



EKOJI CHILDREN'S DHARMA SCHOOL

What We Teach

The Basics

- Dharma School started in 1979 – two years before Ekoji was founded
- Our goals:
 - *Students should be able to articulate what Buddhism is and what it means to them in their own words*
 - *Students should be able to chant at least two chants on their own*
 - *Students should have their own personal altar and onenju*
- Our program:
 - *School year: October – May*
 - *Classes twice per month; joint class once per semester*
 - ~ 13 hours of class time each school year
 - *Monthly family service, led by Intermediate & Advanced students*
 - *Monthly Tsuji Center cleaning*
 - *Monthly community service “dana bite” activity*
- Annual fees for tuition (non-members) and materials (all students)
- Sangha volunteer teachers (goal: two per class)



EKOJI
– BUDDHIST TEMPLE –

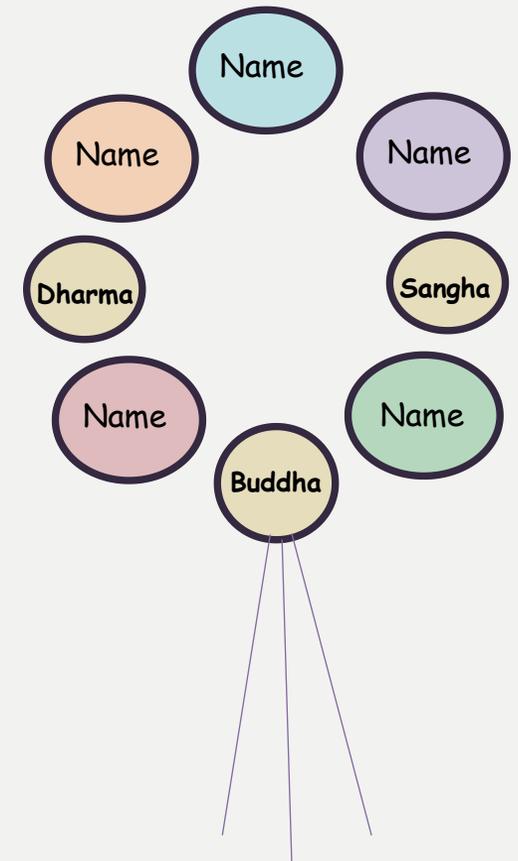




PRE-K – 1ST GRADE

What we teach: Pre-K – 1st grade

- Ages 4 – 6 years old – Parents encouraged to join class
- Primary objective:
 - *Help students feel comfortable with basic terms and rituals*
 - *Begin to see Ekoji as a second home*
- Curriculum focus:
 - *Common terms:*
 - Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha)
 - Hondo, Onaijin, Altar
 - Onenju, Gassho, Oshoko
 - *First day activity: Wall onenju project*
 - Impermanence, Gratitude, Mindfulness
 - *Temple Etiquette*
 - Removing shoes; Bow when entering/leaving; How we treat books and onenjus; No running/yelling in temple or garden
 - *Rituals:*
 - How to gassho
 - Expressing gratitude before/after meals



What we teach: Pre-K – 1st grade



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- Curriculum cont:
 - *Activities:*
 - Making an onenju with large beads and string
 - Making paper altars
 - Reading Buddhist stories and parables
 - “Field trips” to the Hondo and garden:
 - *To learn and practice temple etiquette*
 - *To learn about altar symbols; scavenger hunt to find the symbols in the hondo*
 - *Nature scavenger hunts (gratitude, impermanence, etc)*
 - Games, games, and more games!
 - *Pictionary and charades to reinforce term/ritual knowledge*
 - *Buddhaland game*
 - *Mystery bag sensory game to practice mindfulness*
 - *Disappearing ink and dissolving paper to reinforce impermanence*





