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| Kevin Trainor | Office: 481 Main Street, Rm. 203 |
| Spring 2018 | Phone: 656-0799 |
| MWF 9:40-10:30 a.m. | E-mail: [kevin.trainor@uvm.edu](mailto:kevin.trainor@uvm.edu) |
| U Heights North 016 | Office hrs: W 3:30-4:30; Th 4-5 & by appt. |

**HCOL186D: The Problem of Experience (CRN 11243)**

**Course Description:**

This seminar will examine the role of experience in human knowledge, with special attention to issues raised by religious experience. We will investigate experience from several angles, drawing upon accounts of extraordinary states of human consciousness (sometimes called “mystical” states), reflections on the challenges of intercultural understanding, and readings that highlight different disciplinary approaches to knowledge.

The topic of religious experience is of particular interest because it highlights the tension between subjectivity and objectivity in human knowledge. Many accounts of religious experience grant a privileged status to the personal and subjective. Scholarly knowledge, in contrast, is commonly marked by its “public” character, whether this is defined by rigorous standards of empirical testing or by the broader criteria of publication and adherence to standards of rationality. We will explore this tension through a variety of texts, including a modern novel, an influential Buddhist text, scholarly essays drawn from several academic disciplines, and through conversations with visiting faculty who will discuss their research. Along the way we will consider questions such as:

• When is my personal experience a reliable basis for knowing the world?

• How does my gender shape the way I know myself and the world around me?

• What role does emotion play in gaining valid knowledge of the world?

• In what ways are my “personal” experience socially defined?

• Do empirical observation and rational analysis provide objective and universally applicable knowledge of the world?

• Does the fact that people grow up in different cultures mean that their experience of the world is fundamentally different, and, if so, what does this mean for efforts to attain objective knowledge about the world?

Thoughtful reflection on these sorts of questions should inform your own research activity as you write your major paper for the seminar.

Key learning goals of the course include:

• understanding how one’s cultural location shapes one’s efforts to know the world

• understanding how selected scholarly disciplines approach the pursuit of knowledge

• understanding some of the distinctive characteristics of religious knowledge

• developing effective research skills including use of relevant library resources, compilation of an annotated bibliography, development of a clear thesis or scholarly claim, and development of an effective scholarly argument

• developing effective oral presentation skills

**Course Requirements:**

This course is organized in a seminar format, which means that your consistent attendance, careful reading of the course materials, and thoughtful contributions to the class discussions are essential elements in the success of the course. This means no texting, e-mail, internet use, or other non-class activity during class time. Turn off phones during class. I know that not everyone is equally comfortable speaking in class, but please make the effort, even if you initially find it difficult. I expect seminar participants to attend every class, having read the assignments carefully and reflected upon them. To facilitate discussion, please bring the day’s readings to class, either as hard copy or on your computer.

Written requirements include the following:

* Five 2-page response papers, including four papers on questions that relate to the course readings (see handout for prompts and guidelines; the due dates are marked below with an asterisk); these should be stapled and double-spaced with one-inch margins to allow for my comments; they should also be proofread for spelling, grammar, and typographical errors; these must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on four of the following due dates, unless you are ill or have a family emergency: 1/29; 2/14; 3/2; 3/30; 4/13; 5/2; in addition, you must attend one outside musical event and write a 2-page reflection discussing your experience of the event as it relates to one of our course readings (e.g., the Becker reading for 4/6 or the Titon reading for 4/9); this paper is due one week after the event that you attend.
* A substantial research paper (see below) on a topic of your choice, 12-15 pages in length; this will be the culmination of a process that begins early in the semester and that includes a topic statement, a substantial annotated bibliography, a 1-2-page research proposal, a complete first draft, and a revised final version of your research paper (see the handout with detailed guidelines for this assignment).
* One-paragraph statement of a key point from each class reading, along with one question about the reading, submitted by e-mail to the instructor by 9 a.m. on the day the reading is due (these are not required on days that you submit formal response papers or lead class discussion).

All written requirements must be submitted in a timely fashion in order to pass the course. See the statement below concerning academic honesty. In addition, each seminar participant will be responsible for leading class discussion once during the semester, and will give a 10- to 12-minute presentation on their research project during one of our classes from 4/16-4/23 (I will provide guidelines for these assignments). The various assignments count toward your final grade as follows: class participation, pre-class email responses, research presentation, and leading class discussion—30%; written responses to readings—30%; research paper, including the annotated bibliography and the preliminary and final drafts—40%.

