

Buddhism level 2

A course prospectus

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This course will provide a firm foundation in Buddhist thought and practice. It is aimed at people with a basic grounding in meditation and Buddhism, who want to discover whether and how to apply Buddhism in their lives.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

This course runs in six 6-week modules. Each module stands alone, and so you can join and leave the course at any point. You don't need to take the modules in order.

Each session will run from 7.30pm – 10pm. They will usually comprise: a short meditation; a semi-formal presentation by the leader(s); discussion time for participants to relate the material to their own life; experiential workshop aspects.

The course is not intended to be an academic introduction to Buddhism: the emphasis is on the practical application of Buddhist teachings to our own lives.

There will usually be some “practical homework” to do between sessions: this will not usually be study-based. Suggested reading will be given for participants to gain the most from the course, but it will not be integral to the course.

PRE-REQUISITES

It is necessary to have completed:

- the Introduction to Buddhism (Level 1) course, or to have an equivalent knowledge of Buddhism.
- The Introduction to Meditation (Level 1) course, or to be familiar with the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana meditation practices.

COURSE AIMS

By the end of the course, it is hoped the participants will:

- Be able to relate Buddhist teachings to their own experience, and practise them in their daily life.
- Have an appreciation of the breadth and living spirit of the Buddhist tradition, while bringing a critical faculty to their understanding of it.
- See the different Buddhist practices (ethics, meditation, study, friendship, ritual) as an integrated system of development.
- Develop relationships with other participants by sharing experiences and ideas, in order to support practice and stimulate understanding.
- Understand what it means to “be a Buddhist”, and have a sense whether or not they consider themselves to be one.

COURSE OUTLINE – THE SIX MODULES

The six modules are listed below, together with their proposed content — the actual content may vary slightly according to the judgement of the leader.

Traditional Buddhism

What does it mean to Go for Refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?

Faith within a Buddhist context

Enlightenment as goal of Buddhism

Dharma as doctrine – approach to doctrine, parable of raft, 3 levels of wisdom

Dharma as method – become a Dharma chef, threefold path

Dharma as method – the five spiritual faculties

Development of the Sangha – historical development of three yanas, FWBO in context, lineage of Enlightened ones.

Buddhist Wisdom – doctrinal Dharma

Some core ideas to gain a new perspective on our lives.

Views – wrong view, right view, perfect view; qualities of Dharma

Conditionality – conditioned co-production as the middle way

Facets of conditionality – impermanence, compoundedness, interconnectedness

Four Noble Truths

Orders of conditionality – reactive and creative; karmic and non-karmic conditionality

Wisdom and compassion – altruistic dimension of Buddhism, Bodhisattva ideal

Buddhist Wisdom – symbolic Dharma

An overview of the whole of life's dynamics in symbolic form.

The wheel of life – knowing our realm

The wheel of life – karma and rebirth

The wheel of life – the chain of conditioning, “staying in the gap”

The spiral path – to Insight and beyond

The mandala of the five Buddhas – Akshobhya and Amitabha

The mandala of the five Buddhas – Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi & Vairocana

Buddhist ethics

Seeing the implications of our behaviour for ourselves and others

Ethics as individual choice

Love – the golden rule

Generosity – respecting and contributing

Contentment – weakening the neurotic drives

Honesty – being true about ourselves

Awareness – the working edge for any growth

Ritual and Devotion

Exploring the psychology and meaning of Buddhist ritual through the 'Sevenfold Puja'

Who/what do Buddhists worship? Commitment to a path of personal development

The practice of openness, disclosure and confession

The importance of developing positive emotion

Receptivity: turning towards what is deepest in ourselves and the universe

The 'awakening heart' (*bodhicitta*)

The Heart Sutra: the essence of emptiness. Chanting, and the use of mantras

The FWBO System of Spiritual Practice

How does the FWBO work, and help me to develop?

A history of the FWBO

Going for Refuge as spiritual commitment

Spiritual friendship and spiritual community

The system of spiritual practice – especially looking at meditation practices

Whole life practice – practising at home and work

COURSE FEE

There is no set fee for the course modules. They are offered on a "dana" basis, meaning that they are made freely available with no necessity of financial exchange.

Of course, the Centre does have financial needs, so if you appreciate the work of the Centre, you may feel like supporting it. The most helpful way would be to take out a standing order giving a fixed amount monthly. Or you could choose to leave a donation each week, or at the start of each course. Or you could offer time and energy. What you give is entirely up to you.

SUPPLEMENTARY MODULES

It is intended that supplementary modules will be offered occasionally on a weekend. These will give the opportunity to explore an area in more depth, or cover aspects that don't appear in the course. Look out for information about these modules.

BOOKING

It is recommended that you book on a course module – just contact the Centre office. You may have to join a waiting list.