CONTEMPLATION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

This course introduces students to a cross-section of Buddhist contemplative techniques practiced throughout the region. The class’s goal is to explore these forms of Buddhist meditation in their cultural contexts, investigate scientific research on meditation’s dynamics, survey contemporary applications (health care, K-12 education, entrepreneurship, creativity), and experience meditation firsthand.

The course blends four distinct components revolving around Buddhist meditation with the goal of exploring tradition and modernity, humanities and sciences, theory and practice:

1. **Traditional Practices**: learn the original meditative practices in Buddhism, and their deep relationships to philosophy, community, and ways of life.
2. **Modern Research**: learn the scientific exploration of these practices and the neurological, biological, and psychological mechanisms of their effects.
3. **Contemporary Adaptations**: learn about how people in an astonishingly varied array of fields are creating new secular adaptations of such practices.
4. **Contemplation Practice**: learn contemplative practices first-hand within silence and sound, in sincerity and in irony, in body and in mind.

Each week combines guided readings and lectures given by faculty and local experts with supervised practice sessions and individual reflections. We will have two **lecture meetings** a week, which involve lecture, presentations, and group interactions. Tuesdays deal with traditional practices, and Thursdays deal with contemporary adaptations and modern research. Students will be encouraged to develop a regular secular contemplative practice throughout the semester and will visit local pilgrimage sites to experience practice sessions in culturally specific contexts. These contemplative studies will also be explicitly tied to the ethnographic work and ongoing immersion in local society as students learn new approaches to listening, communication, empathy, and social relationships.

Assignments include the keeping of a contemplative journal (50%), presentation of a traditional contemplative technique in light of contemporary adaptations and scientific research (25%), and a final project on a traditional contemplative technique and issues surrounding its contemporary practice, adaptation, and/or scientific exploration (25%).

**Required Textbooks**

WEEKLY CALENDAR

WEEK #1 (August 1, 2016): INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPLATION

1. Tradition Tuesday (8/2) - INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE (Buddhism Class)

2. Innovation Thursday (8/4) - MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION: BEGINNINGS & DIVERSE ADAPTATIONS (Science & Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings:


Optional Further Readings:

- National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine, “Meditation,” 

WEEK #2 (August 8, 2016): INTRODUCTIONS - BUDDHIST MEDITATION, BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY, AND SCIENCE
1. Tradition Tuesday (8/9) - INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION & BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:

  - Turning the Wheel of Truth (pp. 243-246).
  - Fire Discourse (pp. 222-225).
  - Self-Aggregates Discourse (pp. 216-222).
  - Chapter on Causes (pp. 210-214).
  - Chapter 1, “The Indian Background,” pp. 17-29.

Recommended Further Readings:


2. Tradition Tuesday (8/11) – HOW DID MEDITATION BECOME TO POPULAR IN AMERICA? (Science and Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings:

- Adaptation: Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your

Recommended Further Readings:

- National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine, “Meditation,”  

WEEK #3 (August 15, 2016): EARLY BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS AND INTRO TO THE NEUROSCIENCE OF MEDITATION

1. Tradition Tuesday (8/16) - THE ORIGINAL BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS AND GUIDED REFLECTIONS (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:


Optional Further Readings:


2. **Innovation Thursday (8/18) - THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF MEDITATION: A RECENT SNAPSHOT (Science & Adaptation)**

**Readings**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Further Readings and Video:**

- Richard Davidson’s site: http://psyphz.psych.wisc.edu/web/personnel/director.html

**WEEK #4 (August 22, 2016): MINDFULNESS & SERENITY AND CONCENTRATION MEDITATION**
1. **Tradition Tuesday (8/23) - SERENITY & CONCENTRATION MEDITATION (Buddhism)**

**Readings**

**Required Readings:**


**Optional Further Readings**


2. **Innovation Thursday (8/25) - Synthesizing Contemplation and Analysis**


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**WEEK #5 (August 29, 2016): INSIGHT AND ANALYTICAL MEDITATION**

1. **Tradition Tuesday (8/30) - INSIGHT MEDITATION I (Buddhism).**

**Readings**

**Required Readings:**


**Optional Further Readings:**
2. Innovation Thursday (9/1) - Synthesizing Contemplation and Analysis

Readings

Required Readings:

Optional Further Readings:

WEEK #6 (September 5, 2016): LARGER LANDSCAPE OF EARLY BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS

1. Tradition Tuesday (9/6) - THE LARGER LANDSCAPE OF EARLY BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:
  - Chapter 4, “Meditation”, pp. 55-62.
- Sarah Shaw, Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from Pāli Sources. London: Routledge, 2006, selection from among the following:
  - The Ten Kasiṇa Practices, pages 86-100.
  - The Ten Foulness (asubha), pages 101-108.
  - Recollections (first six), pages 109-134.
  - The Four Divine Abidings, pages 163-172.
Optional Readings:


2. Innovation Thursday (9/8) - THE NEUROSCIENCE OF EMOTIONS & PERSONAL GROWTH (Science & Adaptation)

Required Readings:


Optional Further Readings:


WEEK #7 (September 12, 2016): EMPTINESS MEDITATION

1. Tradition Tuesday (9/13) - EMPTINESS MEDITATION (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:

  - Chapter 2, “Mahāyāna”, pp. 31-43.

Optional Further Readings:

- Chandrakirti, *Introduction to the Middle Way*. Chapter 6, verses 140-178 (pp. 87-93), and Mipham’s commentary (Chapter 6, section 3, “Tenets that aim at the realization of the nonexistence of the self…”: pp. 294-309).
- Joe Wilson, *Chandrakirti’s Sevenfold Reasoning: Meditation on the Selflessness*
of Persons. Dharamsala: LTWA.