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus for pedagogical purposes as seems prudent; the most current version of syllabus can be found on the Blackboard course web site.

**Course Assignments:**

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| 1/17 | Introductions. |
| 1/19 | One statement of the “problem” of experience:  [Robert Sharf](http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/), “Experience” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. M. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 94-116. |
|  | Science and Religion: A Novel Perspective |
| 1/22 | [Mark Salzman](https://www.salon.com/2001/01/10/salzman/), *Lying Awake*, 1-55 (“God’s Mystery” through “Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time”). |
| 1/24 | Salzman, 56-116 (“Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor” through “Holy Thursday ”). |
| 1/26 | Salzman, 117-181 (“Darkness” through “All Saints”). |
| 1/29 | Research paper workshop.\* |
|  | Gender and Knowing |
| 1/31 | [Alison Jaggar](https://www.colorado.edu/philosophy/people/alison-jaggar), “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology” in *Gender/Body/Knowledge*, ed. A. Jaggar and S. Bordo, 145-171 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989). |
| 2/2 | [Anne Clark](http://www.uvm.edu/~religion/?Page=clark.php), “Hildegard of Bingen and *Frauenmystik*” in *The Cambridge Handbook to Western Mysticism and Esotericism*, ed. G. A. Magee, 118-129 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). |
| 2/5 | Visiting scholar: [Anne Clark](http://www.uvm.edu/~religion/?Page=clark.php), UVM Department of Religion. |
| 2/7 | Library workshop with Pat Mardeusz, Bailey-Howe Library; **meet in the Library Classroom**, at the rear of the reference area on the right. |
|  | Cultural Knowledge: Objectivity, Subjectivity and Cultural Difference |
| 2/9 | [Clifford Geertz](https://www.ias.edu/news/press-releases/2009-49), “From the Native’s Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding” in *Culture Theory*, ed. R.A. Shweder and R.A. LeVine, 123-136 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984). |
| 2/12 | [John Corrigan](https://divinity.uchicago.edu/john-corrigan), “Religion, Emotion, and History,” *Criterion* 53, no. 1 (2017): 6-15. |
| 2/14 | Visiting scholar: [Tom Borchert](https://www.uvm.edu/~religion/?Page=borchert.php), UVM Department of Religion; **research topic statement due.\*** |
|  | Knowledge and Experience in a Buddhist Religious Text |
| 2/16 | [Damian Keown](http://www.gold.ac.uk/history/staff/d-keown/), *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 29-56; 97-109. |
| 2/19 | Presidents’ Day: no class. |
| 2/21 | [Ralph Flores](http://www.sunypress.edu/details.asp?id=61568), *Buddhist Scriptures as Literature* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008): 1-16; *The Dhammapada: Verses on the Way*, tr. [Glenn Wallis](https://www.glennwallis.com/about-me/), pp. xi-xv; 89-102. |
| 2/23 | *Dhammapada*, chs. 1-9 plus relevant supporting materials from the “Guide to Reading the Text” (pp. 103-190). |
| 2/26 | *Dhammapada*, chs. 10-20 plus relevant selections from the Guide. |
| 2/28 | *Dhammapada*, chs. 21-26 plus relevant selections from the Guide. |
| 3/2 | [Ranjini Obeyesekere](https://anthropology.princeton.edu/people/emeritus-faculty/ranjini-obeyesekere), *Portraits of Buddhist Women: Stories from the Saddharmaratnavaliya* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001): 1-5; 11-20; 126-133 (“The Nun Patacara”).\* |
| 3/5 | [Karen Derris](http://www.redlands.edu/study/schools-and-centers/college-of-arts-and-sciences/undergraduate-studies/religious-studies/meet-our-faculty/karen-derris/), “Interpreting Buddhist Representations of Motherhood and Mothering,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30 (2014): 61-79. |
|  | Mindfulness in North America |
| 3/7 | Showing of [David Grubin](https://www.grubin.com/about)’s [*The Buddha*](http://www.pbs.org/thebuddha/); **annotated bibliography due.** |
| 3/9 | [Robert Sharf](http://buddhiststudies.berkeley.edu/people/faculty/sharf/), “Is Mindfulness Buddhist?” *Transcultural Psychology* 52 (2015): 1-15. |
| 3/12-16 | Spring Break: no class. |
| 3/19 | *Mahā-satipaṭṭthāna-sutta*, tr. [Thanissaro Bhikkhu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanissaro_Bhikkhu#CITEREFTricycle1998), *Access to Insight*, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.22.0.than.html>. |
| 3/21 | [Jeff Wilson](https://professorjeffwilson.wordpress.com/), *Mindful America*, Introduction-ch. 2. |
| 3/23 | Visiting scholar: [Jim Hudziak](https://www.uvm.edu/medicine/psychiatry/?Page=profile.php&bioID=23244), UVM College of Medicine: **research proposal due.** |
| 3/26 | *Mindful America*, chs. 3-4. |
| 3/28 | *Mindful America*, chs. 5-Postscript. |
| 3/30 | [*Free the Mind*](http://danishdocumentary.com/films/free-the-mind/), a documentary by [Phie Ambo](http://danishdocumentary.com/directors/phie-ambo/) (2012).\* |
| 4/2 | *Free the Mind*, cont. |
|  | Musical Experience and Knowledge |
| 4/4 | [Oliver Sacks](https://www.oliversacks.com/about-oliver-sacks/), *Musicophilia* (New York: Knopf, 2007): 279-301; 305-316; 335-347. |
| 4/6 | [Judith Becker](http://www.music.umich.edu/faculty_staff/bio.php?u=beckerj), *Deep Listeners* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004): 69-86. |
| 4/9 | [Jeff Todd Titon](https://vivo.brown.edu/display/jtiton), “Knowing Fieldwork” in *Shadows in the Field*, ed. G. Barz and T. Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 87-100. |
| 4/11 | No class; **first draft of research paper due by 5 p.m. at my office.** |
| 4/13 | Visiting scholar: [Mark Howe](http://www.stpaulscathedralvt.org/staff.html), Music Director and Canon Precentor, St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral.\* |
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| 4//16 | Oral research reports. |
| 4/18 | Oral research reports. |
| 4/20 | Oral research reports. |
| 4/23 | Oral research reports. |
|  | Experience and Education |
| 4/25 | [John Dewey](https://www.uvm.edu/psychology/archive2010/?Page=John_Dewey.html&SM=overview_menu.html), *Experience and Education*, chs. 1-3. |
| 4/27 | Dewey, chs. 4-6. |
| 4/30 | Dewey, chs. 7-8. |
| 5/2 | Visiting scholar: [Bob Pepperman Taylor](https://www.uvm.edu/cas/polisci/profiles/robert-pepperman-taylor), UVM Department of Political Science.\* |
| 5/4 | Concluding discussion. |
| 5/10 | **Final version of research paper due by 5 p.m. at my office.** |
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The following texts are required and are available through the University Store, as well as from Amazon, including less expensive e-book editions that can be directly downloaded:

