

Self-Cultivation and Spiritual Practice

Comparative Perspectives

HCOL Sophomore Seminar, Spring 2018



Course director: Prof. Adrian Ivakhiv, aivakhiv@uvm.edu

Office: Room 211, Bittersweet House, 153 South Prospect Street (at Main)

Consultation hours: Wednesdays 10:30–11:30 am, 2:30–4:00 pm

Appointments: Please call or email Cathy Trivieres (656-4055, envs@uvm.edu)

Class meetings: Tue. & Thur. 11:40 am–12:55 pm, University Hts. North Multipurpose Room

OVERVIEW

This course introduces students to the comparative study of religious, spiritual, and psycho-physical practices—exercises by which individuals and groups deepen, develop, challenge, and transform their perceptions and capacities for action in harmony with religious, moral-ethical, or philosophical ideals. The course covers a range that spans from ancient Greek and Roman philosophers (such as Stoics, Epicurians, and Neoplatonists), yogis and monks of South and East Asia, Christian and Muslim ascetics and Renaissance mages, to practitioners of modern forms of westernized yoga, martial arts, ritual magic, and environmental and spiritual activism. Readings of ancient texts and contemporary philosophical and sociological writings are complemented by practical exercises, writing and presentation assignments, and a practice project.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Philosophers in the ancient world were less interested in knowledge for its own sake than in the "art of living." From ancient Greece and Rome to China and India, the core of philosophical practice often consisted of spiritual exercises (*askesis*, ἄσκησις, Gk.) aimed at self-cultivation (*xiushen*, 修真, Ch.). This interest has been revived in today's growing fascination with spiritual practices undertaken both within and well outside the context of traditional religion.

This course introduces students to the comparative study of religious, spiritual, and psycho-physical practices—exercises by which individuals and groups deepen, develop, challenge, and transform their perceptions and capacities for action in harmony with religious, moral-ethical, or philosophical ideals. This involves a two-part definition of "spiritual practice," with each of these two components being integral to the practices examined: (1) a physical and/or psychological activity that is performed regularly, with the aim of improvement or attainment toward a goal, and (2) an ideal that contains some moral or ethical understanding of "the good." Such practices may be performed by individuals or by groups, and they can be pursued in tightly regulated or highly unregulated settings. For instance, they may function in traditionally religious contexts circumscribed by concepts of sanctity or strict codes of duty and prohibition; or they may be completely free of such constraints, as in today's highly individualized "spiritual marketplace."

The course covers a spectrum of such practices as well as the philosophies that underlie them, drawn from a broad historical range, from ancient Greece and Rome (including Stoics, Epicurians, Skeptics, and Neoplatonists), ancient and medieval South and East Asia, medieval Christianity and Islam, to the 'magical' philosophy of Renaissance Europe, to practitioners of modern forms of westernized yoga, martial arts, meditation, neo-shamanism, environmental or other forms of activism, extreme sports, and computer apps for mental and emotional strength training and longevity. Readings of original texts (in translation) and contemporary philosophical writings will be complemented by practical exercises and writing and presentation assignments. We will discuss debates over the place of such practices in varying cultural contexts; their relations to religion, conformity and deviance, social order and dissent, economic class, race, and gender; and their changing place in today's pluralistic and globalized world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

(1) Students will be introduced to a historically and culturally informed, comparative perspective on spiritual practices. This perspective will be rooted in current literature in religious studies, philosophy (as practice), and the social sciences, with reference to new fields of consciousness studies, the psychology of happiness and well-being, and the spiritual and "postsecular" turns in religious and cultural studies.

(2) Students will be challenged, with the aid of concepts and practices from divergent cultural contexts, to critically think through their assumptions about religion, spirituality, the self, morality, and the good life.

(3) Students will be provided the opportunity to improve their writing and presentation skills through iterative writing exercises and assignments.

(4) Students will be provided the opportunity to engage in a spiritual or psycho-physical practice in a sustained manner, to reflect on that engagement through multiple lenses, and to introduce this practice to other students through an appropriate pedagogical format.

Disclaimer: Students should be aware that exercises that fall under the rubrics of "self-cultivation" and "spiritual practice," if followed with rigor and consistency, can trigger the arousal of difficult and challenging emotions connected to past experiences, beliefs, and concepts of self. The course is not intended to provide a therapeutic function, nor am I a licensed therapist in the position of doing that. No classroom exercises of this kind will be mandatory, and students should exercise their judgment about their own level of participation.

