Presuppositions of Buddhism
Due to negative experiences in previous classes, let me be clear— you are required to understand the following:

Presuppositions of Buddhism
What does “presupposition” mean?

It come from of the verb: to suppose

To suppose being to believe
to guess
to posit a theory
to make an assumption

It is NOT a FACT
What does “presupposition” mean?

In the religious studies context, “pre-supposition” is a very specific term meaning:

those ideas, notions, or assumptions that are foundational to the tenets of the religion.

In other words, the “underlying root axioms of a religion”

Without presuppositions, a religion would have no questions to answer
Like Atlas, the presuppositions support the ideas and speculations of the “theologians” of the particular religion about the “answers” to the questions postulated by the presuppositions.
Vedic literature

Vedas are constructed in what is known as Vedic Sanskrit

“Veda means "(sacred) knowledge" (cf. English wit). The Four Vedas are the oldest extent texts of India and contain religious and ritual poetry, ritual formulas and the explanatory prose that interprets these very texts; additionally, in the late Vedic Upanisads there is some early philosophy.” M. Witzel Indo-Eurasia Message #4911
Vedic literature

Vedas are in what is known as Vedic Sanskrit

Rig veda the oldest ca, 1450-1350 BCE

Saman

Yajur (“Black” & “White” Versions)

Atharvaveda ca. 1000 BCE
All of this material was taught by rote memorization

Dvi-vedi “he of the two vedas”

Tri-vedi “he of the three vedas”

Catur-vedi “he of the four vedas”
Notion of invocation of the Gods most important to Buddhism

Son of Arthavan (inventor of the Fire offerings)

Indra

Dadicha

Ashvins
The Hymns of the Rig Veda are the most telling

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/rigintro.asp

HYMN I. Agni.

1 I Laud Agni, the chosen Priest, God, minister of sacrifice, The hotar, lavishest of wealth.
2 Worthy is Agni to be praised by living as by ancient seers. He shall bring. hitherward the Gods.
3 Through Agni man obtaineth wealth, yea, plenty waxing day by day, Most rich in heroes, glorious.
4 Agni, the perfect sacrifice which thou encompassest about Verily goeth to the Gods.
5 May Agni, sapient-minded Priest, truthful, most gloriously great, The God, come hither with the Gods.
6 Whatever blessing, Agni, thou wilt grant unto thy worshipper, That, Angiras, is indeed thy truth.
7 To thee, dispeller of the night, O Agni, day by day with prayer Bringing thee reverence, we come
8 Ruler of sacrifices, guard of Law eternal, radiant One, Increasing in thine own abode.
9 Be to us easy of approach, even as a father to his son: Agni, be with us for our weal.
The Hymns of the Rig Veda are the most telling

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/rigintro.asp

1 INDRA, bring wealth that gives delight, the victor's ever-conquering wealth,
Most excellent, to be our aid;
2 By means of which we may repel our foes in battle hand to hand,
By thee assisted with the car.
3 Aided by thee, the thunder-armed, Indra, may we lift up the bolt,
And conquer all our foes in fight.
4 With thee, O India, for ally with missile-darting heroes, may
We conquer our embattled foes.
5 Mighty is Indra, yea supreme; greatness be his, the Thunderer:
Wide as the heaven extends his power
6 Which aideth those to win them sons, who come as heroes to the fight,
Or singers loving holy thoughts.
7 His belly, drinking deepest draughts of Soma, like an ocean swells,
Like wide streams from the cope of heaven.
8 So also is his excellence, great, vigorous, rich in cattle, like
A ripe branch to the worshipper.
9 For verily thy mighty powers, Indra, are saving helps at once
Unto a worshipper like me.
10 So are his lovely gifts; let lauds and praises be to Indra sung,
That he may drink the Soma juice.
Vedas, Upanishadic thought and the Atharvaveda

The Vajra
1000 spokes
100 knuckles
The Hymns of the Rig Veda are the most telling

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/rigintro.asp

HYMN XXXIV. Asvins.

1 Ye who observe this day be with us even thrice: far-stretching is you bounty, Asvins and your course. To you, as to a cloak in winter, we cleave close: you are to be drawn nigh unto us by the wise.
2 Three are the fellies in your honey-bearing car, that travels after Soma's loved one, as all know. Three are the pillars set upon it for support: thrice journey ye by night, O Asvins, thrice by day.
3 Thrice in the self-same day, ye Gods who banish want, sprinkle ye thrice to-day our sacrifice with meath;
And thrice vouchsafe us store of food with plenteous strength, at evening, O ye Asvins, and at break of day.
4 Thrice come ye to our home, thrice to the righteous folk, thrice triply aid the man who well deserves your help.
Thrice, O ye Asvins, bring us what shall make us glad; thrice send us store of food as nevermore to fail.
5 Thrice, O ye Asvins, bring to us abundant wealth: thrice in the Gods' assembly, thrice assist our thoughts.
Thrice, grant ye us prosperity, thrice grant us fame; for the Sun's daughter hath mounted your three-wheeled car.
Vedas, Upanishadic Thought and the Atharvaveda