John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997);

*The Dhammapada: Verses on the Way*, tr. Glenn Wallis (New York: Modern Library, 2004);

Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake: A Novel* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000);

Jeff Wilson, *Mindful America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

All other readings are available as pdf files on the Blackboard course web site. Much of this material is subject to copyright restrictions, and selections in pdf format are made available solely for the instructional purposes of this course. You can find guidelines for the “fair use” of copyrighted materials here: <https://library.uvm.edu/about/policies/copyright_guidelines/electronic_reserve_copyright_guidelines>.

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://www.uvm.edu/academicsuccess/student_accessibility_services).  SAS works with students and faculty to create reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to professors with suggested accommodations as early as possible each semester. Contact SAS: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; [access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu).

Religious Holidays: Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work.

This class should be regarded as a learning community guided by basic principles of honesty and mutual respect. In light of this, it is the responsibility of all students enrolled in this course to be aware of and in compliance with the university’s regulations regarding academic honesty as stated in UVM’s [Code of Academic Integrity](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf). If you have any questions about these regulations, you should speak to the instructor for further clarification. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is and for knowing the standard techniques for adequate documentation in your writing.  You are responsible for submitting only your work as your own. Writing assignments for this course are not collaborative; each student must do his or her own individual work.  Any suspected case of any type of academic dishonesty will be handled according to the procedures described in *The Code of Academic Integrity*. A broader statement of students’ rights and responsibilities can be found here: [www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf).