**1.3 Annotation-Interpretation of Buddhist Text Assignment**

*Due on Monday, Apr 10, 11:59 pm*

***NOTE! Late policy: 5% off for each day late***

**Overview**

This assignment will be to **create a basic outline** and then i**nsert a series of comments** into a Word doc. of a classic Buddhist meditation text (chosen from the three listed below).

*Descriptive* Outline of the text [20%]

Begin by breaking the text down into its main sections by **inserting section headings into the text,** giving each a creative/descriptive title. This will greatly help to getting a sense of the text as a whole and how the various parts are related.

Each of these texts has three main sections: a short introduction, the main body of the text that contains the teaching, and short ending that contains the audience’s reaction. Therefore, you should insert headings before these three main sections and then another set of headings that breaks down the main teaching section into its main parts. For example, I outlined the *Heart Sutra* thus:

II - Shariputra’s Question [Introduction]

II - A Short Teaching on the Perfection of Wisdom [Main teaching].

1. Form is Empty; Emptiness is Form
2. Emptiness as Absence
3. Relying on the Perfection Wisdom
4. The Perfection of Wisdom Mantra

III - A Generous Reception [Conclusion]

(hint: using “Headings” in Word is a great way to make a clear outline)

Annotations [80%]

It is required that you make at least **10 comments** on the text, with comments being **50-70 words apiece.** At last **four** of the comments should refer directly to the *contexts* that may surround this text and give it meaning. Refer to materials from the course, including Video Lectures, readings, in-class discussions and lectures, and your own experience and reflections from the course contemplative exercises.

Note that interpretation means that you ***present a point of view to the passage that shows it in new light, or gives a relevant and interesting way to look at it****.* We are not particularly after traditional Buddhist explanations (although you can show your knowledge of Buddhism), but creative interpretation in the entire context of human experience. ***Do not be merely descriptive***. Ask yourself: ***what might this passage mean? Am I providing anything new and engaging to the way this passage is viewed?*** This also applies to experiential interpretation. It is not enough to merely connect the passage to your own experience, if you don't present an interpretation that connects to some of the broader themes we have been addressing in the course.

It isn’t about being “right” - it’s about thinking deeply and widely about what the details of the practice might mean. You can read it experientially, or socially, or psychologically, or symbolically, or any other way - as long as it demonstrates more than just a surface analysis of the text. To do this assignment properly, you should spend some time with text, reading and re-reading it and thinking about how it relates to the topics and themes that we have discussed so far in the course.

**Contexts:**

Four of your comments must be about the kinds of contexts that are implied - or perhaps explicitly stated - in the text. In general, the possible types of contexts include:

* **Cultural and social issues and values** (gender, social roles, group dynamics, etc.)
* **Environmental and Temporal Context** (i.e. does the text specify or assume anything about what kind of *environments* are helpful or unhelpful, or any other ideas about *setting* or *time* and *duration* of the practice?)
* **Philosophical and doctrinal** **assumptions**: in what ways are *Buddhist* ideas present in the text? (i.e. the ideas and assumptions that underlie a particular statement. These could include assumptions about reincarnation, the Buddhist idea of salvation and the problems of suffering, or any other philosophical idea that seems to lie beneath the surface)
* **Integrated Context:** what are the other practices that surround and perhaps give meaning to the idea or practice in question (e.g., what kinds of *prerequisites* are mentioned? Does there seem to be a *required order* that one must do the mentioned practices? Does the text mention *why* they are to be done in this order? If not, why do you think they are put in that order?)
* **Literary aspects** (How does the text use imagery and metaphor to communicate its message? It what ways do you think these devices are effective in communicating to an audience?  What kinds of literary techniques does the author use that seem unusual  to you? Why might the text be arranged in the order that it is?)
* There are other kinds of contexts, too: Aesthetic, typological (ideas about types of people, for example), historical, etc. Perhaps you will reveal one not listed here…

**Texts:**

Please choose one of the following texts (these are available in Word doc form in Resources: Assignment Texts: Assignment 1 )

* “Turning the Wheel of Truth” (pp. 243-246). [“Turning the Wheel of the Truth Sutra-243-246 From Rupert Gethin's Sayings of the Buddha”]
* “The Fire Discourse” (pp. 222-225). [ “Fire Discourse-222-225 from Rupert Gethin's Sayings of the Buddha.”]
* “The Four Foundations of Mindfulness”, as found in Sarah Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from Pāli Sources*. London: Routledge, 2006: [The Four Foundations of Mindfulness]

**Downloading and Annotating the Text**

1) Go to “**Resources**” > “**Texts for Assignment 3**” on our main Collab page and select from among the three texts

2) Cut and paste your text into a Word Doc., outlining as you do so.

3) When you are ready to begin making your comments, select the word, sentence, or paragraph in the Word Doc. that you want to comment on [in the example comment in the document, the phrase “direct path.” has been selected]

4) Click the “**Review**” Tab (top of the page) and click on the “**New**” icon under “Comments” [in PC, click the “**New Comment**” icon].

(Alternatively, in Mac, you can select “**New Comment**” from the pull down menu under  the “**Insert**” tab at the top of your screen).

5) Enter in your comment into the comment field. Remember, comments need to be at least 50 words (and you should try to keep them to under 70 words) – to check the word count, simply highlight the text in your comment and click the “**Tools**” tab at the top and click “**Word Count**.” [For PC, on the “**Review”** tab, in the “**Proofing”** group, click “**Word Count**.”]

**Saving and Submitting**

6) Once you have finished entering your 10 comments, click “**Save as**” under the “**File**” tab. Name the document according to the following format: **Sec#.Last name.Annotation Assignment.** For example: **108.Baggins.Annotation Assignment.docx.**

7) Email your saved document as an attachment directly to your TA before the submission deadline (*Monday, April 10, 11:59 pm*)