Students unsure about their personal pursuit of such practices are encouraged to seek counseling support at UVM's Center for Health and Wellbeing (<http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb>).

READINGS

1. A Course Reader will be made available to students for a nominal fee. Other readings will be made available in BlackBoard.
2. Bregman, Lisa, The Ecology of Spirituality: Meanings, Virtues, and Practices in a Post-Religious Age. Baylor University Press, 2014. Parts of this book (approx. a third to a half) will be required in the second half of the semester. It will also be available for 2-hour loan on Bailey Howe Library Course Reserve.

For additional resources, see Additional Resources list on pp. 10–11 below.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Students will be evaluated according to the following grade breakdown:

1. Classroom attendance & participation	15
2. Personal journal (to be submitted 3 times)	15
3. Three short classroom quizzes (3 x 5)	15
4. Practice project:	30
Proposal (3)	
Progress report (2)	
In-class workshop (10)	
Final report (and diary) (10)	
Class presentation (5)	
5. Research paper:	25
Proposal (3)	
In-progress draft (2)	
Final draft (20)	
Total:	100

1. CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (15%)

Attendance and quality of participation: Your participation grade will incorporate your attendance and performance in class discussions. You are expected to attend all classes. If you will be absent for any reason, please let me know ahead of time and indicate how you plan to make up missed work. Participation is a significant part of your grade and difficult to do if you are not there. Respect and consideration for fellow students, instructors, guests, and the ideas they express is essential at all times.

Reading and 'prompts': The course will cover a great deal of material in a short time period, so it is important for you to stay current on the reading. I will not be lecturing on the readings, but we will discuss your responses to readings as we clarify their main points. Please come to class prepared to speak to the substance of the assigned material. For each class session, you should prepare at least one question that distills your understanding of the reading material into a 'prompt' for class discussion. We will normally aim to collect these and draw on them to guide our discussion. There may occasionally also be a supplementary reading requirement, where you will be able to choose a reading from a list and asked to report on it for the class.

2. PERSONAL JOURNAL (15%)

The goal of this journal is to make the class materials “your own” by reflecting on them and relating them to your own life (to the extent you feel comfortable) in whatever expressive medium you find most appropriate (e.g., literary, visual, etc.). The journal could also include your “practice journal” related to the Practice Project (see below). It will be evaluated on the quality and depth of engagement with course materials and ideas. While it is not necessary to reflect on all of the class readings, you should make an effort to do on most readings and class topics and to add journal entries on at least a weekly basis.

3. QUIZZES (3 x 5% = 15%)

There will be three short quizzes (in a multiple-choice or short-answer format) covering course materials. Any materials that are *both* in a required reading *and* mentioned in class can be on the quizzes. Reading materials *not* covered in class will not be on the quizzes. The quizzes are not intended to test your memorization of detail; their goal, rather, is to provide an incentive for you to pay attention in class and an opportunity for review, which helps transfer course ideas and content from “short-term” to “long-term” memory.

4. PRACTICE PROJECT & AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY (30%)

This will be a multi-part project taking up a good part of the semester. You will be asked to “adopt” a practice or set of practices for a period of four weeks (see below* for an alternative option). Adopting the practice will normally mean committing to practice it daily, for no less than 10 minutes per day, at least 4 days a week, and no less than 60 minutes per week in total, during the 4-week practice period. The practice could be new to you or it could be something you have tried before, but it should not be one with which you have a long and regular history of practice.

The project will include the following:

- (a) **Proposal** (3%): A 2-page proposal should include a title, a detailed description of the practice you will be adopting (including relevant details about timing, reflection method, and the like), a timeline (including starting and end dates of your 4-week practice period, and a proposed date for your in-class workshop on the practice), a list of sources of information you have consulted or will rely on for the practice, anticipated results, and any questions you may still have about the project. **Due:** Feb. 15.
- (b) **Practice/diary:** As you take up the practice over its 4-week period, maintain a journal/diary including observations on the effects of the practice, critical reflections on it in the context of class readings and discussions, and any other relevant considerations. Feel free to vary the format as suitable to your practice.
- (c) **Progress report** (2%): This 1-to-2 page report should specify how things are going, what you are learning, any challenges or obstacles you have come up against, and ideas for overcoming those challenges. It could include (as an appendix) any relevant notes or parts from your practice diary. **Due:** 1 to 2 weeks into your 4-week practice period.
- (d) **Class workshop:** At some point during the 4-week period or soon afterward, you will be expected to lead the class in a brief workshop on this practice. This should provide basic historical and other background information, ideally conveyed with the aid of a visual medium, handout, Power Point or Prezi, et al. (taking 5–10 minutes of class time) and an experiential exercise giving students a “taste” or “flavor” of the exercise (aiming for no more than 10 minutes here). It is understood that you are not an expert at this practice, but rather that you are presenting what you are learning so that we can together explore its contexts, experiential dimensions, et al.

- (e) **Report:** Write a final “auto-ethnographic” report assessing your experience. This report should contextualize your analysis within relevant course readings and/or other literature. Additional sources should be consulted and appropriately documented, with footnotes/endnotes and/or a bibliography of works cited. Include, as an appendix, any relevant diary notes either in summary format or in their original form. **Due:** Apr. 5.
- (f) **Presentation:** Present the results to the class in a format of your choice (e.g., in-class audio-visual presentation, web site, poster, musical or theatrical performance, etc.). This should be considered a short follow-up to the in-class workshop. **Date:** TBA.

***Alternative option:** You may choose to study a group of practitioners rather than adopting a practice yourself. This will normally involve carrying out interviews (face-to-face or electronic) with more than one practitioner of some recognized spiritual practice, analyzing them in terms discussed in the course. This will require careful consideration of the group in question as well as the preparation of research review procedures, which we will go over in class.

5. RESEARCH PAPER (25%)

This will be an in-depth research paper assessing some form of spiritual or psycho-physical practice in the context of its cultural or historical emergence, with some reference to its contemporary uses and to the literature on it. These can range widely, but should be specific rather than overly generalized. For instance, papers on Yoga, Buddhist meditation, Christian mysticism, Kabbalah, or Pagan ritual magic are far too general. Papers on Zen Buddhist koan meditation, Tibetan Buddhist sand mandala painting, Eastern Christian hesychastic “prayer of the heart,” Boy or Girl Scout routines and rituals, Laughter Yoga, or Spiritual Surfing are *potentially* feasible, but only if you specify what you will do with them (e.g., examine particular uses of them today, focus on some particular debate around them, compare different schools of thought about them, etc.). The paper should analyze the practice based on a review of scholarly and/or historical sources (to the extent that these are available)—which is what makes it a research paper. Note that the research paper can be *related* to your practice project, but its focus should not be identical to the practice you carried out or studied in that project.

Recommended length: 10–12 typed, double-spaced pages or 2500–3000 words.

Format: The paper should include sections on each of the following:

- (a) **Background & cultural-historical origins:** What are the social and cultural contexts in which the practice emerged? Refer here to politics and social order, cultural differences such as race, class, and gender (if relevant), and relevant other dimensions of the social milieu within which the practice originated and/or spread. This section should be written as a concise summary, and normally no more than 2 to 3 pages in length.
- (b) **Phenomenology/Analysis:** This sections would normally summarize the reported experiential impacts of the practice on devoted practitioners, and discuss these with reference to at least one analytical framework discussed in the course. This should normally be the longest part of your paper. You may choose to focus on something other than the phenomenology of the practice (e.g., some controversy around the use of a particular technique/practice, etc.), in which case your proposal should clearly specify this (the section would therefore not be called a “phenomenology”).
- (c) **Conclusion and contemporary relevance of the practice:** This should address the relationship between the practice (in its experiential dimensions) and its cultural and historical background. If it is practiced in today’s world, discuss how such practice is different from that of its historical origins or precedents, and what this tells us about the two contexts. What place does or might this practice have in an increasingly globalized and “disembedded” world, and why? This section should be no more than 2 pages long.

- (d) **Bibliography:** This should be a properly formatted (APA, MLA, or Chicago style) list of works consulted, including at least 12 sources, of which at least 5 should be scholarly in nature and at least two of those be published since 2005.

Due dates:

Proposal (3%): This should include a title, a description of the practice you will be analyzing, your methods of analysis, and a bibliography listing at least 5 sources (of which at least 3 should be scholarly). **Due:** March 8.

Progress report (no grade): This should include drafts of any parts of the paper you have begun writing (including, at minimum, an introduction), point form of what else will be part of the full draft, and any challenges you are finding or questions you may have. **Due:** by March 29.