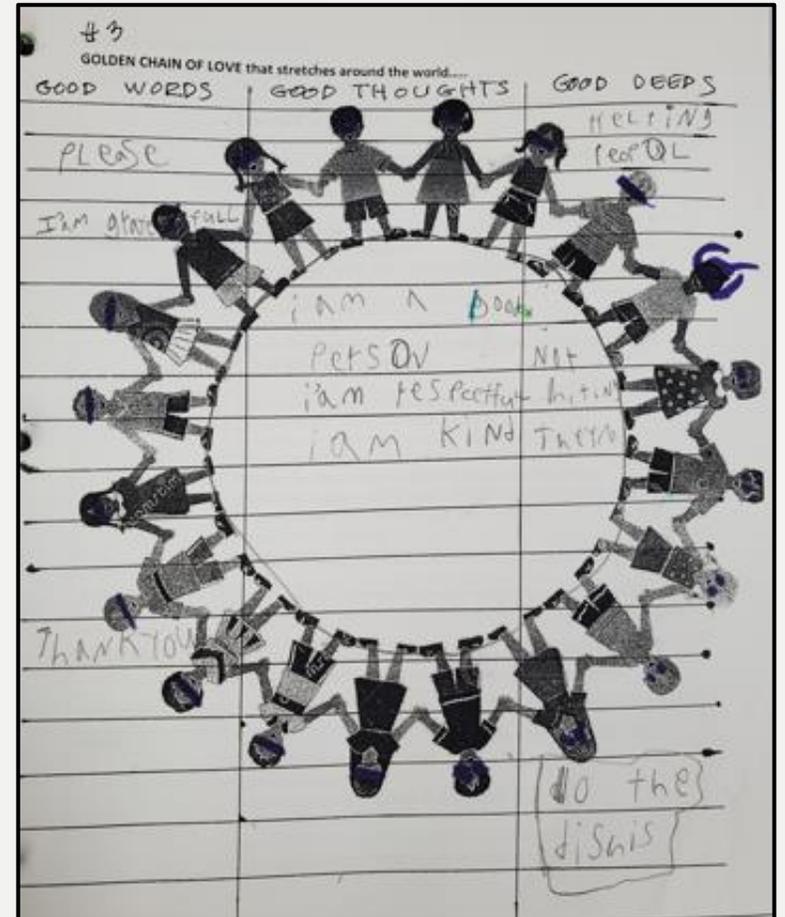
ELEMENTARY

What we teach: Elementary



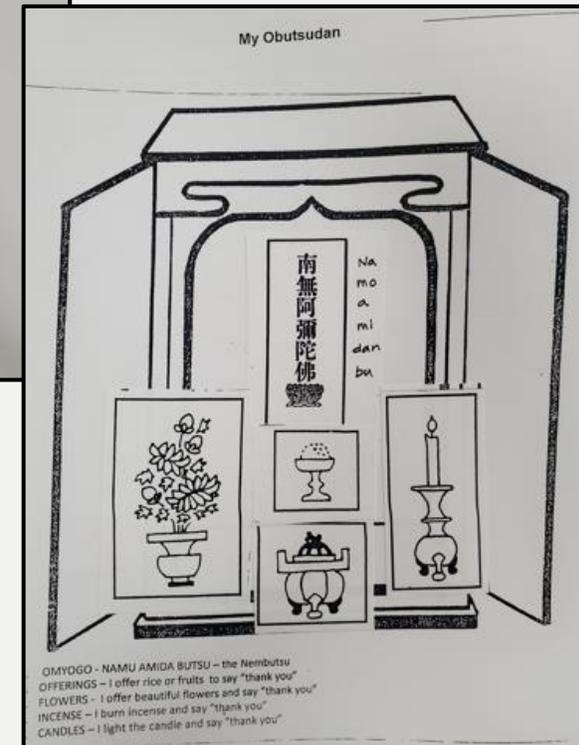
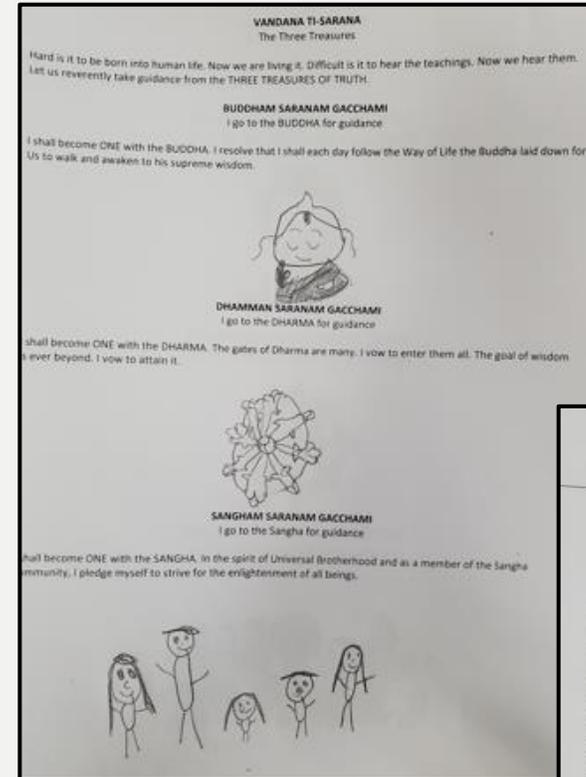
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- Ages 7 – 9 years old – Parents welcome to join class
- Primary objective:
 - *Begin to cover basic Buddhist teachings*
 - *Internalize teachings of Compassion, Gratitude, Dana, Mindfulness, Meditation*
- Class structure:
 - *Opening gassho*
 - *Gassho to Amida or Vandana ti Sarana*
 - *Golden Chain*
 - *Class content / activity*
 - Use of worksheets to reinforce content
 - Students maintain a binder for the year
 - *Closing gassho*



What we teach: Elementary

- Curriculum focus:
 - *Altar – components and care*
 - *Three Treasures*
 - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
 - *Four Gratitudes*
 - Family, Friends and all beings, Country, Three Treasures
 - How we benefit and how we can show our gratitude
 - *Buddhist symbols*
 - Dharmacakra, Wisteria, Buddhist flag, Lotus flower



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What we teach: Elementary



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- Curriculum focus (cont):
 - *Buddhist holidays*
 - *Life of Siddhartha*
 - *Early life of Shinran Shonin*

THE QUEEN'S DREAM



Two thousand five hundred years ago, King Shuddhodana (pronounced: Shoe-DOE-to-na) of the Shakya Clan ruled in northern India. One night his wife, Queen Maya, had a strange and wondrous dream in which a white six-tusked elephant, made of brilliant light, approached and melted into her body. The Queen awoke, filled with greater happiness than she had ever felt before. When told of this dream, the wise men at court declared that it was a sign the Queen would give birth to a son who would someday grow into a great man.

THE BIRTH OF A PRINCE 560 B.C.



As was the custom, when the time for the royal birth drew near, Queen Maya and her entourage proceeded to her parents' home. On the way they passed in the beautiful gardens of Lumbini, and it was here, supporting herself by the branch of a tree, that the Queen gave birth.

A BEAUTIFUL BABY Siddhartha Gautama



From the moment of his birth, the Prince displayed many unusual qualities. He was alert and aware, very pleasing to look at, and had a peaceful, loving disposition. Such wonderful signs appeared at his birth that his father had reason to believe his son would grow up to be an even greater King than himself. This pleased him very much, and he decided to call the child "Siddhartha" (SIDDHAR-THA), which means "the one by whom all things are accomplished."

A BRILLIANT STUDENT



Prince Siddhartha grew up to be a most remarkable boy. He was very intelligent and quickly mastered whatever he was taught. One day his teachers reported to the King, "Your Majesty, the Prince no longer needs us. Not only has he learned everything we had to teach him, but he has taught us many things we did not know ourselves!" The King was very proud and became even more convinced that his son would grow up to be a great ruler.