The Hymns of the Rig Veda are the most telling

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/rigintro.asp

6 Thrice, Asvins, grant to us the heavenly medicines, thrice those of earth and thrice those that the waters hold,
   Favour and health and strength bestow upon my son; triple protection, Lords of Splendour, grant to him.
7 Thrice are ye to be worshipped day by day by us: thrice, O ye Asvins, ye travel around the earth.
   Car-borne from far away, O ye Nasatyas, come, like vital air to bodies, come ye to the three.
8 Thrice, O ye Asvins, with the Seven Mother Streams; three are the jars, the triple offering is prepared.
   Three are the worlds, and moving on above the sky ye guard the firm-set vault of heaven through days and nights.
9 Where are the three wheels of your triple chariot, where are the three seats thereto firmly fastened?
   When will ye yoke the mighty ass that draws it, to bring you to our sacrifice. Nasatyas?
10 Nasatyas, come: the sacred gift is offered up; drink the sweet juice with lips that know the sweetness well.
   Savitar sends, before the dawn of day, your car, fraught with oil, various-coloured, to our sacrifice.
11 Come, O Nasatyas, with the thrice-eleven Gods; come, O ye Asvins, to the drinking of the meath.
   Make long our days of life, and wipe out all our sins: ward off our enemies; be with us evermore.
12 Borne in your triple car, O Asvins, bring us present prosperity with noble offspring.
   I cry to you who hear me for protection be ye our helpers where men win the booty.
Upanishadic thought

Written between about 800 BCE and the 6th century CE, the Upanishads are esoteric commentary on the Vedas.

In the earliest Upanishads, a rigorous form of monism emerges:

This Monism began with the Great or Revealed Sayings (Mahavakya, Shruti Vakya) of the early and middle Upanishads (8th to 3rd Century B.C.E.):

- *Aham Brahmasmi* - "I am Brahman" *(Brihadaranyanka Upanishad, I. 6.10-11)*
- "*This Atman (Self) is verily Brahman"*(Brihadaranyanka Upanishad, II.5.19; IV. 4.5)
- "*All this is Brahman alone"*(Mundaka Upanishad II-2-11)
- "*Nothing whatever that is variegated here exists (Katha Upanishad, II-1-11)"
Most importantly the phrase “tat tvam asī” from the Chandogya Upanishad; is held by many to be perhaps one of the most inspiring pieces of mystical prose ever written:

"That which is the subtle essence this whole world has for its self [Atman].

… That is the [individual] self (atma). “That art thou”, Shvetaketu." [Chandogya Upanishad, VI.8.7;]

In the Upanishads it is axiomatic that the following ideas are true.

1) Life (Bhava), death (mara) and rebirth (jati or gati) are eternal.

2) There are many levels of life (jati) into which one can be reborn.

3) Determination of such rebirth is through one’s own Actions (Karma) which can be both positive and negative, i.e., both good and bad karma.

4) One can escape from this cycle of life (samsara) by attaining an experiential knowledge of Atman-atman.

5) The process is accomplished through yogic transformation.

6) All such realizations take place in the heart-mind (chitta).

7) All such realizations take place in the context of Mount Meru.
It is postulated that life is individually eternal and that one will be reborn, grow up, old, sick, and die, only to repeat the sequence through all time.
The Accural of Karmic Residue

The Upanishads also state that is one’s Karma (literally “actions” and their karmic accrual, as a kind of residue of those actions, that leads one to the various possible states of rebirth. In the Upanishads there is both good karma or punya (merit) and bad karma or klesha (hinderances). According to the Abhidharmakosha, there is a palace known as Sudharma in the heaven of Trayastrimsa where the gods evaluate the good and evil done by humans.
Gati “Birth” Possibilities

Depending on one’s accrual of karma, rebirth may take place at any level of life in any of the six states of rebirth.

The twenty or so heaven worlds inhabited by the various devas are states of existence above the mundane plane.

The four mundane realms, i.e., ashuras (animistic spirits etc.), manusya (humans), triyag (animals), and the preta are all co-terminus.

The sixteen realms of niraya (hell) eight hot and eight cold are lower realms.

Animal, preta, and niraya and considered to be the unfortunate births (durgati)
An individual progressing through the infinity of lives may escape the samsaric cycle by attaining enlightenment and allowing complete cessation.
What is the Heart-Mind *(Chitta)*?

It is exactly what we mean by the "heart" and the "mind" combined.

Whether we call it "Psyche," "Intellect and Intuition," "Rationality and Emotionality" or "Left brain right brain," it is the sum of all mental experience both as reaction to external stimulus and deeds of our own creation.
Where is the Heart-Mind (*Chitta*)?