First full draft (2% for on-time completion, mock final grade to be revised upon submission of final draft): This should be a full draft of your paper, written in complete sentences and paragraphs. If there are any parts that remain to be written (please minimize these!), they should be described in a preamble or concluding statement. The draft should read *as if* it were complete. **Due:** April 19.

Final draft: Due: May 10.

NOTE ON GRADING

Grades in this course will be assigned a letter grade equating with a percentage-grade as follows:

A- 90-93	A 94-98	A+ 99+
B- 80-82	B 83-86	B+ 87-89
C- 70-72	C 73-76	C+ 77-79
D- 60-62	D 63-67	D+ 67-69
F Below 60		

COURSE OUTLINE

The following is a tentative schedule of topics and readings, and is subject to change. Not all listed readings may be required; others may be added. Folders with additional materials and links to web resources will be available in Blackboard. Details about requirements will be announced in class and on Blackboard. "CR" indicates readings in the Course Reader.

1. INTRODUCTION: DEFINING OUR TERMS

Overview of the Course. Defining terms: Religion, spirituality, philosophy, theology; Mysticism, esotericism, magic, occultism; Self-cultivation, self-realization, self, God (or gods); Moral education, character development.

Jan 16

(No readings)

Jan 18

1. Bregman, "The making of contemporary spirituality," The Ecology of Spirituality, pp. 1-7. CR.
2. Huss, "Spirituality: The emergence of a new cultural category and its challenge to the religious and the secular," Journal of Contemporary Religion 29.1 (2014). Read only pp. 47-51. CR.
3. Parsons, "Introduction," Teaching Mysticism, pp. 1-3. CR.
4. Metzner, "Contents," Opening to Inner Light: The Transformation of Human Nature and Consciousness. CR.
5. Sloterdijk, "On the anthropotechnic turn," You Must Change Your Life, pp. 1-6. CR.

2. PHILOSOPHERS AS PRACTITIONERS IN ANCIENT GREECE & ROME

Philosophy as a way of life among the Stoics, Epicurians, Sceptics, and Neoplatonists

Jan 23

1. Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises" and "Philosophy as a Way of Life," Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault, pp. 81–109, 264–275. CR.

Jan 25

1. Stoic Week 2014 Handbook, pp. 9–17; skim days of the week & choose one to do as exercise. CR.
(Audio exercises: <https://learn.modernstoicism.com/courses/233925/lectures/3648468>)

Jan 30

1. Harrison, "The Garden School of Epicurus," Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition, pp. 71–82. CR.

3. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN SOUTH ASIA

Yoga (in its many definitions) and its evolution; Hindu and Buddhist self-cultivation practices

Feb 1

1. White, "Yoga, Brief History of an Idea," in White, ed. Yoga in Practice, pp. 1–22. CR.
2. Malinar, "Yoga Practices in the *Bhagavadgita*," in White, Yoga in Practice, pp. 78–89. CR.

Feb 6

1. Feuerstein, "Classical dualist yoga: The eight limbs of the path of self-transcendence," Yoga: The Technology of Ecstasy, pp. 183–196. CR.

Feb 8

1. Wallace, on the Sattipatthanasutta, Contemplative Science, pp. 114–118.
2. Wright, "Introduction," The Six Perfections: Buddhism & the Cultivation of Character, pp. 3–12. CR.

4. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN CHINA & EAST ASIA

Daoist and Confucian self-cultivation, Daoyin/Qigong, martial arts, and other arts

Feb 13

1. Graziani, "The subject and the sovereign: Exploring the self in early Chinese self-cultivation": read "Introduction" (pp. 459–465) and "Conclusion" (pp. 511–517). CR.
2. Slingerland, "Effortless Action: The Chinese Spiritual Ideal of Wu-Wei": read "Wu-Wei as a Common Ideal" (pp. 299–310) and "The Paradox of Wu-Wei" (315–321). CR.

Feb 15

1. Smith et al, "On Zhu Xi's Theory of Mind and Methods of Self-Cultivation" (excerpt on "The Problem of Mind" and the 8 methods). CR.
2. Kohn, "*Daoyin*: Chinese healing exercises," Asian Medicine 3 (2007), pp. 103–128. CR.

Due: Practice project proposal

Feb 20

1. Keenan, "The first five steps of personal cultivation," Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation, 37–52. CR.
2. Matsunobu, "Japanese spirituality & music practice: Art as self-cultivation," pp. 1425–1435. CR

5. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS

Christian spiritual practice, from Augustine to Ignatius to Hesychasm and 'Centering Prayer.' Judaism and the Kabbalah; Islam and Sufism.

Feb 22

1. Eifring, "Meditation in Judaism, Christianity & Islam: Technical aspects of devotional practices" CR.
2. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola (Louis Puhl translation):
<http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl>
3. Excerpts from The Philokalia: The Complete Text, vol. 1.

Feb 27

1. Altglas, "A short introduction to Kabbalah," From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage, pp. 42–44. CR.
2. Hoffman, "Light from Ten Spheres: A Kabbalistic Self-Inventory with the Tree of Life," 40–43.

6. MAGIC, ESOTERIC GNOSIS, & THE ARTS

From the Ancients to the Renaissance to Romanticism to the 'New Age.' Defining terms: Hermeticism, esotericism, gnosis/Gnosticism, occultism, magic, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Tarot, Jungian depth/analytical psychology, et al. Changing relations between religion, science, magic/occultism, and the arts.

Mar 1

1. Faivre, "The components of esotericism considered as a form of thought," Access to Western Esotericism, pp. 10–15. CR.
2. Hanegraaff, "Practice," Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed, pp. 102–118. CR.

Mar 8

1. Luhrmann, "New experiences: meditation and visualization," Persuasions of the Witch's Craft, pp. 180–202. CR.

Due: Paper proposal

Mar 20

1. Ivakhiv, "The resurgence of magical religion as a response to the crisis of modernity." CR.
2. Steiner, "The six protective exercises with their etheric powers," and "Steiner's karma exercises." CR.
3. Progoff, from At a Journal Workshop. CR.

Mar 22

1. Robertson, "Active imagination in practice." CR.
2. Lipsey, "Wassily Kandinsky in the years of On the Spiritual in Art," An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth Century Art, pp. 40–43.
3. Arya, "Contemplations of the spiritual in visual art." CR.

7. NATURE, BODY, & LIFE SPIRITUALITIES IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

Nature spiritualities, from Boy Scouts and "wannabe" Indians to Neo-Pagans, eco-activists, and outdoor enthusiasts. From Physical Culture and bodybuilding to Modern Postural Yoga, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Mindfulness, and other 'westernized,' 'easternized,' and 'traveling' practices. The science (and neuroscience) of spirituality.

Mar 27

1. Berry, "Recovering the peripatetic tradition," Devoted to Nature: The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism, pp. 49–57. CR.
2. Schmitt, "Backwoods brotherhoods," Back to Nature, pp. 106–114. CR.
3. Excerpts from Handbook for Scoutmasters. CR.

Mar 29

1. Singleton, "Transnational exchange and the genesis of modern postural yoga," pp. 37–54. CR.

Due: Paper progress report

Apr 3

1. Lloyd, "The askesis of contemporary 'Occidental' martial arts," from "Philosophy as a way of life and the practice of martial arts," pp. 12–19.
2. TBA

Apr 5

1. Young, "What is mindfulness? A contemplative perspective," Handbook of Mindfulness in Education, pp. 29–44. CR.
2. Tang, Holzel, and Posner, "The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation," Nature Reviews: Neuroscience, pp. 213–222.

Due: Project report

Apr 10

1. Lutz, Dunne, and Davidson, "Meditation and the neuroscience of consciousness" (excerpts to be specified)

8. 'SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS'? THE FUTURE OF SPIRITUALITY

Is there an evolving global spirituality? Is spirituality what happens to religion in neoliberal capitalism? Is spirituality individual or collective? Is spirituality conducive to health? Positive Psychology, the Mindfulness movement, and the science (and neuroscience) of spirituality.

Apr 12

1. Bregman, The Ecology of Spirituality, chapters 4 & 5.

Apr 17

1. Bregman, The Ecology of Spirituality, chapter 6.

Apr 19

1. Bregman, The Ecology of Spirituality, chapters 7, 9, and Conclusion.

Due: Paper draft

Apr 24

1. Carrette and King, "Introduction: Spirituality and the rebranding of religion," pp. 1–6, 13–23, from Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion. CR.
2. Starhawk, "Towards an activist spirituality," pp. 215–220. CR.