OCTOBER 05 2025 GASSHO TO AMIDA VANDANA TI SARANA GOLDEN CHAIN EBT Info Sheet All About Me Student Sheet	OCTOBER 19 2025 D.S. SERVICE	OCTOBER 26 2025 TEMPLE ETIQUETTE ONENJU/OJUJU OBUTSUDAN Quick visit to Hondo Obutsudan Bingo Gassho to Amida activity
NOVEMBER 02, 2025 FOUR GRATITUDES and BUDDHIST SYMBOLS Four graticudes Star Box Make onenju	NOVEMBER 09, 2025 D.S. SERVICE	NOVEMBER 23, 2025 GRATITUDE BUDDHIST SYMBOLS Gratitude turkey activity Treasure Hunt around temple
DECEMBER 07, 2025 DANA / BODHI DAY Dana gift card Bodhi leaf holiday wreath	DECEMBER 14, 2025 JOINT CLASS	DECEMBER 21, 2025 D.S. SERVICE
JANUARY 04 2026 New Year's resolutions tied to The Golden Chain	JANUARY 11 2026 D.S. SERVICE	JANUARY 25, 2026 SHINRAN SHONIN PASSING Shinran bio and activity
FEBRUARY 01 2026 DHARMAKAKRA BUDDHIST WHEEL 8-FOLD PATH VT SCLEMM Buddhist Wheel activity Begin Siddhartha	FEBRUARY 08, 2026 D.S. SERVICE	FEBRUARY 22, 2026 NIRVANA DAY - PASSING OF THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA SIDDHARTHA 8-Fold Path and Siddhartha / Devadatta
MARCH 01 2026 SIDDHARTHA Family tree activity Buddhist stories	MARCH 15, 2026 D.S. SERVICE	MARCH 22 2026 SIDDHARTHA Siddhartha timeline activity Make lotus flowers for Hanamatsuri



INTERMEDIATE

What we teach: Intermediate

- Ages 10 - 12 years old
- Primary objective:
 - *Delve deeper into basic Buddhist teachings*
 - *Teach students to lead kansho, service and chanting*
- 3 - 4 year cycle for curriculum content
- Each year starts with learning how to lead service:
 - *Discuss this role as both a privilege and a responsibility*
 - *Walk students through the service script*
 - *Practice chanting voice and how to ring the bell*
 - Focus on Gassho to Amida opening and closing
 - *Practice ritual of bowing before entering / exiting onaijin*
 - *Practice mindfulness when sitting on onaijin*
 - *Practice how to ring the opening kansho bell*



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DHARMA SCHOOL SERVICE EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE, VA

Service Chair Reminders:

- Speak slowly and clearly so the whole sangha can hear you. Only read the words in **bold**.
 - Take the script with you when you go on the *naijin* (altar) and when you return to the podium.
 - Bow towards the scroll when you enter and leave the *naijin*.
 - On the *naijin*, ring the bell so everyone can hear it.
1. Kansho - Ringing of the bell in a 7-5-3 pattern.
 2. Open service by doing *ashoko* (burning incense) before the altar.
 3. Stand at the podium. "Good morning everyone. My name is _____ and I am the chair for this service. Thank you _____ for ringing the Kansho."
 4. Stand at the podium. "Please join me in opening meditation and recitation of the Nembutsu. When we recite the Nembutsu by saying 'Namu Amida Butsu' we are reminded of our Oneness with Amida Buddha and all living things."
 - Go up on the *naijin* (altar). Bow towards the scroll. Sit down by the bell.
 - Ring gong ONCE, then let sound ring and fade away.
 - Pause for silent meditation (take 7 slow breaths).
 - Recite (regular) **"Namu Amida Butsu"**; Sangha responds: **"Namu Amida Butsu"**; Sangha responds: **"Namu Amida Butsu"**; Sangha responds.
 - Stand up and walk to the *naijin* stairs. Bow towards the scroll. Return to the podium.
 5. Stand at the podium. "We will now chant 'Gassho to Amida,' on page 10 of the thin Service Book, which was written for our Dharma School by the late Reverend Tsuji."
 - Go up on the *naijin*. Bow towards the scroll. Sit down by the bell.
 - **Raise the closed service book in front of your forehead and bow**
 - Ring gong 2 times.

Amida Bu
tsu.

 - Chant: **"Namo** | **Amida Bu** | **tsu."**
 - At end, ring gong where shown in the book.
 - Recite (regular) **"Namu Amida Butsu"**; Sangha responds: **"Namu Amida Butsu"**; Sangha responds: **"Namu Amida Butsu"**; Sangha responds.
 - **Close the service book, raise it in front of your forehead, and bow.**
 - After the chant, stand up and walk to the *naijin* stairs. Bow towards the scroll. Return to the podium.
 6. Stand at the podium. "Our Dharma lesson will be given by Reverend Rye." Go and sit in the front row with the rest of the sangha. Return to the podium after the Dharma lesson.
 7. Stand at the podium. "Please rise. Let us now recite Golden Chain I on page xx of the Service Book." Wait until everyone is ready, and then lead the reading with, "I am a link..."
 - When everyone finishes reading the Golden Chain, say, "Please be seated."

