

ITSF4068
CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES AND EDUCATION

This syllabus and other relevant materials for the course are available at
<http://www.columbia.edu/~cah34/contemp.html>

Who am I when I am not asking who I am ?—*Zen koan*

A hen at rest lays many eggs.

A peacock, when still, has a handsome tail.

A gentle horse has a swift pace.—Nagarjuna Pandit

When all things return to the One, even gold loses its value. But when the One returns to all things, even the pebbles sparkle.—Wu, *The Golden Age of Zen*

If I see you, I will laugh out loud or fall silent

Or explode into a thousand pieces.

If I don't see you, I will be caught

In the cement and stone of my own prison.—Rumi

The eye with which I see God is the eye with which God sees me.—Meister Eckhart

But as we cannot love what is outside ourselves, we must love a being who is in us and is yet not ourselves; and that is true of each and all men. Now, only the Universal Being is such. The kingdom of God is within us; the universal good is within us.—Pascal, *Pensées*

Prayer is the smile, the look of the eyes that conveys to any other man the greetings of the heart, which tells him, unknown as he may be and met by chance in a public place or vehicle, that he is not really a stranger, but is recognized and loved as a brother.—

Abhishiktananda, *Prayer*

This course is organized around three components:

- (1) an overview of diverse traditions of contemplative practices
- (2) a transcultural exploration of commonalities within these practices
- (3) an investigation of the educational benefits of these practices

The first component is the longest, since it introduces material from the classical traditions of Asia—Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist—and of the Middle East—Jewish, Christian, Muslim. In working with a broad range of traditions, we consider two kinds of material:

- (1) classical texts that undergird contemplative practices
- (2) modern commentaries on these practices that explore benefits to the body, mind, and society

These physiological, psychological, and sociological perspectives are important in preparing us to explore the educational benefits of traditional contemplative practices.

The second component presents transcultural syntheses of different traditions (e.g., the work of Thich Nanh Hanh that bridges Asian and Western traditions); and the third component presents educational benefits of contemplative practices not only in formal settings such as the classroom but also in other settings such as psychotherapy and conflict resolution. In our readings we explore these benefits from the perspective of both the individual and society.

A brief word about the reading material for this course. Since we are dealing with diverse traditions, it seems preferable to read not just a book or two on each tradition but rather excerpts from a number of books. You may choose to read the whole book if you find the excerpts appealing (in certain instances the complete book is available on reserve). Multiple texts within a single tradition are important for a further reason—all these traditions reflect an extraordinary heterogeneity to be explored, especially in preparation for the transcultural syntheses. In the case of certain books, the use of excerpts is further justified in that they were composed in order to induce a contemplative style of reading. You may choose not only to read these excerpts out loud but to read them slowly so that you can savor their meaning.

In addition to the assigned readings, I have included optional readings for those who would like to explore a particular tradition more fully. Both assigned and optional readings have been placed under my name at the reserve desk on the first floor of the library. In the schedule below, each reading, whether assigned or optional, is followed by the number that you should use when requesting it at the reserve desk. Certain of the readings can also be found online, in which case I have provided the website address.

During the course, we will have the opportunity to hear from individuals about contemplative practices within a specific tradition. If you have a good deal of experience within one of these traditions, please let me know and perhaps you can make a brief presentation around certain aspects of your own practice.

SCHEDULE

- January 19 *Introduction*
Goleman, *The contemplative mind: Reinventing the news* 103
excerpt from Walsh and Vaughan (eds.), *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision* 104
Kabat-Zinn, *Analyzing movement toward a more contemplative sacred-appreciating/non-dualistic society* 105
Buell, *Report on the contemplative practice fellowship program* 106
- January 26 *Hinduism*
excerpts from *Upanishads* (introduction by Swami Nikhilananda) 107
excerpts from *Bhagavad Gita* (introduction by Eknath Easwaran) 108
optional: *Upanishads* (introduction by Swami Nikhilananda) 109
Bhagavad Gita (introduction by Eknath Easwaran) 110
Aurobindo, *The mind of light* (introduction by Robert McDermott) 111
Prabhupade, *The path of yoga* 112
Hittleman, *Yoga philosophy and meditation* 113
Sen, *Hinduism* 114
Bedrick, *Indian mythology* 115
Campbell, *Oriental mythology* 116
- February 2 *Buddhism*
excerpts from the *Lotus sutras* 117
excerpts from Thich Nanh Hanh, *The miracle of mindfulness: A manual on meditation* (afterword by James Forest) 118
optional: Watts, *The way of Zen* 119
Humphries, *Buddhism* 120
Suzuki, *Beginner's mind, Zen mind* 121
Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism* 122
Kapleau (ed.), *The Three Pillars of Zen* 123