Apr 26

1. Seligman, "The past and future of positive psychology" (excerpt). CR.
2. Wong, "Positive psychology 2.0: Towards a balanced, interactive model of the good life." CR.

May 1

1. Walsh, "The art of transcendence: An introduction to common elements of transpersonal practices." CR.
2. Metzner, "Introduction: From caterpillar to butterfly," Opening to Inner Light: The Transformation of Human Nature and Consciousness, 1–15.
3. Wall, Nye, FitzMedrud, "Psychospiritual integrative practices," Wiley–Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology.

May 3

Review & Conclusions

May 10

Due: Final paper due

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (see Blackboard for more)

Background Reading

- Calhoun, A. The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us. IVP Books, 2015.
- Carrette, J., and R. King. Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion. Routledge, 2005.
- Carter, R. E. The Japanese Arts and Self–Cultivation. SUNY Press, 2008.
- Christof, C. Rethinking Religion in the Theatre of Grotowski. Routledge, 2017.
- De Souza, M., J. Bone, J. Watson, ed. Spirituality Across Disciplines: Research and Practice. Springer, 2016.
- Farrer, D. S. and J. Whalen–Bridge, ed. Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge: Asian Traditions in a Transnational World. SUNY Press, 2011.
- Flanagan, K. and P. C. Jupp, ed. A Sociology of Spirituality. Routledge, 2009.
- Giordan, G. and W. H. Swatos, ed. Religion, Spirituality, and Everyday Practice. Springer, 2011.
- Hadot, P. Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault. M. Chase, trans. Blackwell, 1995.
- Harris, S. Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion.
- Heelas, P. Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism & Consumptive Capitalism. Blackwell, 2008.
- Hunt, Harry T. Lives in Spirit: Precursors & Dilemmas of a Secular Western Mysticism. SUNY Press, 2003.
- Irvine, William B. A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy. Oxford U. Press, 2009.
- Lloyd, H. M. "Philosophy as a way of life and the practice of the martial arts."
- Martin, L. H., H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton, ed. Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault. U. of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Rappaport, Roy, Religion and Ritual in the Making of Humanity. Cambridge U. Press, 1999.
- Schneider, Pat. How the Light Gets In: Writing As a Spiritual Practice. Oxford U. Press, 2013.
- Sheldrake, Philip, Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford U. Press, 2012.
- Slingerland, E. Trying Not to Try: Ancient China, Modern Science, and the Power of Spontaneity. Broadway Books, 2015.
- Sloterdijk, Peter, You Must Change Your Life! Polity Press, 2013.
- Spatz, B. What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research. Routledge, 2015.
- Taylor, Bron. Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality & the Planetary Future. U. of California Press, 2009.
- Wuthnow, Robert, Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist. U. of California Press, 2001.
- Young, Shinzen. The Science of Enlightenment: How Meditation Works. Sounds True, 2016.

Online Resources

Buddhist meditation practices: <https://www.wikihow.com/Practice-Buddhist-Meditation>

Types of meditation: <https://liveanddare.com/types-of-meditation>

Christian meditation and contemplative prayer: <https://liveanddare.com/contemplative-prayer-and-christian-meditation/>

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola (Christian) resources:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises>

Spirituality & Practice resources: <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/alphabet/>

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/features/view/27713/spiritual-practice-toolkit>

10-step guide to starting your own spiritual practice:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/wakeupcall/2016/11/a-10-step-guide-to-starting-your-own-spiritual-practice-no-church-required/>

Brian Taylor's guide: [http://explorefaith.org/livingspiritually/](http://explorefaith.org/livingspiritually/a_guide_to_spiritual_practice/an_introduction.php)

[a_guide_to_spiritual_practice/an_introduction.php](http://explorefaith.org/livingspiritually/a_guide_to_spiritual_practice/an_introduction.php)

Tom Das's Roadmap to Enlightenment: <https://tomdas.com/2016/01/09/the-highest-spiritual-teachings-self-knowledge-and-generating-peace/>

COURSE POLICIES

1. ABSENCES: Students are expected to attend all classes, unless you have an excused absence. Attendance will be taken, and unexcused absences will factor into your final grade. (Absences are not excused unless they are personally cleared with the instructor by phone or email.) If you miss a class, please ask another student for assistance in catching up on the material. We expect you to make it a commitment to attend every class, both for your own learning and to contribute to the community of learning in the group.

2. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS & LATENESS: Unless otherwise specified or agreed upon beforehand, all written work should be submitted in print, not electronically. It should be typewritten, at least 1-1/2 spaced (or double-spaced), in a common font style (such as Times New Roman or Arial) no less than 11-point in size, and with at least 1" margins for comments. Pages should be numbered and stapled together. Please spell-check and proofread your work, and use inclusive language (i.e. be conscious of your use of gendered pronouns and referents, using "people" or "humanity" instead of "man", "he or she" or "they" instead of simply "he," and so on). All written work should be turned in on time, i.e. at the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due. Late work is subject to penalties, with grades dropping half a letter grade each day your work is late unless you have a valid medical excuse or receive an extension from me beforehand.

3. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: UVM supports students' active involvement in their religious/faith communities. Students wishing to be excused from class participation during their religious holidays should submit a documented list of such holidays by the end of the second week of classes.

4. COLLABORATION & PLAGIARISM: You are encouraged to work with others in the class on your assignments, sharing resources and ideas and helping each other with direction, focus, clarity, and personal support. Please make an effort to get to know your peers. Many religious and environmental initiatives have been built on collaborative networking, and such activity is encouraged. At the same time, UVM's commitment to academic honesty will be followed. This means that unless otherwise stated, all written assignments should be your own. If you draw on other sources, they should be cited properly to give adequate credit. If you work with other students to prepare for an exam, your written answers should be individually constructed, not copied from each other or shared notes. Work that appears to be plagiarized will be given no credit and students will be asked to meet with me to explain the situation. Plagiarism at UVM is grounds for academic suspension; don't do it. Further information on plagiarism can be found in UVM's Statement on Academic Integrity; see <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

5. RESPECTFUL CLASS CONDUCT: The mission of the University of Vermont includes two components: the creation, evaluation, sharing, and application of knowledge; and the preparation of students “to be accountable leaders who will bring to their work *dedication to the global community*, a grasp of complexity, effective problem-solving and communication skills, and an enduring *commitment to learning and ethical conduct*” (emphases added; see www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=mission.html). The commitment of “dedication to the global community” is reflected in the D2 diversity requirement, which this course in “Religion and Ecology” fulfills. Since religion is often a deeply personal matter, it is important that students feel welcome and safe in this class to express their views on the subjects of our study. Respectful treatment of others and their views is key to this (and not only because it is consistent with the “ethical conduct” aimed for in the University mission). I will do my best to uphold it in my own behavior, and will expect a similar effort from each student.

As a public university, UVM is also committed to the protection of free speech (which is guaranteed by the First Amendment, except in instances of defamation, obscenity, criminal conduct, or a “clear and present danger” to incitement of harm, injury, and violence). The classroom, however, is not a forum for the airing of any views whatsoever. It is a forum for learning about specific topics, and this is best done within a respectful and open-minded setting in which divergent views can be discussed, critically considered, clarified, and evaluated. In seeking a balance between freedom of expression and respect for difference, I have found the following principles to be most helpful, and I suggest that we adopt them in our class:

- (1) Seek to *understand* other points of view, even if you disagree with them;
- (2) Where disagreement or criticism seem warranted, seek to engage *constructively* and to criticize ideas or behaviors (at most) but not the *people* who hold them;
- (3) When in doubt, practice kindness and civility.

Disrespect of individuals or groups, such as would create an atmosphere of hostility or fear, should not be tolerated in a classroom seminar. If such disrespect emerges, students should feel free to “flag” it without fear of retribution. In the end, however, it is in engaging with differences in perspective and expression that we develop our capacity for “ethical conduct” in a “global community” that is complex and deeply heterogeneous in its values, beliefs, and practices. Through practicing kindness with each other, we learn how to engage in civil conversation with our peers and to model such conversation in our country and in the world.

RELATED RESOURCES

UVM policy on academic integrity: <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

Grade appeals: <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/gradeappeals.pdf>

Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities: www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf

FERPA Rights Disclosure (student records privacy rights):

<http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/ferpa.pdf>

UVM policy on disability certification & student support:

www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf

Center for Health and Wellbeing: <http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb/>

Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS): (802) 656-3340

Note: If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at <http://www.uvm.edu/~dos/>

For other policies, see www.uvm.edu/academics/catalogue and click on Policies (A-Z).