What we teach: Intermediate



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- Curriculum focus – Year 1:
 - *Leading service and kansho*
 - *Review:*
 - Temple etiquette
 - Life of Siddartha
 - Altar symbolism – flowers, candle, incense, food offering, scroll/Amida image, bell
 - Onenju symbolism
 - *Siddartha’s first Dharma talk at Deer Park: Turning the Wheel of Truth*
 - First meeting of the Three Treasures – Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
 - Siddartha shared his initial revelation on the cause of human suffering
 - *Four Noble Truths*

What we teach: Intermediate

- Curriculum focus (cont): Year 1 – 2: “the cosmology chart”

Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is suffering



What we teach: Intermediate

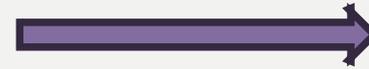
- Curriculum focus (cont): Year 1 – 2: “the cosmology chart”



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Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is suffering



Eight Sufferings:

- Birth
- Death
- Sickness
- Old age
- Being separated from a loved one
- Meeting someone you don't like
- Trying vainly to fulfill your desires
- Living an unenlightened life

What we teach: Intermediate

- Curriculum focus (cont): Year 1 – 2: “the cosmology chart”



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Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is suffering
2. Suffering is caused by the ego (our desires, attachments)
3. Suffering can be stopped...
4. ...by following the **Noble Eightfold Path**



Eight Sufferings:

- Birth
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What we teach: Intermediate

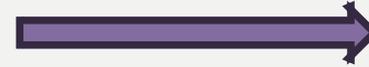
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EKOJI
— BUDDHIST TEMPLE —

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1. Pure/noble View
2. Pure/noble Thought
3. Pure/noble Speech
4. Pure/noble Conduct
5. Pure/noble Livelihood
6. Pure/noble Effort
7. Pure/noble Mindfulness
8. Pure/noble Meditation

What we teach: Intermediate

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— BUDDHIST TEMPLE —

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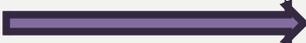
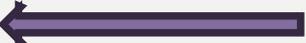
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2. Pure/noble Thought	
3. Pure/noble Speech	VIRTUE
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6. Pure/noble Effort	MEDITATION
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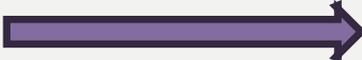
What we teach: Intermediate

- Curriculum focus (cont): Year 1 – 2: “the cosmology chart”

4 Characteristics of Life:

1. No real substance (Interdependence)
2. Everything is impermanent
 - Cause and effect, karma
3. Existence of suffering 
4. Existence of nirvana 
 - “Nirvana” = “to extinguish”

Four Noble Truths:

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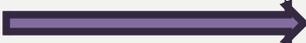
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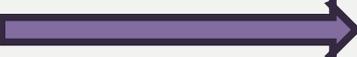
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1. Pure/noble View	WISDOM
2. Pure/noble Thought	
3. Pure/noble Speech	
4. Pure/noble Conduct	VIRTUE
5. Pure/noble Livelihood	
6. Pure/noble Effort	
7. Pure/noble Mindfulness	
8. Pure/noble Meditation	MEDITATION

How we teach—personal examples, verbal escape rooms, Cranium-type games, blank puzzles

What we teach: Intermediate

■ Curriculum focus (cont): Year 2: Six Paramitas

– “Paramita” = Sanskrit for “other shore”

1. Dana (selfless giving)

- Material things; Dharma; Kind and gentle words; Embracing all living things

2. Sila (virtuous and ethical behavior, harmlessness)

- 5 Precepts—Abstain from: killing; lying or bullying; stealing; intoxicants; uncleanness.
- Allows us to live happier lives by no longer causing harm / suffering to others.

3. Ksanti (patience, tolerance, acceptance)

4. Virya (joyous effort, perseverance)

- Necessary to achieve first three paramitas

5. Dhyana (meditation, perfection of concentration)

- Allows deep insight needed to break habits and change behaviors; requires virya

6. Prajna (ultimate wisdom)

- Realization that selflessly serving wellbeing of others is natural expression of awakened heart



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What we teach: Intermediate

■ Curriculum focus (cont): Year 2: Six Paramitas

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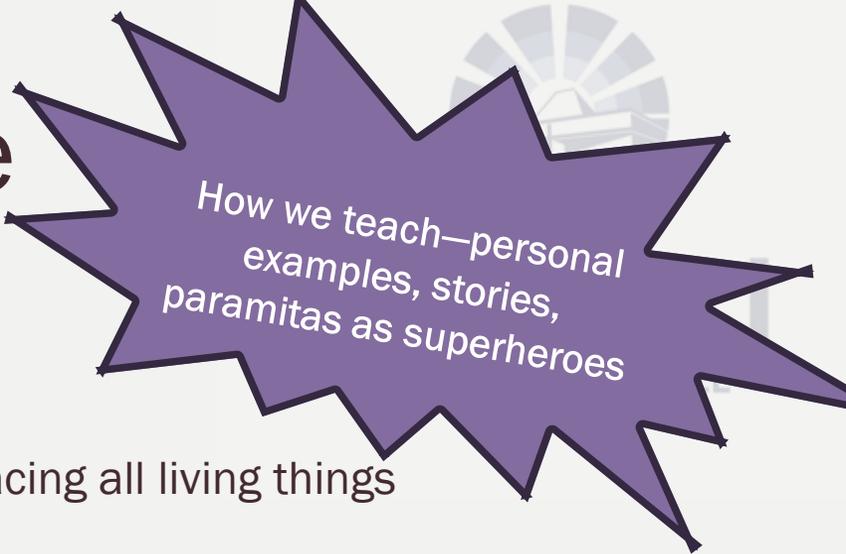
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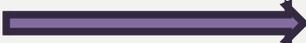
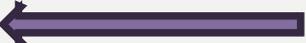
How we teach—personal examples, stories, paramitas as superheroes



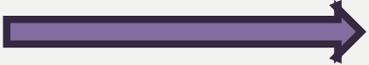
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Four Noble Truths:

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Eight Sufferings:

- Birth
- Death
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- Meeting someone you don't like
- Trying vainly to fulfill your desires
- Living an unenlightened life

Six Paramitas:

