approach train attention and insight in a different way?
- **Mindfulness and Memory**
 - What is the connection between mindfulness and memory?
 - How does right mindfulness support remembering things “as they really are,” rather than in a distorted way?

Class 11 – 14 April 2027

Personality Types and Meditation Techniques

Lecture + Quiz 2

Topic Focus:

Six personality types in Buddhist psychology and their matching meditation themes.

Guiding Questions:

- **Classification of Types**
 - Why does the Buddha's teaching classify personality or character types into six?
 - On what basis are these types distinguished?
 - **Recognising Personality Types**
 - How can we identify each personality type in ourselves and others?
 - **Matching Meditation to Personality**
 - How are specific meditation subjects assigned to different personality types?
 - Why is this matching important for effective practice?
 - **Wider Applications**
 - Are these personality classifications useful beyond meditation—for example, in education, counselling, or human resource management? If so, how?
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Class 12 – 21 April 2027

Positive Institutions and Positive Strengths

Lecture & Class Activity

Topic Focus:

Role of family, Saṅgha, and other institutions in cultivating virtues and supporting human flourishing.

Guiding Questions:

- **Positive Institutions Defined**
 - What counts as a “positive institution” in a Buddhist framework?
 - Which institutions most strongly support our growth as individuals and as social beings?
- **Family, Democracy, and Free Inquiry**
 - How do family, democratic structures, and freedom of inquiry contribute to positive emotions and strengths?
- **Household Life and Monastic Life**
 - In what ways can lay family life and the monastic life of the Saṅgha both be understood as positive institutions?
 - How do their roles and responsibilities differ and complement each other?
- **Duties, Rights, and Positive Strengths**
 - How do these institutions help individuals fulfil their duties to one another and realise their human rights in harmony with the Dhamma?
 - How does this interplay of duties and rights cultivate positive strengths such as generosity, compassion, and wisdom?

Knowledge and Skills

Through the course assignments, the Buddhist Studies programme expects students not only to learn the subject matter, but also to develop the following transferable skills:

- Write concisely and clearly.
- Structure and communicate ideas effectively in spoken and written form.
- Locate, evaluate, and synthesise a range of sources for research.
- Make informed judgements about the validity and cogency of arguments.
- Develop self-reflexivity in relation to one's own assumptions, values, and learning process.

Assessments

Coursework Breakdown (100%)

Assessment Tasks	Weighting	Due Date	Key Grading Criteria
1. Class Participation and Activities	20%	Ongoing	Attendance, participation, quality of contribution / engagement
2. Quiz 1	10%	March 03	Accuracy, understanding
3. Quiz 2	15%	April 14	Accuracy, understanding
4. Mind-Map on a Buddhist Concept and Its Modern Relevance	25%	April 07	Creativity, clarity and organization, accuracy, relevance
5. Reflective Writing	30%	April 28	Creativity, clarity and organization, accuracy, depth, application

1. Class Participation and Activities (20%)

Objective

To assess attendance, active participation, and thoughtful engagement in weekly class activities.

Components

- **Attendance (5%)**
 - Regular attendance is required and recorded via the HKU Attendance App.
 - If you cannot access the app in class, you must inform the TA during the first hour so that your presence can be recorded manually.
 - Absences must be supported by valid documentation (e.g. medical certificate or other approved evidence).
- **Participation (10%)**
 - Active engagement in individual and group tasks during class time (e.g. discussions, worksheets, online activities, brief presentations).
 - Activities in most classes are completed on paper and/or online (e.g. menti.com).
 - For online activities, students must use their real name so that completion can be recorded accurately.
 - Given the large class size, participation is assessed mainly through evidence of activity completion and visible engagement with group work, rather than detailed monitoring of each individual.

- **Quality of Contribution / Engagement (5%)**

- Class activity sheets are collected each week and kept by the instructor.
- They are not graded individually each week but are reviewed at the end of the course.
- Marks are allocated based on overall quality of engagement and completion across the semester (e.g. effort, thoughtfulness, and consistency in doing the tasks), rather than the accuracy of answers.
- Since activity sheets are collected, students who wish to keep a record are encouraged to take a photo of their work before submitting it.