- *Kunzang Pellen. The Nectar of Manjushri’s Speech: A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva’s Way of the Bodhisattva*. Boston & London: Shambhala 2007. Read the part of the commentary on the 9th chapter which concerns meditation on emptiness (pp. 346-367), and optionally the final part of the chapter’s commentary (367-389). See PDF Kunzang Pellen-The Nectar of Manjushris Speech A Detailed Commentary on Shantidevas Way of the Bodhisattva (346-389).

**2. Innovation Thursday (9/15) - THE NEUROSCIENCE OF MEDITATION IN DEPTH (Science and Adaptation)**

Readings

**Required Readings:**


**WEEK #8 (September 19, 2016): COMPASSION MEDITATIONS**

**1. Tradition Tuesday (9/20) - COMPASSION MEDITATION (Buddhism)**

Readings

**Required Readings:**


**Optional Readings:**


Shantideva-The Way of the Bodhisattva (Chapters 8-9)


Read the part of the commentary on the 8th chapter which concerns meditation, but largely concerns compassion practices.

2. Innovation Thursday (9/22) - RESEARCHING COMPASSION, PRACTICING COMPASSION (Science & Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings and Viewing:

- **Adaptation**: video - The Compassionate Care and Empathic Leadership Initiative at U.Va.: http://vimeo.com/54874862. Featuring Dorrie Fontaine, Dean of the School of Nursing, University of Virginia.

Optional Further Readings:

- Other CCARE articles at: http://ccare.stanford.edu/research/peer-reviewed-ccare-articles/

WEEK #9 (September 26, 2016): Bumthang Trek

WEEK #10 (October 3, 2016): CREATION PHASE MEDITATION I: DEITY YOGA, TRANSFORMATION, & PERFORMANCE
VISUALIZATIONS

1. Tradition Tuesday (10/4) - DEITY YOGA MEDITATIONS IN TANTRA (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:

Optional Further Readings:
2. Innovation Thursday (10/6) - MENTAL IMAGERY: SCIENTIFIC MODELS AND INTROSPECTION (Science & Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings:

Optional Further Readings:
- **Science**: Stephen Kosslyn, “What Shape Are a German Shepherd’s Ears?” ([http://www.edge.org/conversation/what-shape-are-a-german-shepherd-39s-ears](http://www.edge.org/conversation/what-shape-are-a-german-shepherd-39s-ears))
- **Adaptation**: “Visualizing in a Creative Way,”

WEEK #11 (October 10, 2016): CREATION PHASE MEDITATION II: MANDALAS, VIOLENCE, & PRACTICES OF THE COLLECTIVE

1. Tradition Tuesday (10/11) - MANDALA VISUALIZATIONS (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:
Optional Further Readings:

- Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. Chapter 4 - The Victory of Esoterism and the Imperial Metaphor, pp. 112-168.

2. Innovation Thursday (10/13) - PERFORMATIVE ART & HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS (Science & Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings and Viewings:

- **Science**: Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, chapters 12, 16.

Optional Further Readings:

- Olga Kimecki and Tania Singer, “Empathy from the Perspective

WEEK #12 (October 17, 2016): BODY PRACTICE I
1. Tradition Tuesday (10/18) - TANTRIC EXPLORATION OF THE BODY I (Buddhism)

Readings
Required Readings:

Optional Further Readings:

2. Innovation Thursday (10/20) - FLOW, THE BODY, AND SUFFERING (Science & Adaptation)

Readings
Required Readings:

Suggested Readings:

WEEK #13 (October 24, 2016): BODY PRACTICES II

Tradition Tuesday (10/25) - TANTRIC EXPLORATION OF THE BODY II (Buddhism)

Readings
Required Readings:
- Daniel Cozort, Highest Yoga Tantra, pp. 41-47, 63-114.
2. **Innovation Thursday (10/27) - INTEROCEPTION: BODY, TRAUMA, AND MEANING IN PSYCHOTHERAPY (Science & Adaptation)**

**Readings**

**Required Readings and Viewings:**

- Craig 2002, “How do you feel?”
- Seth 2013 - Interoceptive inference emotion and the embodied self

**Optional Further Readings and Viewings:**

- Interview with Eugene Gendlin from Tricycle Magazine.
- The Focusing Institute’s introduction to Focusing: [http://www.focusing.org/newcomers.htm](http://www.focusing.org/newcomers.htm)
- The six steps of focusing: [http://www.focusing.org/sixsteps.html](http://www.focusing.org/sixsteps.html)
- An excerpt from a talk by Eugene Gendlin: [http://vimeo.com/2299660](http://vimeo.com/2299660)

**WEEK #14 (October 31, 2016): NATURAL MEDITATIONS**

1. **Tradition Tuesday (11/1) - THE GREAT SEAL NATURAL MEDITATION (Buddhism)**

**Readings**

**Required Readings:**

Optional Further Readings:


2. Innovation Thursday (11/3) - NEUROSCIENCE OF EFFORTLESS AWARENESS (Science & Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings:

- Tobias Otto, Fred R. H. Zijlstra, and Rainer Goebel, Neural correlates of mental effort evaluation— involvement of structures related to self-awareness

Optional Further Readings:

WEEK #15 (November 7, 2016): VISIONARY MEDITATIONS

1. Tradition Tuesday (11/8) - THE GREAT PERFECTION NATURAL MEDITATION (Buddhism)

Readings

Required Readings:


Optional Further Readings:


2. Innovation Thursday (11/10) - PSYCHOLOGY AND WORKING WITH THE IMAGINATION (Science & Adaptation)

Readings

Required Readings:


Optional Further Readings:


**WEEK #16 (November 14, 2016): THE MOST EXCELLENT CONCLUSION**

1. **Tuesday (11/15) – REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS**

2. **Thursday (11/17) – STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**