- Dana
- Sila
- Ksanti
- Virya
- Dhyana
- Meditation

5 Precepts

1. Pure/noble View	WISDOM
2. Pure/noble Thought	
3. Pure/noble Speech	
4. Pure/noble Conduct	VIRTUE
5. Pure/noble Livelihood	
6. Pure/noble Effort	
7. Pure/noble Mindfulness	
8. Pure/noble Meditation	MEDITATION

What we teach: Intermediate

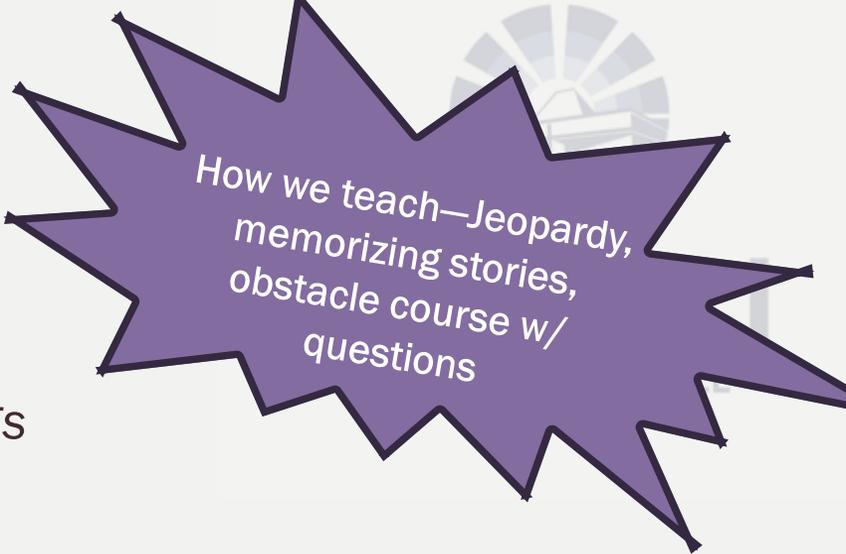


- Curriculum focus – Year 3: Spread of Buddhism
 - *Importance of Silk Road to spread of Buddhist teachings*
 - *Capturing and spreading what Siddartha taught:*
 - 1st Council – 500 disciples met for several months within year after Siddartha’s death
 - *Ananda recited all Dharma talks → “Sutra Pitaka” (basket of teachings)*
 - *Upali recited all advice, scoldings re: behavior → “Vinaya Pitaka” (basket of discipline)*
 - 2nd Council ~ 100 years after Siddartha’s death
 - *Behavior shifting; disciples met and agreed to uphold rules*
 - *Some monks were unhappy, wanted to adapt rules to current times*
 - 3rd Council ~200 years after Siddartha’s death
 - *Several interpretations of the Dharma; 1000 disciples met and reaffirmed sutras*
 - *Also developed commentaries on the Dharma → Abidharma*
 - 4th Council ~ 600 years after Siddartha’s death
 - *12-year meeting during which Dharma was written down*

What we teach: Intermediate

■ Curriculum focus – Year 3: Spread of Buddhism

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 - *Also developed commentaries on the Dharma → Abidharma*
 - **4th Council** ~ 600 years after Siddartha’s death
 - *12-year meeting during which Dharma was written down*



How we teach—Jeopardy,
memorizing stories,
obstacle course w/
questions

What we teach: Intermediate



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— BUDDHIST TEMPLE —

- Curriculum focus – Year 3: Spread of Buddhism
 - *Split of Buddhism into Theravada and Mahayana branches*
 - Seeds took root from 2nd Council decision to keep rules in place
 - *Amida Buddha = Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Compassion*

- Theravada: “Way of Elders”
 - *Follow Siddartha’s path as monk*
 - *Based on Pali Canon & meditation*
 - *Focus on attaining wisdom; compassion & kindness follow*
 - *Ideal: Arhat (an enlightened one)*

- Mahayana: “Great Raft”
 - *Buddhism for the masses, not just monks*
 - *Based on Siddartha’s actions – after attaining enlightenment, helped others*
 - *Enlightenment by oneself is not possible*
 - *Buddha always reaching out to help*
 - *Ideal: Bodhisattva*



ADVANCED

What we teach: Advanced

- Ages 13 - 16 years old
- Primary objective:
 - *Augment foundational knowledge of Buddhist teachings with more advanced concepts*
 - *Teach life of Shinran Shonin and Shin Buddhist basic concepts*
 - *Teach basic context and meaning of key Shin Buddhist sutras*
- 3 - 4 year cycle for curriculum content
- Review + modular approach key for this age range as students are torn between extracurricular activities and Dharma School attendance
- Advanced students help fill in to lead service as needed
- Each class incorporates leading / reciting Juseige



EKOJI
— BUDDHIST TEMPLE —

What we teach: Advanced



- Curriculum Focus – Year 1: Basics Review + Augmentation
 - *Life of Siddhartha – key milestones*
 - *Spread of Buddhism – Council meetings, creating of Tripitaka*
 - *Four Characteristics of Life*
 - All things are impermanent – creates dynamism of life, not only suffering and sadness
 - Nothing exists on its own; everything is a result of causes and conditions
 - *Idea of “mind only”...both delusion and enlightenment originate from mind*
 - Our understanding of the world driven by how our minds combine context & past experience
 - Words and concepts are human-derived...east/west...numbers...good/bad...life/death
 - If mind can understand its own delusion, creates clarity that can lead to enlightenment
 - Buddha looked upon world as a passing cloud – seeing only illusion minimizes attachment
 - *Karma – like energy, never lost, only transformed*
 - Humans are senders and receivers of mental/verbal/physical action-influence
 - Different from idea of fate