Typical Activities

- Each class includes at least one individual and/or group activity related to:
 - The weekly lecture and lecture notes,
 - Key terms and concepts, or
 - An assigned reading, if any in the given week.
- Work is usually captured through a short written response, activity sheet, and/or online activity; the quality of this work forms the basis of the engagement assessment.

Policies

- Focus is on effort and thoughtfulness, not perfection.
- Make-up completion of missed class activities is permitted only for students whose absences are due to documented medical or other approved reasons.
- No make-up is provided for other types of absences.
- No emails regarding missed activities will be replied to unless accompanied by a valid medical certificate or approved documentation.
- Individual and group work quality is assessed based on the submitted written and/or online answers.

Grading Guide (20 points total)

- **A+/A/A- (18–20 points):** Consistent attendance; frequent, thoughtful participation; strong evidence of preparation and engagement.
- **B+/B/B- (15–17 points):** Regular attendance; generally active participation; reasonable level of preparation.
- **C+/C/C- (12–14 points):** Irregular or low-key participation; engagement is inconsistent.
- **D+/D (10–11 points):** Minimal participation and limited evidence of engagement.

A Note on the “Quality of Engagement” Score (5%)

The “Quality of Engagement” score is a holistic assessment of your demonstrated effort and critical thinking throughout the term. It is not based on the factual accuracy of responses in low-stakes activities (e.g. Menti activities, quick quizzes, worksheets).

- Incorrect answers on such tools will not reduce your quality score.
- Consistently provided thoughtful, complete answers on worksheets and actively contributing to discussions will raise it.

2. Quizzes (25% Total, Open-book)

- Both quizzes are open-book and conducted on paper in class.
- You may use
 - Printed or digital lecture notes (e.g. on a tablet or laptop) and
 - Your own typed or handwritten notes.
- Textbooks, websites, AI tools, communication with others, or any unauthorised aids are strictly prohibited. Use of such aids will result in disqualification from the quiz and may lead to further action under university regulations.

Quiz 1 (10%)

Objective

To assess recall and understanding of basic concepts covered in Lectures 1–5.

- **Date:** 3 March 2027
- **Format:** Short-answer questions (including brief definitions and explanations).

Grading Criteria

- **Accuracy (5%):** Correct responses to factual and definitional questions.
- **Understanding (5%):** Ability to restate key concepts in your own words and apply them in simple ways.

Grade Guide (10 points total)

- **A+/A/A- (9–10 points):** Very high accuracy; clear, accurate explanations of concepts.
 - **B+/B/B- (7–8 points):** Mostly accurate; minor errors but overall sound understanding.
 - **C+/C/C- (5–6 points):** Basic grasp of key ideas; significant gaps or misunderstandings.
 - **D+/D (4 points):** Limited understanding; frequent or serious errors.
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Quiz 2 (15%)

Objective

To assess recall and understanding of basic concepts covered in Lectures 6–10.

- **Date:** 14 April 2027
- **Format:** Short-answer questions (including brief definitions and explanations).

Grading Criteria

- **Accuracy (7%):** Correct responses to factual and definitional questions.
- **Understanding (8%):** Ability to explain and briefly apply key concepts in your own words.

Grade Guide (15 points total)

- **A+/A/A- (13–15 points):** Very high accuracy; clear and well-expressed understanding of key concepts.
- **B+/B/B- (10–12 points):** Generally accurate; some minor errors or unevenness in explanation.
- **C+/C/C- (7–9 points):** Basic understanding but with noticeable errors or omissions.

- **D+/D (5–6 points):** Limited understanding; frequent inaccuracies.

3. Mind-Map on a Buddhist Concept and Its Modern Relevance (25%)

Objective

To demonstrate accurate understanding of one key Buddhist concept, and present, on a single page, a clear and visually organised mind-map that connects this concept to concrete aspects of contemporary life (e.g. mental health, social media, consumerism, work, relationships).

Assignment Details

- **Due Date:** 7 April 2027
- **Format:**
 - One single-page mind-map (A4 or A3).
 - May be hand-drawn (neatly scanned/photographed) or digitally produced.
 - The page must be easily readable when printed: use clear fonts/handwriting and avoid overcrowding.

