BROWN UNIVERSITY COURSE SYLLABUS

UNIVERSITY COURSE 54: INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES

Semester II, 2007-08    Seminar: Weds. 3:00 PM    LABS: MWF, 9AM

Instructor: H.D. Roth Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies
Teaching Assistant: Jeffrey Hutchison, Department of Cognitive Science
Associated Researcher: Willoughby Britton, Ph.D., Department of Psychiatry, Brown University School of Medicine

Professor’s Office: Department of Religious Studies; 59 George Street, Room 305
Office Hours: Monday, 10:45 AM-12:30 PM

TA’s Office Hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- Throughout the course we will focus on identifying many of the methods that human beings have found, across cultures and across time, to concentrate, broaden and deepen conscious awareness.
- We will study what these methods and experiences entail, how to critically appraise them, how to experience them ourselves, and how they influence the development of compassion and empathy, and health and well-being.
- In doing this we will thus be adopting both third-person approaches, which study contemplative experience from a presumed objective position outside ourselves and critical first-person approaches, which study contemplative experiences from a presumed subjective position within them.
- The former approaches will be from the perspectives of the fields of philosophy, cognitive science, psychology, psychology of religion, neuroscience, and comparative religious thought, and they will be presented and discussed through lectures and seminars.
- The latter approaches will center on the well-developed techniques for the cultivation of attention and self-examination that are found in the Asian meditative traditions of Taoism and Buddhism. These will be pursued in the thrice weekly Meditation Lab as well as in weekly readings.
- Taoist meditation will be based on the reconstruction of the techniques of the classical tradition developed by Professor Roth. Buddhist meditation will be based on modern practices.
- Course readings will include primary texts that present the methods and results of contemplative practice and secondary works that discuss issues and critical methods in the philosophical and scientific understanding of the results and significance of contemplation.
PRE-REQUISITES

- This course is usually taken in the second semester of the sophomore year (although upperclassmen may be admitted in its initial offering) and necessitates a basic familiarity with some of the source material for the study of contemplative experiences. Therefore, the principal pre-requisites are three relevant courses at Brown to be drawn from the three basic areas of Contemplative Studies: Science (especially Cognitive Science, Psychology, and Neuroscience), the Humanities, and the Creative Arts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Regular attendance at Seminar and Lab; attendance will be an important factor
- Attending one meditation retreat of 1-2 days and short write-up of retreat
- Recording brief comments in a journal at the end of every lab session
- At least two seminar presentations based on the readings
- 3 page write-up of seminar presentation
- One 12-15 page Final Paper on a topic to be decided upon with the professor

READINGS

BOOKS

Required


Recommended


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ARTICLES (AVAILABLE ON OCRA)

- Young, Shinzen, “How Meditation Works.” Shinzen.org
**COURSE OUTLINE**

1/23: Introduction to the Course: “Religion for Scientists”

**WEEKS 1 AND 2: IS THERE AN INTERFACE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKLY SEMINAR</th>
<th>MEDITATION LAB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1/30: Rethinking Science and Religion</strong></td>
<td>Theravada Buddhist Mindfulness practice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2/6: The Role of Human Experience</strong></td>
<td>[2/4: Charles Halpern Lecture]</td>
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**WEEKS 3 AND 4: METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: TOWARDS A NEW SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

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<tr>
<th>WEEKLY SEMINAR</th>
<th>MEDITATION LAB</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2/13. “Scientific Materialism” and the Disappearance of Introspection</strong></td>
<td>Theravada Buddhist Mindfulness practice</td>
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<td><strong>2/20. Combining Third and First Person Perspectives in A New Science of Consciousness</strong></td>
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## WEEKS 5 AND 6: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF CONTEMPLATION

### WEEKLY SEMINAR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/27.</td>
<td>Experience and the Cognitivist Hypothesis</td>
<td>Roth, <em>Original Tao</em>, pp. 35-118</td>
<td>Varela, Thompson and Rosch, <em>The Embodied Mind</em>: Introduction, pp. 3-130</td>
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### MEDITATION LAB