- February 9 *Taoism*
 excerpts from the *Tao Te Ching* (introduction by R. B. Blakney) 124
 excerpts from Watts, *The way of the water* 125
 excerpt from Huston, *The religions of man* 126
- Optional: *Tao Te Ching* (introduction by R. B. Blakney) 127
 Watts, *The way of the water* 128
 Ware, *The sayings of Confucius* 129
 Lanczkowski, *Sacred writings* (chapters 15-16) 130
 Christie, *Chinese mythology* 131
- February 16 *Judaism* (readings to be provided by a guest lecturer)
- February 23 *Christianity*
 excerpts from *Augustine of Hippo: Selected writings* 132
 excerpts from *The cloud of unknowing* (foreword by Huston Smith) 133
 excerpts from Julian of Norwich, *Revelation of love* (preface by John Skinner) 134
 excerpts from Merton, *Seeds of contemplation* 135
 excerpt from Panichas, *The Simone Weil reader* 136
 excerpts from Jager, *Contemplation: A Christian path* (also ‘The Catholic way
 of Zen,’ an interview with Father Jager in *The East West Journal*) 137
- optional: Waddell, *The desert fathers* 138
 Augustine, *The confessions* 139
 Merton, *The seven-story mountain* 140
 Jager, *Contemplation: A Christian path* 141
 Finley, *Merton’s palace of nowhere* 142
 Nouwen, *The way of the heart* 143
- March 1 *Islam* (presentation by Dean Peter Awn, Columbia University)
 excerpts from Schroeder, *Muhammad’s people* 144
 excerpts from Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim mysticism* 145
 excerpt from Al-Kalabadhi, *The doctrine of the Sufis* 146
 excerpt from Al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-mahjub* 147
 excerpt from Hakim Sana’i, *Sufi poetry* 148
- optional: Andrae, *Mohammed: The man and his faith* 149
 Pickthall, *The meaning of the glorious Koran* 150

- March 8 *Transcultural approaches*
 excerpts from Kamenetz, *The Jew in the lotus* 151
 Dalai Lama, *Education and the human heart* 152
 Toombs, Dying, meaning, and wholeness: a dialogue of east and west 153
 excerpt from Abhishiktananda (Hindu name of the Catholic priest le Saux, *Prayer* 154
optional: Stace, *The teachings of the mystics* 155
 James, *The varieties of religious experience* 156
- March 15 Spring break
- March 22 *Transcultural approaches*
 excerpts from Thich Nanh Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* 157
 Simmer-Brown, Commitment and openness: A contemplative approach to
 pluralism 158
 O'Hanlon, The integration of spiritual practices 159
 excerpts from Mathiessen, *The snow leopard* 160
optional Huston, *Religions of man* 161
 Parsons, *The enigma of the oceanic feeling: Revisioning the psycho-*
 analytic theory of mysticism 162
- March 29 *Educational benefits of contemplative practices: School* (presentation by
 Professor Nancy Baker, Sarah Lawrence College)
 Thurman, Meditation and education: Buddhist India, Tibet and modern America
163
 Stock, The contemplative life and the teaching of the humanities 164
 Palmer, The grace of great things: Reclaiming the sacred in knowing,
 teaching, and learning 165
 Gatto, Education and the western spiritual tradition 166
 excerpt from *The Simone Weil reader* (introduction by George Panichas) 167
optional: Glazer (ed.), *The heart of learning: Spirituality in education* 168
 Ashton, Relaxation as development 169
- April 5 *Educational benefits of contemplative practices: Personal development*
 excerpts from Epstein, *Thoughts without a thinker: Psychotherapy from*
 a Buddhist perspective (part II: Meditation) 170
 Shainberg, Healing in psychotherapy 171

- Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness meditation: Health benefits of an ancient Buddhist practice 172
- Walsh, Meditation research: The state of the art 173
- optional: Epstein, *Thoughts without a thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist perspective* 174
- Moore, *Care of the soul* 175
- Kabat-Zinn, Psychosocial factors: their importance and management 176
- Kabat-Zinn, An outpatient program in behavioral medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation 177
- Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, Burney, Clinical use of mindfulness meditation for the self-regulation of chronic pain 178
- Benson, The relaxation response 179
- Kiecolt-Glaser and Glaser, Mind and immunity 180
- Chopra, *Quantum healing: Exploring the frontiers of mind/body medicine* 181
- April 12 *Educational benefits of contemplative practices: Social development*
- Rockefeller, Meditation, social change, and undergraduate education 182
- Little, Religion: source of conflict, source of peace 183
- Boulding, The challenge of imaging peace in wartime 184
- Curie, Peacemaking: the middle way 185
- Williams, Being in the middle by being at the edge: Quaker experience of political mediation 186
- Pradervan, Living simply that others may simply live 187
- optional: Barlow, Inner life and the public good 188
- White, A contemplative approach to law 189
- Fox, *The reinvention of work* 190
- Smith-Christopher (ed.), *Subverting hatred: The challenge of non-violence in religious traditions* 191
- Pradervand, *Vivre sa spiritualité au quotidien* 192
- Forman, *Grassroots spirituality* 193
- April 19 Student presentations of course projects
- April 26 Student presentations of course projects
- May 3 Student presentations of course projects

I am open to suggestions for added readings, especially with respect to educational applications of contemplative practices. In order to expand our reading list, I would like for each of you to hand in either an article or book excerpt, along with a brief synopsis and explanation of why it would be valuable in this course. Please hand in this material by March 8th so that I can place it on reserve for the second half of the course.