Step 1: Choose One Buddhist Concept

Examples (you are not limited to these, but choose **one** only):

- Right view (sammādiṭṭhi)
- Right mindfulness (sammā-sati)
- Not-self (anattā)
- Five clinging-aggregates (khandhas)
- Dependent co-arising (paṭicca-samuppāda)
- Craving (taṇhā)
- Karma and intention (cetanā)
- Defilements (kilesas)
- Loving-kindness (mettā)
- Compassion (karuṇā)
- Mindfulness of body / feeling / mind / mental objects
- Choose a concept that:
 - Is clearly defined in the course (lectures/notes).
 - Has obvious or interesting links to modern issues you care about.

Step 2: Design the Mind-Map

Your mind-map should include:

1. Central node

- The chosen Buddhist concept clearly written in the centre (in English; Pāli term optional).

2. First-level branches (core understanding)

- Around **3–5 main branches** that explain the essential features of the concept, for example:
 - Definition / meaning
 - Key elements or components
 - Related terms or opposite qualities
 - Its function in the Buddhist path (e.g. as a factor for enlightenment, a root of suffering, etc.)

3. Second-level branches (modern relevance)

- From the core branches, add further branches showing **specific modern applications**, for example:
 - How this concept helps explain certain modern problems (stress, anxiety, identity crisis, conflict, addiction).
 - How it can be applied in daily life (mindfulness at work, ethical decision-making, online behaviour, family relationships).
 - Links to contemporary fields (psychology, education, social media, workplace culture, environmental concerns).
- Use **concrete examples**, not only abstract keywords.

4. Visual elements (optional but encouraged)

- Colours, icons, simple drawings, arrows, symbols, or boxed text to highlight:
 - Cause-effect relationships
 - Contrasts (e.g. with common modern views)
 - Practical examples or brief case-type scenarios

Submission

- Mode of submission:
 - Submit **one PDF file via Moodle** (no hard copy), so that there is a clear record of submission.
- **If hand-drawn:**
 - ensure the scan/photo is clear, flat, and high-resolution.
- **Identification:**
 - Put your **name, UID, and chosen concept** clearly on the mind-map page.
- **The single pdf file must include (in this order):**
 1. Page 1: Cover page (your name, UID and chosen concept)
 2. Page 2: AI declaration form (submissions without a completed AI declaration form will **not** be graded)
 3. Page 3: Mind-map
 4. Page 4: Reference list / bibliography (if any)

Grading Criteria (25%)

1. Creativity (5%)

- *What we look for:*
 - Original, visually engaging layout.
 - Thoughtful use of colour, symbols, or structure to make the map more intuitive.
- High marks: Design clearly supports understanding, not just decoration.

2. Clarity and organization (10%)

- *What we look for:*
 - Logical structure (central concept → core aspects → modern applications).

- Clear, legible text and connections that are easy to follow.
- No overcrowding; related ideas grouped meaningfully.
- High marks: A viewer can quickly see what the concept is and how the branches relate.

3. Accuracy (5%)

- *What we look for:*
 - Correct use of terms drawn from lectures and notes.
 - Faithful representation of how the concept is understood in Buddhist teaching.
- High marks: No major misunderstandings; definitions and relationships are sound.

4. Relevance (5%)

- *What we look for:*
 - Specific, credible links to modern life (not vague claims like “this is useful today”).
 - Examples that clearly show how the concept can explain or address contemporary issues.
- High marks: Modern applications feel concrete, insightful, and well-connected to the central concept.

Grade Bands (25 points total)

- **A+/A/A- (22–25 points)**
 - Highly creative and visually effective layout; very clear organisation.
 - Accurate and nuanced presentation of the Buddhist concept.
 - Strong, specific, and insightful links to modern issues or contexts.
- **B+/B/B- (18–21 points)**
 - Generally creative and well-organised.
 - Minor inaccuracies or oversimplifications, but overall correct.
 - Clear modern relevance, though some examples may be less detailed or less well-developed.
- **C+/C/C- (14–17 points)**
 - Basic structure present but visually or logically cluttered or simplistic.
 - Concept mostly correct but with noticeable gaps or vagueness.
 - Relevance to modern life mentioned but not clearly explained or illustrated.
- **D+/D (10–13 points)**
 - Weak or confusing organisation; difficult to follow.
 - Significant misunderstandings or mislabelling of the concept.
 - Modern relevance is minimal, very general, or missing.

