

Philosophy of Religion
Spring 2015
Essay #1:

Due Tuesday, March 10, 2015 (before 11:50pm)

Prompt: Does meditation reveal reality as it is?

Assignment objective: to demonstrate knowledge of eastern metaphysics and spiritual practice as presented in scholarly sources, and to critically engage these views by developing clear, well-organized, and cogent arguments.

NOTE: This assignment will be submitted online through Turnitin on the course iLearn page. Follow the Turnitin link and follow instructions.

Please save document in Word format and title file using your last and first name as follows:
302_last name_first name.doc or .docx

Assignment Clarified and Important Guidelines

Before writing your paper, please read the following instructions carefully. Before submitting your paper, go down this list and check off each after you have confirmed that your paper meets the requirement. If you find that there are parts you are not checking off, your paper is missing something that should be addressed before submitting it.

- (1) *Prompt Clarified.* Your paper must provide a clear answer to the prompt.
 - a. The Vedic-Hindu and Buddhist traditions each maintain that meditation reveals reality as it is, in contrast to reality as it merely appears to us. Carefully formulate a “yes” or “no” response to the prompt. This is your thesis, which of course you may qualify in whatever way you wish in the course of your paper. (See below)
 - b. In answering the prompt, be clear about what meditation is according to the eastern traditions we have explored. You are not making up your own idea of meditation. You are answering the prompt in the light of how long-standing spiritual and philosophical traditions (you have been studying) have understood this concept and practice.
 - c. Since the eastern traditions have understood meditation differently, you should be clear which meditation concept/practices you have in mind. Be as specific as possible. For example, are you engaging the view that meditation is a practice of controlling the mind to induce a state of tranquility, or are you discussing meditation as just a simple observing or watching of what is arising in the mind (without trying to control the mind)? Don’t feel you need to discuss all different views. Write on the one you feel most strongly about.
- (2) *Need for Quotations.* Support for your answer should involve the use of relevant quotes from the text(s) and, where necessary, references to particular passages of the

text that clarify or support your argument. Do not go overboard with quotations. Select quotes that are most relevant to your argument, and just provide references to other passages that provide additional support to your argument.

- (3) *Thesis Statement.* Your thesis statement is your main point and should embody a clear answer to the prompt. For example: *In this paper I will argue that the eastern view of meditation as a practice of just observing what is happening in our experience dissolves appearances and reveals reality as it is.*
- (4) *Body of Paper.* Be sure that you use the body of the paper to clarify and provide clear support for your thesis statement.
 - a. Make sure that you accurately explain the central concepts, e.g., meditation, clear seeing, tranquility, no self, appearances, mind, reality *as it is*. Do not discuss concepts that have no direct bearing on your thesis or argument.
 - b. Have you used quotes and references to the text at the appropriate points to back up your claims from the text?
 - c. Does each paragraph have a clearly stated main point? Avoid extremely long paragraphs, or paragraphs in which too many ideas are discussed.
 - d. Does the body of your paper make your argument clear? Here's a way to determine this. First, limit your argument to no more than two supporting reasons. Second, make sure that each paragraph makes a point that is clearly connected to one of your supporting reasons. This is sometimes most effectively accomplished by using each paragraph (between introduction and conclusion) to develop one of your supporting reasons.
- (5) *Introductory Paragraph and Conclusion.* These should be short, that is, no more than a few sentences. Avoid “dramatic” openings like “Ever since the dawn of humankind. . .,” as these trick you into thinking you’re actually saying something, and they put the reader to sleep. Cut to the chase. State your thesis in the introduction. Summarize your argument (thesis and supporting reasons) in the conclusion. Do not add additional points when you summarize your argument.
- (6) *Technical Requirements for the Paper.* Do not neglect!
 - a. Your paper must be between 900 and 1,000 words, double-spaced, and **you must include a word count**, preferably at the end of your paper. You may go over the word limit, but do not go over 1,200 words.
 - b. Use a standard font such as Times Roman.
 - c. **Do not use any sources in addition to the course texts.** However, you may use notes, handouts, or power points from the course. Be sure to provide citations from any materials that are not your own.
 - d. For all quotations from the text, provide references by page number or chapter/verse.
 - e. Make sure your paper conforms to MLA format, including the requirement for a “works cited” page. If your paper fails to conform to MLA guidelines, your

paper may be docked up to a whole letter grade. See the following for MLA guidelines: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Professor Sudduth