EKOJI
— BUDDHIST TEMPLE —

What we teach: Advanced

- Curriculum Focus – Year 1: Basics Review + Augmentation
 - *Life of Siddhartha – key milestones*
 - *Spread of Buddhism – Council meetings, creating of Tripitaka*
 - *Four Characteristics of Life*
 - All things are impermanent – creates dynamism of life, not only suffering and sadness
 - Nothing exists on its own; everything is a result of causes and conditions
 - *Idea of “mind only”...both delusion and enlightenment originate from mind*
 - Our understanding of the world driven by how our minds combine context & past experience
 - Words and concepts are human-derived...east/west...numbers...good/bad...life/death
 - If mind can understand its own delusion, creates clarity that can lead to enlightenment
 - Buddha looked upon world as a passing cloud – seeing only illusion minimizes attachment
 - *Karma – like energy, never lost, only transformed*
 - Humans are senders and receivers of mental/verbal/physical action-influence
 - Different from idea of fate



What we teach: Advanced



- Curriculum Focus – Year 1: Basics Review + Augmentation (cont)
 - *Four Characteristics of Life (cont)*
 - Existence of suffering, existence of nirvana
 - *Shin Buddhist view of rebirth / reincarnation within 10 realms of being:*
 - Buddha
 - Bodhisattva – would-be Buddha, helping others
 - Buddha-for-oneself – internalizing the teachings into one’s own life experience
 - Direct disciple of Buddha – studying the teachings
 - Heavenly beings – intense joy, inner contentment
 - Human beings – status quo state
 - Fighting spirits – selfish/greedy/competitive state
 - Beasts – “Fight or flight” mode, ruled by instinct
 - Hungry spirits – Controlled by insatiable desire
 - Hellish beings – State of absolute suffering and despair, compelled to destroy
 - *Not fixed worlds...we move between realms regularly*

What we teach: Advanced



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 - *Not fixed worlds...we move between realms regularly*

How we teach—
personal examples,
tie to other
teachings
(Six Paramitas)

What we teach: Advanced

- Curriculum Focus – Year 1: Basics Review + Augmentation (cont)
 - *Rest of “Cosmology Chart”*
 - Four Noble Truths, 8 Sufferings, Eightfold Path
 - Six Paramitas, 5 Precepts
 - *Spread of Buddhism along Silk Road, split into Theravada and Mahayana branches*
 - *New content:*
 - “Seven Patriarchs” (Seven spiritual masters)
 - *Shinran chose these seven specifically, to tie Honen’s teachings to Siddhartha’s*
 - India: Nagarjuna (“father of Mahayana”); Vasubandhu
 - China: Donran; Doshaku; Zendo
 - Japan: Genshin; Honen



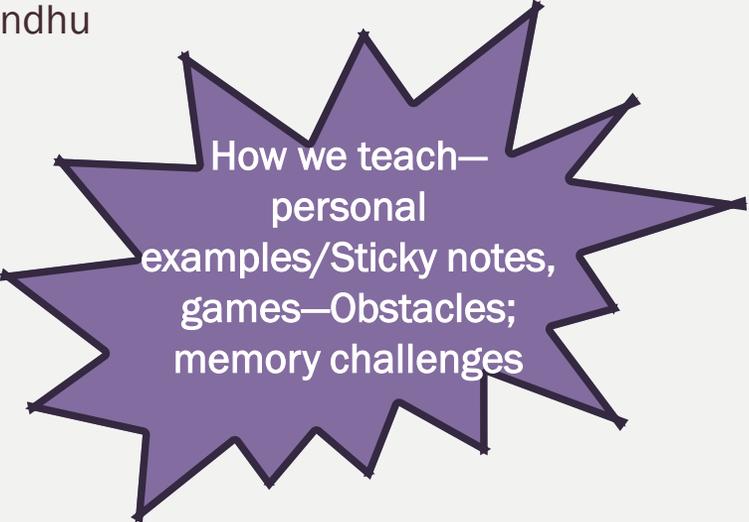
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What we teach: Advanced

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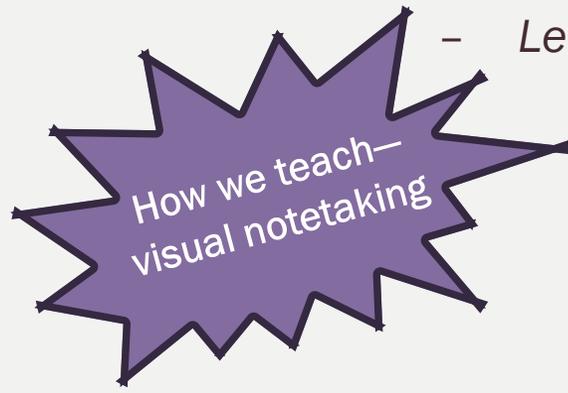
How we teach—
personal
examples/Sticky notes,
games—Obstacles;
memory challenges



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What we teach: Advanced

- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings
 - *Life of Shinran*
 - Japan, 1173: Born into a world of strife and suffering – civil war, natural disasters
 - Lost parents early. He and siblings went to live with uncle. Missed parents terribly.
 - Age 9, asked for permission to enter a monastery on Mt. Hiei.
 - Arrived at night; when head monk said they would admit him in AM, Shinran recited:
“Tis vain to wait until tomorrow; Life is the like the glorious cherry blossom, Which ere morn might be all gone, Night winds as soon might blow them off.”
 - Studied Tendai teachings on Mt Hiei for 20 years.
 - *Nara pilgrimage; vision of Prince Shotoku with prophecy of living only another decade.*
 - *Disillusioned by repeated recitation of Nembutsu and texts, and monks’ political favors.*
 - *Left Mt. Hiei at age 29.*