Practical Tips

- Start by revising lecture notes on your chosen concept.
- Jot down keywords and modern examples before drawing the map.
- Aim for a small number of clear main branches (around 3-5), each with a few well-chosen sub-branches, rather than many scattered points.
- Ask yourself:

- “If someone unfamiliar with Buddhism looked at this, would they understand (1) what the concept means and (2) why it still matters today?”

4. Reflective Writing (30%)

Objective

To reflect deeply on either a personal experience or a contemporary social issue and analyse it using one or more Buddhist concepts discussed in this course. You should show both accurate understanding of the concepts and thoughtful self-examination.

- **Word Limit:** 1,500 words (Acceptable range: 1,450–1,550 words)
- **Due Date:** 28 April 2027

Assignment Overview

Choose **one** of the following approaches:

1. Personal Experience

- Reflect on a meaningful event in your life (e.g. conflict, failure, success, loss, ethical dilemma, strong emotion, change of view).
- Use Buddhist concepts (e.g. right view, dependent co-arising, craving, kamma, not-self, mindfulness, defilements) to interpret what happened and what you learned.

2. Contemporary Social Issue

- Reflect on a current issue (e.g. social media addiction, consumerism, mental health stigma, political polarisation, environmental crisis, suicide in society).
- Analyse the issue using relevant Buddhist ideas and discuss what a Buddhist perspective might suggest for understanding or responding to it.

You are **not** asked to prove that you are “right” or “Buddhist,” but to think critically and honestly.

Suggested Structure (3 Main Parts)

You do not need to use these as headings, but your essay should clearly include all three elements:

1. Description (about 25–30% of the essay) – 10% of grade

- **If you choose personal experience:**
 - Clearly describe what happened, when and where it occurred, who was involved, and why it was significant to you.
- **If you choose a social issue:**
 - Briefly explain what the issue is, who it affects, and why it matters now.

Focus on the essential details the reader needs to understand the context—avoid long storytelling that does not support later analysis.

2. Interpretation (about 40–50% of the essay) – 10% of grade

- Identify **one or two** key Buddhist concepts or theories that help to illuminate the event or issue (e.g. dependent co-arising, craving, not-self, defilements, mindfulness, kamma, personality types).
- Explain these concepts accurately in your own words, showing you understand them from the course.
- Apply them carefully to your example, for instance:
 - What patterns of thought, emotion, or behaviour become clearer in light of this concept?

- How does the Buddhist perspective deepen or challenge your usual way of looking at this event or issue?

3. Outcome (about 25–30% of the essay) – 10% of grade

- Describe what you have learned about:
 - Yourself (if using a personal experience), and/or
 - Human behaviour and suffering in general (if using a social issue).
- Reflect on how this insight could influence your future attitudes or behaviour, for example:
 - How might you respond differently if a similar situation arises?
 - What specific practices (e.g. mindfulness, reflection on not-self, restraint, loving-kindness) could you use?
- Be concrete and realistic rather than vague. For example:
 - “I will try to notice craving when it arises, especially in situations like X, and respond by doing Y...”).

Grading Criteria (30%)

1. Creativity (5%)

- Originality in your choice of event/issue and the way you approach it.
- A fresh, personal voice rather than formulaic or generic writing.

2. Clarity and Organisation (5%)

- Clear introduction stating what you will reflect on and which Buddhist ideas you will use.
- Logical flow between description, interpretation, and outcome.
- Well-structured paragraphs and a coherent line of argument.

3. Accuracy (5%)

- Correct explanation of Buddhist concepts and theories, consistent with lectures and notes.
- Appropriate and careful application of these ideas to your chosen case.

4. Depth of Reflection (10%)

- Honest and thoughtful engagement with the event/issue.
- Willingness to question your own assumptions, reactions, and biases.
- Goes beyond surface description (“this happened”) to explore **why** it matters and what it reveals.

5. Application (5%)

- Clear, practical connection between Buddhist concepts and your own growth or understanding.
- Concrete implications for future behaviour, choices, or attitudes.

Grade Bands (30 points total)

• A+/A/A- (27–30 points)

- Highly original and engaging; very clear structure and writing.
- Buddhist concepts are accurately and insightfully explained and applied.
- Reflection is deep, honest, and nuanced; concrete, realistic applications to personal growth or ethical understanding.

