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Term Paper for Contemporary Buddhist Ethics

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RELI 3332: The Buddhist Tradition
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Department of Religion

Term Paper for Contemporary Buddhist Ethics (draft)

The term paper will require research and analysis of a topic as listed below. The essay should be typed, double-spaced, and at least 5000 words in length. It should be properly footnoted (or endnoted), with bibliography, and follow a standard and consistent style. For bibliographical assistance, you should consult Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, pp. 439-462; Robinson and Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion* (3rd ed.), pp. 243-269; the *ATLA Religion Database*; and Chris Nolan, the Assistant University Librarian with an advanced degree in Religious Studies.

The research paper will have two components: an issue and a geographic focus.

a. "Buddhist Responses to ..."

Your topic is a Buddhist examination of a contemporary issue or problem, based on course readings this semester, with additional research. Please address only one of the following issues:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| a) Animals (meat eating or experimentation) | f) suicide |
| b) plants, trees, and forests | g) euthanasia |
| c) economics in the modern world | h) abortion |
| d) Buddhist involvement in violence | i) contraception |
| e) Buddhist peace activism | j) sexual equality (nuns or laywomen) |
| | k) homosexuality |

Your approach should be both descriptive and analytical. That is, what are Buddhists actually doing and saying about this issue – who? where? (the descriptive aspect) -- and what is a Buddhist understanding or analysis of the problem (the analytical aspect)? This project involves a deeper examination of readings done by the class as a whole, focusing on one issue.

b. "The Ever-Turning Wheel of the Law: Buddhism Today"

You will focus your topic by concentrating on a country. Probably the most interesting countries would be:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| a) Cambodia | f) Burma |
| b) China | g) Thailand |
| c) Japan | h) Sri Lanka |
| d) Tibet | i) United States |
| e) Korea | j) Vietnam |

This dimension of the project could be introduced with a brief overview of the history of Buddhism in that country, perhaps including a discussion of the types of Buddhism most prevalent. In addition, you should examine the possible reasons for the appeal of Buddhism in the culture as well as conflicts with other traditions indigenous to it. What kinds of people have been attracted to Buddhism? What forms has it taken? How has it adapted to local conditions? What is the present situation and prospects for the future? This term paper will draw on common readings done by the class, but focus on a specific culture, especially as Buddhism is practiced in that culture today.

General instructions and guidelines:

1. Formulate a manageable topic that can be treated within 5000 words
2. Seek out a variety of sources: book-length studies, academic encyclopedias, peer-reviewed journals, and popular media (newspapers, magazines, etc.)
3. Evaluate the quality of the sources, with attention to authorship (citation indexes, academic or professional background, etc.)
4. Use proper, consistent citation