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/25.</td>
<td>Taoist Reconstructive Meditations from <em>Guanzi’s “Inward Training:”</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/27.</td>
<td>Coiling and Uncoiling</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/29.</td>
<td>Coiling and Uncoiling</td>
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[2/28: Edward Burger Film and Talk]
| 3/3.   | Focused Awareness of Breathing: “Revolving the Breath”               |
| 3/5.   | Revolving the Breath                                                |
| 3/7.   | Revolving the Breath                                                |
[3/6: Sienna Craig Talk]

## WEEKS 7 AND 8: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTEMPLATION

### WEEKLY SEMINAR

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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### MEDITATION LAB

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/12.</td>
<td>Bellows Breathing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/14.</td>
<td>Bellows Breathing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/17.</td>
<td>Observing consciousness while</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/19.</td>
<td>“Holding fast to the Center”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/21.</td>
<td>“Holding fast to the Center”</td>
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## SPRING RECESS MARCH 24-30
## WEEKS 9-11: THE NEUROSCIENCE OF CONTEMPLATION

### WEEKLY SEMINAR

#### 4/2. Zen Contemplation+the Neurophysiology of Consciousness I

- Primary Texts: Sekida, *Zen Training*, 29-90
- Secondary works: Austin, *Zen and the Brain*, 3-145

#### 4/9. Zen Contemplation+the Neurophysiology of Consciousness II

- Primary Texts: Sekida, *Zen Training*, 91-159
- Secondary works: Austin, *Zen and the Brain*, 293-368; 469-518.

#### 4/16. Neurological Transformations from Contemplative Practice

- Secondary works: Austin, *Zen and the Brain*, 521-696; Lutz, et al., "Long Term Meditators Self-induce high amplitude gamma synchrony during mental practice"

### MEDITATION LAB

#### Japanese Zen Meditation

- 3/31: Sekida’s “Bamboo Breathing” (exhalation in stages); eyes closed
- 4/2: Bamboo Breathing, eyes closed
- 4/4: Bamboo Breathing; eyes just open
- [4/4 Linda-Susan Beard Lecture]
- [4/5 Linda-Susan Beard Retreat]

#### 4/7: Rinzai Zen Style: Kōan: “Does this dog have Buddha-nature?” (Jōshū’s NO); eyes just open
- 4/9: Jōshū’s NO with explanatory talk: this no is a VERB! Not an object but the core activity of your mind from moment to moment
- 4/11: Jōshū’s NO; Indoor walking meditation (10”)

#### 4/14: Sōtō Zen Style: Shikan Taza: Just Sitting; facing window

#### 4/16: Shikan Taza: Just Sitting; facing window or wall

#### 4/18: Just Sitting; facing wall (10”); walking meditation (10”); sit (10”)

#### 4/17: James Austin Lecture

### WEEKS 12-13: CLINICAL APPLICATIONS OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

### WEEKLY SEMINAR

#### 4/23. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

- Primary Works: Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, Sections I-III; Bishop et al., *Baer*

#### 4/30. Studies in Mindfulness

- Primary: Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, Sections IV-V;

### MEDITATION LAB

#### 4/21: MBSR Techniques

#### 4/23: MBSR Techniques

#### 4/25: MBSR Techniques

#### [4/25: Harvey Aaronson Lecture]

#### [4/27: Anne Klein Buddhism Retreat]

#### [4/28: Anne Klein Lecture]

#### 4/28: Mindfulness Practice

#### 4/30: Mindfulness Practice

#### 5/02: Mindfulness Practice
CLASS PRESENTATION

Each student will be asked to do at least two class presentations, working in a team of four on the readings for the week. This presentation will consists of:

A. The Lecture Period of Class
   1. Each member of the team of 4 will present a summary one section of the weekly readings. This should concentrate on at least 5 key ideas in that section of the readings
   2. The Team of 4 will work together to determine how to divide up responsibility for presenting the readings in an equitable fashion.

B. The Discussion Period of Class
   1. The Team of 4 will develop a series of discussion questions and lead the discussion period of the class. The Team will divide in half, with two students from the Team leading each discussion period

C. The Presentation Write Up
   1. Each student will be responsible for their own 2-3 page write up of major ideas in the material they presented and those discussion questions that interested them the most.
   2. This Write Up may be in point form or in essay form.
   3. The Write Up should be handed in the next weekly class. No penalties for the first month of the course will be assessed for turning in these Write Ups late as long as they are turned in before Spring Break.