I am also open to suggestions for readings from traditions that remain largely on the margins of received history (e.g., African and native American traditions). If we can come up with good readings, perhaps we can have a special session for those interested in practices within these traditions. I would be pleased if some of you explore such practices in your course project.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Digital. The website for this course presents other websites that contain relevant material. These other sites are organized according to the major traditions of contemplative practices: each tradition is presented under its name and a representative icon: when you click on a particular name or icon, you are presented with various websites that deal with that tradition (you then click on any website that you would like to view). On the course website you will also find a special icon labeled *Contemplative practices and education*; if you click on this icon, you are presented with a list of relevant websites.

I would like to encourage you to suggest additional websites relevant to this course. If you click on *links* at the top of the home page, you will gain access to a button named *add a site*. Click on this button and you can register a suggested website. If anyone is especially interested in material available online, I would encourage you to explore and evaluate relevant websites for your course project.

Print. The scope of this course is so vast that I have not put together a bibliography. However, many of the books listed on reserve under optional readings contain extensive bibliographies of the particular tradition that they deal with. A useful bibliography of print resources available for the major traditions of contemplative practices can be found online at <<http://acad.smumn.edu/merton/zos/meditation.html>>.

STUDENT WORK

Online responses to readings/replies to others' responses. Each week you will submit responses to the readings. In previous courses that I have taught, I have asked students to submit their responses directly to me and I then try to bring them to bear on our class

discussion. In this course, however, I would like to experiment with your posting responses directly onto our class bulletin board (to gain access to the bulletin board, click on the icon with that name at the top of the home page). In this way, you can have the opportunity to read each other's responses and thus deepen our class dialogue around the readings. I would recommend that your response be relatively brief since long postings can be difficult to read online (your response should probably not exceed a double-spaced page of print).

In addition to posting your own response, please post a reply to at least one other response. Our bulletin board is organized so that in order to reply, you click on the button named *reply*. Once you have replied to another person's response, a tree diagram on the left displays your reply linked to the original response. Such a display helps us to keep track of complex patterns of online interaction.

In order for such online communication to work efficiently, you will need to post your response to the readings by Monday so that others will have an opportunity to read it and then reply before class. Your reply to another person's response can be quite brief (e.g., you might simply suggest a further reading for the other person based on what (s)he has posted).

You can also use the class bulletin board to follow up on something we have discussed in class. After a class I often leave with the feeling that I have not adequately expressed a certain point; sometimes I provide a short posting to the class bulletin board to explain or amplify what I said. You can also use the class bulletin board in this way. The bulletin board gives us all a chance to reflect on and further refine what we have said to each other during class. It is my hope that the spirit of this course will be reflected in how we communicate with each other both in class and online.

After the initial two weeks of posting responses to the readings and replying to other responses, we will evaluate our use of the class bulletin board in order to see how well it is working. At that time you can make suggestions as to how we might improve our use of it. Please bear in mind that our goal in using the class bulletin board is two-fold: (1) to keep our class discussion alive throughout the week, and (2) to make sure that everyone's voice is heard (this is why it is important that none of us dominates the bulletin board with unduly long entries).

Projects. Students registered for three points are expected to do a course project (those registered for two points are responsible only for the weekly postings). In planning the project, you need to set modest goals. One possibility is to plan a project that relates directly to your work. If you are, for example, a teacher in an urban school, you might

experiment with how certain kinds of contemplative practices might help your students achieve greater calm (I have a set of audiotapes made by a teacher who has been using practices developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn). If you work in conflict resolution, you might experiment with using contemplative practices to prepare individuals for dealing with conflict.

On March 1st you are to hand in a one-page plan for the project (try to be as specific as possible about what you plan to do). If you like, you can also post this plan online in order to elicit suggestions from other members of the class. I'll return the plan with comments the following Wednesday so that you can use the spring break to work on your project. On *April 26th* the projects should be handed in so that I can return them at our last class meeting on *May 3rd*. They should not exceed 15 doubled-spaced pages (be sure and maintain ample margins so that I have sufficient space in which to write comments). If our use of the class bulletin board is successful, I may ask you to place your course projects online so that others can read and respond to them.

I would like to encourage you to collaborate with others on a project. My experience has been that students often learn more—and do a better project—when working together. I have found that collaboration between American students and international students can be fruitful, especially when dealing with transcultural issues. I would be particularly pleased if several students worked together on a single project.

GRADING

This course is offered on a pass/fail basis. If you prefer to receive a letter grade, you should obtain the appropriate form from the Registrar, have me sign it, and return it to the Registrar by the third week of class (I would prefer that only those students registered for three points exercise this option).

OFFICE HOURS

I keep office hours on Monday and Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:00; please call (212) 678-3184 to make an appointment. If you cannot come at these times, I can arrange to meet with you at other times.

I look forward to this opportunity for us to explore together an area that was historically important for education but which has been neglected in modern times. As the course progresses, please do not hesitate to suggest ways in which we can better learn together.

Clifford Hill

International and Transcultural Studies
350 Dodge