Draft Structure for New Buddhism Level 1 Course (May 2015)

Week 1

The Buddha’s quest

* Who we are: the Triratna Buddhist Community and the Three Jewels
* The problem of suffering and Prince Siddhartha’s ‘four sights’
* Why do Buddhists meditate?
* Practical meditation: body awareness

Week 2

What is awakening?

* Siddhartha’s quest
* The ‘middle way’
* The Four Noble Truths
* Practical meditation: introducing the Mindfulness of Breathing

Week 3

What did the Buddha teach?

* The difficulty of communicating a direct experience
* A conceptual model of reality: universal inter-connectedness
* The implications of conditionality: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and lack of enduring identity
* Practical meditation: more about the Mindfulness of Breathing

Week 4

Practising the Dharma together

* How the Buddha helped all sorts of people
* Human relations are difficult – how do we know how best to behave?
* Reactive and creative, unskilful and skilful
* What ‘karma’ means
* Practical meditation: positive intentions and the Metta Bhavana

Week 5

The Dharma as a practical path

* The taste of the great ocean
* Working with complexity – the 5 precepts
* How ethics and meditation support wisdom and compassion
* Practical meditation: more about the Metta Bhavana

Week 6

A Triratna Model: the 5 dimensions of practice

* Integration: harnessing our energies
* Positive emotion: learning to behave more creatively
* Letting go of ego and relating to something bigger
* The importance of receptivity
* Practical meditation: building our own, creative practice