It is neither at the location of the physical heart nor is it in the location of the physical brain. Rather, it is located in a conceptual center of the body just below the sternum. It is in this non-physical location that all of the transformations take place and where Mount Meru abides.
What size is the Heart-Mind (*Chitta*)?

Since it is imaginary, it is either explained as being so tiny that it cannot be seen or, more conventionally, the size of a sesame seed or (in Tibet) size of a grain of barley.
What are the components of the Heart-Mind (Chitta)?

Proper Right
  Male
  Compassion
  Skillful Means
  Sun

Proper Left
  Female
  Wisdom
  Shunyata
  Moon

The nonduality of the two is Enlightenment (Bodhi).
Is the Heart-Mind ever displayed in Buddhist art?

Very rarely as the half red half white dot. However, very commonly as the sun-moon & radiance symbol of attainment.

While the sun and moon are now the dominant motifs of the depiction, their symbolism is identical to the Heart-Mind and the radiance is the fruition of their nonduality.
Buddhist Cosmology: Environment of Meditative Transformation

The enlightened state in esoteric Buddhism is attained in the sacred meditational space of Mount Meru. The imagined environment of the Mount Meru world system is an expression of Buddhist cosmology. Conceived as a vast mountain, Mount Meru consists of a series of transcendent residences. The uppermost and most ethereal plane is Akanishta, where innumerable Buddhas resides and where all teachings and transformations take place. Simultaneously, Mount Meru is an individual world system, existing only in the heart-mind of the practitioner. Thus, there are virtually an infinite number of Mount Meru systems, from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic in scale. It constitutes the center of the Buddhist world system in which each practitioner is but one of billions of people, but at the same time represents each person’s “world system,” located in the practitioner’s own heart-mind. This dual nature is precisely what the practitioner must collapse into nonduality, realizing the ultimate identity of microcosms and macrocosms. The works of art in this section visually reiterate the centrality of Mount Meru as a fundamental concept in Vajrayana Buddhism.
Buddhist Cosmology: Environment of Meditative Transformation

The enlightened state in esoteric Buddhism is attained in the sacred meditational space of Mount Meru. The imagined environment of the Mount Meru world system is an expression of Buddhist cosmology. Conceived as a vast mountain, Mount Meru consists of a series of transcendent residences. The uppermost and most ethereal plane is Akanishta, where innumerable Buddhas resides and where all teachings and transformations take place. Simultaneously, Mount Meru is an individual world system, existing only in the heart-mind of the practitioner. Thus, there are virtually an infinite number of Mount Meru systems, from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic in scale. It constitutes the center of the Buddhist world system in which each practitioner is but one of billions of people, but at the same time represents each person’s “world system,” located in the practitioner’s own heart-mind. This dual nature is precisely what the practitioner must collapse into nonduality, realizing the ultimate identity of microcosms and macrocosms. The works of art in this section visually reiterate the centrality of Mount Meru as a fundamental concept in Vajrayana Buddhism.
Seven Rings of Gold Mountain surround Mount Meru in the center.

- Uttarakuru or Kuru
- Kurus
- Kauravas
- Ring of Iron Mountains
- Uttaramantrins
- Godaniya
- Shathas
- Videhas
- Videha or Purvavideha Dehas
- Chamaras
- Jambu with the Vajrasana
- Avaracamara

The "zodiac" of the twenty-eight lunar mansions.
The Hot Hells

The hells are described in the Abhidharmakośa as more or less identical. The utsadas are four in number and repeat four times in each hell giving a total of thirty-two realms of the underworld.

8. Saññāja
7. Kālāsūtra
6. Sarvāṅkāta
5. Raurava
4. Mahārauravva
3. Tapana
2. Pratāpana
1. Avīci

The sixteen utsadas of each hell

4 Kuramarga, 4 kuṇapa, 4 kukūla, and [4 quadrants of] the Vaitaraṇī River

[Four] Kṣuramarga (road of razorblades)
Sword leaved trees
Thorn Trees, etc.

[Four] Kukūla (fires)

[Four] Kuṇapa (mire of excrement)

[Four] Kuṇapa (mire of excrement)

[Four Gates to Hell]

[Four quadrants of] River Vaitaraṇī of boiling water surrounding each hell
Mount Meru

Virupaksha

Virudhaka

Dhritarashtra

Vaishravana
Buddhist Presuppositions
The Lotus onto which one is born (Padmasambhava) in Akanishtha
Buddhist Presuppositions

Mathura, Saka-Parthian Period, ca. 100 BCE

Buddha on Mount Meru with the four Kings
Mount Meru with all of its components.
In the center is the vast mountain with its lapis face.
Along the central axis abides Vairochana in the highest heaven and in a cave at the bottom, our own Buddha nature.
Even though Mount Meru structures our own place among the billions of beings on earth, it exists nowhere except in our own heart-mind.
In Buddhist meditations, the practitioner envisions him or her self as a physical representation of Mount Meru with a collar of the four surrounding continents.
04_ Buddhist Presuppositions