- **B+/B/B- (22–26 points)**
 - Solid and coherent; some originality.
 - Mostly accurate explanation and application of concepts, with only minor issues.
 - Reflection shows genuine thought but may be less probing or less clearly linked to future application.
- **C+/C/C- (17–21 points)**
 - Basic structure and generally correct use of concepts.
 - Reflection remains largely descriptive or superficial (“what happened” more than “what it means”).
 - Applications to personal growth are vague, brief, or underdeveloped.
- **D+/D (12–16 points)**
 - Weak organisation and/or unclear writing.
 - Significant misunderstandings of Buddhist ideas or very limited linkage to the event/issue.
 - Minimal or shallow reflection; little sense of learning or future change.

Resources and Notes

- **Examples**
 - See the course Moodle page → “Resources” → examples of high-quality reflective writing (from other contexts).
 - Use these to understand the expected tone and depth, **not** to copy topics or structure.
- **Use of Sources**
 - External academic sources are **not required**.
 - You may refer to lecture notes, course readings, or other materials if they help clarify a concept.
 - If you use any sources (including course texts), you must cite them properly.

Technical Requirements and Academic Integrity

- **Word Count**
 - 1,500 words (acceptable range 1,450–1,550).
 - The word count applies to the **main body** (including in-text citations). It **excludes** the cover page, table of contents (if any), footnotes, reference list/bibliography, and appendices.
- **Font Style, Size, and Spacing**
 - No specific font or spacing is mandated, but formatting must be consistent and easily readable (e.g., a standard serif or sans-serif font, 11–12 pt, single or 1.5 line spacing is recommended).
- **Citation Style**
 - You may use any standard academic style (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago), as long as you:
 - Use it consistently, and
 - Properly credit all sources.
- **AI Tools Declaration Form**

- You **must** complete and include the **AI Tools Declaration Form** (downloadable from the course Moodle page).
- Combine your essay and the signed declaration into a **single Word or PDF file**.
- Any AI use—or the absence of AI use—must be declared. Submissions **without** the completed form will **not** be graded.
- **If You Use AI for Language Support**
 - If you use AI tools for grammar checking or rewording, you must:
 - Keep your original, unedited version.
 - Include the original version as an **appendix or separate section** in the same submission file.
 - This requirement is part of maintaining fairness and transparency in assessment.

Aim to write as if you are explaining your experience or issue—and what you have learned from it—to an intelligent friend who knows some Buddhism but was not in this course. Be specific, honest, and thoughtful.

Your Final Course Grade

Assignment marks are awarded according to how well your work meets the criteria and standards set for each task. These marks are then combined (according to the stated weightings) to calculate your overall course mark.

However, when final **course grades** are assigned, the following policy applies:

- If, after combining all components, **more than 40%** of students would receive an **A-range final grade (A-, A, A+)**, a **grade curve will be applied**.
- This curve will limit the proportion of A-range final grades to a **maximum of 40%** for the course.

In other words, achieving a high assignment mark is necessary but not always sufficient for an A-range final grade; you are effectively competing within the cohort. Consistent, high-quality work throughout the semester is required to be in the top band.

University Grading and Academic Integrity

In determining final grades, we also follow the standards set out in these Faculty/University documents:

- **Faculty Grade Expectations**

https://arts.hku.hk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/grade_expectations.pdf

- **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. The University regards all forms of plagiarism as unacceptable. Any student found to have plagiarised may:

- Fail the assessment concerned, and
- Be subject to disciplinary action.

Please read carefully:

<http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism>

You are responsible for understanding and complying with these policies.

Submission of Assignments

- The **two assignments** must be submitted by **uploading onto Moodle before 23:59** on the relevant due date.
- **Late submissions** are subject to mark deduction according to course policy.
- Files must be named in the following format:
 - LASTNAME First name
 - Example: LEUNG Chi Wai Tony

Extensions

- No extensions will be granted **beyond the deadline**, except in cases of serious medical grounds, supported by appropriate documentation (e.g. medical certificate).
- To avoid last-minute problems, you are strongly advised to **start early** and **submit well before the deadline**.

