

RLGN 2020 A01 ★ Introduction to Buddhism

Short Essay 3 Assignment

For the third Short Essay, please answer the question below. Please base your answer on the lectures and readings assigned for class. DO NOT use any outside sources (Wikipedia, other internet sources, or publications not assigned for class) and DO NOT use any form of citation or bibliography. Be sure to answer each part of the question. Do not write an introduction or conclusion; jump right into answering the question. Write as if you are addressing someone who knows nothing about Mahayana. Your essay will be graded on clarity and organization in addition to content.

The maximum length is three pages, double spaced, 12 point font; the minimum length is two and a half pages. Any portion of your essay that exceeds this length will not be graded. Please do not use a title page. Essays are due in class on Thursday, Dec. 6.

Zen and Dzogchen Buddhists developed understandings of the path to Buddhahood that differed significantly from those of earlier Mahayana thought. Zen Buddhists taught various versions of the doctrine of “sudden enlightenment.” Dzogchen thinkers developed a vision of the path to Buddhahood based on their distinctive understanding of the origin of life and the world. What were the conceptual foundations of these new understandings of the path, and how did Buddhists believe that they led to Buddhahood?

In discussing sudden enlightenment, be sure to discuss how it was interpreted by different Zen thinkers including Shen hui, the teachers of the “Golden Age of Ch’an,” and the Rinzai school. Also discuss how the Zen understanding of Buddhahood differed from the Indian understanding. In discussing the Dzogchen system, be sure to discuss how the Dzogchen vision of the path to Buddhahood is based on its understanding of the origin and nature of the universe.