What we teach: Advanced



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- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)
 - *Life of Shinran (cont)*
 - Went to Kyoto and encountered teachings of Honen Shonin.
 - *Shared with masses that all could be enlightened by trusting in Vow of Amida Buddha.*
 - *Resonated with Shinran, recognizing limits of self-power—became Honen’s disciple.*
 - Monks on Mt. Hiei and Nara angered by Honen’s teachings; convinced Imperial Court to prohibit Pure Land practice.
 - *1207: Honen banished to Shikoku. Shinran’s priesthood removed; banished to Echigo.*
 - *Shinran later said in Tannisho, “Our world is the burning house of transience, hence all things are entirely empty and nonsense, and not true. The Nembutsu alone is true.”*
 - Shinran remained in Echigo for seven years. Married Eshinni, had at least five children.
 - *Took time to adjust to peasant life; experiencing hardship of human existence reinforced his understanding from Honen about the power of Nembutsu for all.*
 - *Relied on Eshinni’s land, her devoted support for his ability to spread teachings.*
 - Pardoned in 1211; planned to return to Kyoto but learned in 1212 that Honen died.

What we teach: Advanced



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- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)
 - *Life of Shinran (cont)*
 - Moved family to Kanto region at age 42; stayed for next 20 years.
 - *Large farming population. Shinran traveled locally, taught power of Primal Vow.*
 - *Compiled his greatest work—Kyogyoshinsho (“Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment”). Declared the work his expression of gratitude for the Teachings.*
 - Anthology of passages drawn from sutras, texts, commentaries that organized Pure Land teachings for himself and others.
 - Never intended to create his own sect. Saw himself only as “fellow traveler.”
 - Returned to Kyoto at age 62; continued writing until age 86. Died in 1262 at age 90.
 - *Honen & Shinran’s legacy:*
 - Shared Buddhism with the people.
 - Broke tradition of self-power practice; instead relied on entrusting heart and the Nembutsu.
 - Shinran sought to develop doctrinal/theoretical foundation for Honen’s teachings, to provide broader appeal and validation. Kyogyoshinsho systematized the Pure Land teachings.

What we teach: Advanced



- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)
 - *Establishment of Shin sect in Japan*
 - Role of Shinran’s daughter, Kakushinni – assigned land acquired through marriage as jointly owned by Shinran’s disciples. Key to establishing Ohtani Mausoleum and Nishi Hongwanji.
 - Nishi Hongwanji = head temple for Jodo Shinshu sect.
 - *Monshu (head priest) is direct descendent of Shinran. Oversees World Jodo Shinshu Coordinating Council (Japan + overseas districts: US, Hawaii, Canada, South America).*
 - *Establishment of Buddhist Churches of America*
 - 1898: Hongwanji sends two ministers to serve Japanese immigrants in US.
 - Growth, centrality of temples amidst anti-Japanese sentiment up to/after 1924 Japanese Exclusion Act
 - 1942 – 1945: Japanese American internment camps. Limited Buddhist materials in camp. Renamed “Buddhist Mission of North America” to “Buddhist Churches of America.”
 - Post-camps – 1960s: Temples, ministers help with resettlement.
 - 1981 – Ekoji Buddhist Temple established for DC area.
 - *Comparison of BCA temples via hardcopy newsletters and websites.*



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What we teach: Advanced

- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)
 - *Honen read all sutras five times, chose three (Triple Sutras) that all focus on the Nembutsu. Most important scriptures of Pure Land School.*
 - Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life (aka Larger Sutra)
 - Sutra on the Contemplation of Amitayus (aka Contemplation Sutra)
 - Sutra on the Buddha Amitayus (aka Smaller Sutra)
 - *Larger Sutra – serves as core of Shinran’s teachings.*
 - Told from Siddhartha’s viewpoint, as told to Ananda. Ananda says Siddhartha is radiant; Siddhartha says he was born to share the story of Amida Buddha.
 - *Tells the myth of a mortal king who hears teachings of Lokeshvararaja Buddha; gives up his throne to study Buddhism and takes on name of Dharmakara.*
 - *Determined to create a Pure Land with the virtues of all other buddha-lands.*
 - *Describes his Pure Land in the 48 Vows. 18th Vow says he will not become a Buddha unless all other beings can become a Buddha.*
 - *Practices for eons and eventually becomes Amida Buddha.*
 - Siddhartha’s way to try to explain the deep joy of enlightenment to those who have not experienced it. How do you explain love...loss of a loved one...to those with no experience?

What we teach: Advanced



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- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)
 - *Larger Sutra (cont)*
 - Can be divided into five parts:
 - *Introduction – those present at Vulture’s Peak to hear Siddartha’s message*
 - *Sanbutsuge – the meeting between Lokeshvararaja and Dharmakara where the latter expresses his desire to become a Buddha for the sake of all human beings.*
 - *48 Vows*
 - *Juseige – repetition and summary of the 48 Vows by Dharmakara*
 - *Conclusion – states that Dharmakara has fulfilled the vows and is Amida Buddha.*
 - *VERY brief overview of each of the 48 Vows*
 - Vows describe characteristics of Dharmakara’s Pure Land, characteristics of Amida Buddha

What we teach: Advanced



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- Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)
 - **18th Vow (Primal Vow, “Hongan”):** *“If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions, who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the Wonderful Dharma.”*
 - “Call my name” can also be “is mindful of my name”
 - *Not a self-effort – an unhindered, automatic expression of gratitude to Amida after sincerely and joyfully entrusting oneself to Amida*
 - Exclusionary clause
 - *Killing one’s father, mother, arhat, injuring the Buddha, creating a schism in the Sangha*
 - *Current thought is that this is more of a warning of things that should not be thought/acted upon; even for offenders, Infinite Compassion of Amida Buddha means they are bound for Pure Land.*

What we teach: Advanced

■ Curriculum Focus – Year 2: Life of Shinran, Basic Shin Teachings (cont)

– *Shinjin* – “entrusting heart”

- Key for “householder” Shin Buddhists

- A natural progression from encountering the Truth of the Dharma and the 18th Vow – we realize that our own attachments pull us away from enlightenment but that we embrace in the compassion of Amida Buddha.