Recommended Books and Internet Resources

- Analayo, Bhikkhu (2010) *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realization*. Cambridge: Windhorse Publications.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu (1993) *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2000) *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2012) *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Bronkhorst, Johannes (1998) *Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- De Silva, Padmasiri (2014) *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology and Counselling*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gethin, R.M.L. (2001) *The Buddhist Path to Awakening (Classics in Religious Studies)*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.
- Gethin, Rupert (1998) *The Foundations of Buddhism*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Govinda, Lama Anagarika (1961) *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy and Its Systematic Representation According to Abhidhamma Tradition*. London: Rider & Company.
- Hart, W. (1987) *The Art of Living: Vipassana Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Harvey, Peter (1995) *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism*. Richmond: Curzon Press.
- Harvey, Peter (2000) *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jayasuriya, W.F. (1976) *The Psychology and Philosophy of Buddhism: An Introduction to the Abhidhamma*. Kuala Lumpur.
- Johansson, Rune E.A. (1979) *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*. Oxford: Curzon Press.
- Kalupahana, David J. (1987) *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Karunadasa, Y. (2010) *The Theravāda Abhidhamma*. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong.

- Karunadasa, Y. (2013) *Early Buddhist Teachings: The Middle Position in Theory and Practice*. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong.
- Karunadasa, Y. (2015) *Buddhist Analysis of Matter*. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong.
- Karunaratne, W.S. (1988) *Theory of Causality in Early Buddhism*. Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: Indumati Karunaratne.
- Ñāṇamoli, Bikkhu (1999) *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga (Vipassanā Meditation and the Buddha's Teaching)*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Ñāṇananda, Bhikkhu (1986) *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Nyanaponika Thera (1956/1996) *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. Boston: Weiser Books.
- Somaratne, G. A. (2021) *The Buddha's Teaching: A Buddhistic Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Somaratne, G. A. (2022) *An Introduction to Early Buddhist Soteriology: Freedom of Mind and Freedom by Wisdom*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walshe, Maurice (1995) *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*. London: Wisdom Publications.

Internet Resources

- An Entrance to the World of Buddhism [www.buddhistdoor.com]
- Buddhism and Science [www.mindandlife.org]
- Journal for mindfulness practitioners [www.inquiringmind.com]
- Access to insight [www.accesstoinsight.org]
- Digital Dictionary of Buddhism [<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>]
- Translations of the Buddha's discourses [<http://suttacentral.net/>]
- For Learning the Buddha's Teaching [www.dhammadialogue.com]

A Note

Please check the course Moodle page **regularly**. All essential course information and materials will be posted there, including:

- Announcements and updates
- FAQ for quizzes and assignments
- Weekly lecture notes and reading materials
- In-class activities and quizzes
- Attendance records
- Assignment instructions and submission links
- Sample assignments and grading rubrics
- Lecture recordings (where available)
- Feedback on your submitted work

You are responsible for keeping up to date with all information posted on Moodle.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Statement

The Faculty of Arts is dedicated to supporting your overall wellbeing during your studies. Prioritize

your mental and physical health and seek help when needed.

Key Resources:

- **Faculty Student Wellness Counsellor**
Ms. Trinity Pun
Room 4.05, 4/F, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus
Tel: 3917 2279 | Email: trinityp@hku.hk
- **Career Development Advisor (including wellbeing-related concerns)**
Ms. Heidy Wan
Room 4.05, 4/F, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus
Tel: 3917 0736 | Email: heidywan@hku.hk
- **Thrive@Arts:** wellness activities to de-stress, build resilience, and connect with peers. Stay tuned for upcoming events.
- **CEDARS Counselling & Psychological Services**
Tel: 3917 8388 | Email: cedars-cope@hku.hk
Online registration: cedars.hku.hk/cope/cps/online-registration
- **TourHeart+ Platform:** Free confidential online support, assessments, and exercises.
<https://sso.cedars.hku.hk/tourHeart/>
- **Wellness@HKU Portal:** Self-assessments, resources, and workshops.
<https://wellness.hku.hk/login>

Quick Reminders:

- Feeling stressed is normal. Seeking help early is a sign of strength.
- All services are free, confidential, and available to Arts students.
- In emergencies (after hours), contact CEDARS at
<https://www.cedars.hku.hk/cope/cps/reach-out-for-help>.

Your wellbeing matters. Reach out — support is available.