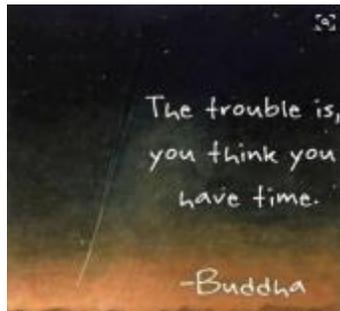


What the Buddha DID (N'T) say: Types of Source Material and Why They Matter



(nope!)



(nope!)



(nope!)

- One main objective in this class is for you to learn to differentiate between modern Western representations of Buddhism and traditional Asian Buddhism.
- Another is to demonstrate the difference between the perspectives of insiders (practitioners) and outsiders (scholars). This is critical to understand the difference between the *practice* of religion and the *academic study* of religion.

Both of these aims require one is able to *locate, identify, discriminate, and evaluate* different types of source material.

Types of Source Material in the academic disciplines of Religious Studies & Buddhist Studies

1. Source material from *within* the religious tradition:

These are the “texts” produced by Buddhists with the aim of clarifying Buddhist practice and goals.

- Primary or canonical religious texts*: These are primary texts within a religious tradition. In Buddhism, there are three sets of primary texts: the Pali Canon, the Mahayana sutras and the Tantric literature. The oldest is the Pali Canon, which includes the suttas (the sayings of the Buddha). Example: *The Satipatthana Sutta*
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.010.nysa.html>
- Commentarial literature*: Have you ever wondered why there are many different types of Buddhists, Hindus, Christians ect? One reason for this is that there are different *interpretations* or *commentaries* on the primary literature and communities of believers often gather around these different interpretations. A commentator is a person of recognizable authority within the tradition who tries to clarify the original meaning of a text. Example: Thera Soma’s commentary on *The Satipatthana Sutta*
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html>
- Contemporary Teachings*: These are texts from contemporary Buddhist teachers and communities that often attempt to apply the canonical teachings to a new context. Example: Thich Nhat Hanh, “The Practice of Mindfulness,”

<https://www.lionsroar.com/mindful-living-thich-nhat-hanh-on-the-practice-of-mindfulness-march-2010/>

2. **Source material from *outside* of the religious tradition:**

These are texts produced by non-Buddhists (and sometimes Buddhists) that *have different aims and agendas* such as providing historical and cultural context for Buddhist practices or even critiquing Buddhism.

- a. *Secondary Peer-reviewed Academic Literature* This is work produced by scholars of Buddhism that is submitted to an academic journal or press. Before publication, they are evaluated by other scholars to make sure they are historically accurate and deliver a coherent and convincing thesis ect.

Example: Rupert Gethin, "On Some Definitions of Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal*

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14639947.2011.564843>

- b. *Primary Popular Literature*: These would include newspaper articles and magazine journals. A number of different factors would determine how historically accurate and theoretically convincing these were:

Examples: "Should we be mindful of Mindfulness," *The Guardian*

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/23/should-we-be-mindful-of-mindfulness-nhs-depression>

For both your mid-term and your final project, you will be required to draw from and compare a variety of sources. As a warmer to and preparation for those projects, you will be required to produce an *informal comparative reflection* paper on *two different sources* above. The paper should be written in a 12-inch font and be between 400-600 words (not including notes)

Instructions:

- From the above examples, choose either a primary text and a contemporary teaching **OR** a secondary peer-review article and the popular literature article **Or** one of the texts produced from inside the tradition and one from outside.
- Read each one and take *some notes* on the different rhetorical aspects of each (see pointers below) These notes should be included at the bottom of your paper.
- The *first* part of the reflection should be comparing the sources: What was the same about them? What was different? Did they make conflicting or complimentary claims?
- The *second* part of the reflection should be on the experience of working across these sources. What did you know about sources before doing this exercise? Could you have clearly identified these two sources? How was the exercise for you? Did it correct, confirm or clarify your previous ideas on sources?

Rhetorical Analysis Pointers:

“A Rhetorical Analysis is an essay that breaks a work of non-fiction into parts and then explains how the parts work together to create a certain effect—whether to persuade, entertain or inform.”ⁱ

- *Author*: is the author a Buddhist teacher? A scholar? A scholar-practitioner? A journalist? Knowing who the author is often helps to determine the type of source but this also gets tricky because sometimes academics write popular (non-peer-reviewed) pieces and sometimes practitioners are also scholars.
- *Argument*: What is the main thesis or argument of the author?
- *Purpose*: What is the author’s main purpose? Are they attempting to inform, persuade, defend or critique?
- *Method*: Does the author explicitly share their method? Do they use personal experience? Do they use empirical evidence or anecdotal? Are they working with texts or fieldwork? Do they include interviews?
- *Evidence*: What type of evidence do they produce to support their thesis?
- *Audience*: Who are they writing for? Buddhists, scholars, the general public?
- *Publishing Context*: Where is the piece published? Is it published by a Buddhist journal or an academic press?

Grades and Rubric: This assignment will be graded on a scale between 1-3 and will be worth 5% of your final course grade. It will be graded by the following category:

3: Above Satisfactory: Your assignment shows full and thoughtful engagement with all criteria: you have applied the rhetorical analysis pointers to each text, made valid comparative pointers and reflected on the process of the comparison.

2: Satisfactory: Your assignment meets the criteria of the assignment.

1: Below Satisfactory: Your assignment is incomplete in terms of both the source analysis and/or meta-reflection of the source analysis.

Resources:

Fake Buddha Quotes <http://fakebuddhaquotes.com/category/fake-buddha-quotes/>

Nope, Buddha Didn’t Say That <https://www.pinterest.com/carriekelley/nope-buddha-didnt-say-that/>

What is a Rhetorical Analysis?

<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Pedagogy/Rhetorical%20Analysis%20heuristic.htm>

ⁱ University Writing Center Texas A& M <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/Students/Writing-Speaking-Guides/Alphabetical-List-of-Guides/Academic-Writing/Analysis/Rhetorical-Analysis>