- Result: Unprompted reciting of Nembutsu as expression of gratitude, not a practice.

– *Deep Hearing* → *Means to recognize the constant call of Amida Buddha*

- Natural function of an entrusting heart

- Phase of Going (Oso-Eko)

– *Our reaction to Amida’s calling out to us, to help us truly see ourselves & the world*

- Some will awaken to the call, awaken to the compassion of Amida, live a life of shinjin
- Some will doubt the message and continue to live in suffering

- Phase of Returning (Genso-Eko)

– *Upon point of death or at time of enlightenment, we drop our ego/desires and realize our oneness with Amida Buddha, become part of Amida’s constant call to others.*

- *Idea of empty Pure Land—because once enlightened, immediately join Amida’s compassion and outreach.*



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What we teach: Advanced



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■ Curriculum Focus – Year 3: Key Sutras

– *Sanbutsuge*

- Review context – tells story of Dharmakara meeting Lokeshvararaja and declaring his intent to become a Buddha for the sake of all human beings
- Recite Sanbutsuge
- Read English translation together from service book (flowery language)
- Have students work together to create own translation
- Example lines from a previous class:
 - *“He’s the greatest, he’s like Zac Efron, he walks in and everyone freaks out. Like when Spongebob plays the chord and it resonates throughout Bikini Bottom. Everyone ‘gets it’ and it resonates with everyone that hears it. Even if you can’t see him, just hearing him as a ton of impact.”*
 - *“Lokeshvararaja knows everything, he understands all the teachings of the Dharma...His teachings are like Hulk Hogan’s hair, everyone recognizes it, it’s his unsaid greatness.”*

What we teach: Advanced



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- *“Lokeshvararaja knows everything, he understands all the teachings of the Dharma...His teachings are like Hulk Hogan’s hair, everyone recognizes it, it’s his unsaid greatness.”*

(This class kept using
Spongebob analogies
so we watched the
movie together)

What we teach: Advanced



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■ Curriculum Focus – Year 3: Key Sutras (cont)

– *Juseige*

- Review context – repeats and summarizes Dharmakara’s 48 Vows
- Review 18th Vow explanation
- Recite Juseige
- Read English translation together from service book (flowery language)
- Have students work together to create own translation
- Example lines from a previous class:
 - *“Like having the major stink bomb that takes over all smells...When I become a Buddha, I will release the best video game that would make all other video game makers go out of business. The light of enlightenment will be so dope that the sun and the moon will no longer be cool. Like having a diamond ring on top of a table made of diamonds...everyone focused on the ring before, but now no one even sees it.”*
 - *“Listen to my words and I will do the vows, and you’ll have devas raining good stuff on you...Like going to Subway and not having the money to pay for the food order, and Dharmakara comes up behind you and puts in his debit card to pay for the order (and he buys you a cookie).”*

What we teach: Advanced



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- Curriculum Focus – Year 3: Key Sutras (cont)
 - *Shoshinge*
 - Part of Kyogyoshinsho, Shinran’s major life work.
 - Shoshinge appears near end of Chapter 2 (true practice), bridge to Chapter 3 (shinjin).
 - *“Shou-shin-ge” translates to “Song on what is true shinjin”*
 - *Original title was “Shoshin-nembutsu-ge”*
 - Shinran saw shinjin and nembutsu as two sides of the same coin...no shinjin without nembutsu bursting forth...no true nembutsu without a shinjin awakening.
 - In Shoshinge intro, Shinran thanks the Seven Patriarchs for conveying the teachings of the Buddha from India, through China, to Japan (and to Shinran).
 - Walk students through the first nine lines of the Shoshinge, including meaning behind each Chinese character
 - *First 2 lines: I take refuge in the Tathagata of immeasurable life. I take refuge in the Buddha of inconceivable light.*
 - Shinran’s amazement at the beauty of this light that penetrates his heart and mind in the midst of his suffering and darkness.

What we teach: Advanced



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- Curriculum Focus – Year 3: Key Sutras (cont)
 - *Shoshinge (cont)*
 - *Lines 3 & 4: At the time that Bodhisattva Dharmakara was studying under Lokesvararaja Buddha.*
 - Shinran’s opening to praising the teachers who enabled him to receive the teachings, starting with the original source of the awakening.
 - *Line 5: Dharmakara sees how various buddhalands were created*
 - Wants to create his own Pure Land, wants to know range of options, characteristics
 - *Line 6: Lokesvararaja helps Dharmakara understand the capabilities of devas and humans of each land*
 - Helps Dharmakara understand nature of all beings whom he wants included in his Pure Land
 - *Line 7: Dharmakara makes a vow that cannot be surpassed*
 - *Line 8: A vow that is both great and wide to save all sentient beings*
 - *Line 9: Dharmakara contemplates his vow deep in his heart for five kalpas*
 - Trying to truly understand hearts and minds of all sentient beings



SENIOR

What we teach: Senior

- Ages 17 – 18 years old (but have not held for 7 - 8 years)
- Primary objective:
 - *Comparative religions*
 - *Practical application of Buddhist teachings to life issues*
- Flexible scheduling to accommodate busy senior schedules
- For comparative religions, have used:
 - *Great Courses' Cultural Literacy for Religion course*
 - Hinduism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc
 - *Visits to local temples and churches*
- Class discussions on:
 - *Buddhism and interfaith relationships; sexuality and gender; death; parenting*
 - *Strategies for incorporating Shin Buddhism in college life, early adulthood*



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