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RLST 369.01: Contemplative Traditions of Asia

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RLST 369
Contemplative Traditions of Asia
Tuesday and Thursday 12:40-2:00
LA 106

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Office: LA 158 (Ext. 2837)
Office Hours: TR 2:30-4:30

This course will examine the concepts and practices of some of the major meditational traditions in the religions of Asia, covering the origins and evolutions of forms of Hindu Yoga in India, Buddhist meditation in South, Himalayan (Tibetan) and East Asia, and Taoist “inner alchemy” in East Asia. The course readings are drawn from a variety of genres, including canonical scriptures, instructional guides, poem-songs, and spiritual hagiographies, biographies, and autobiographies. The readings express a variety of meditational theories, practices and experiences. We will also consider important scholarly investigations of these traditions.

Readings: (All books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore).

- Cleary, Thomas. *Taoist Meditation*.
- Cook, Francis Dojun. *How to Raise an Ox: Zen Practice as Taught in Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*.
- Gunaratana, Bhante Henepola. *Mindfulness in Plain English*.
- Gyatso, Geshe Kelsang. *Clear Light of Bliss: Tantric Meditation Manual*.
- Milarepa. Jetsun. *Drinking the Mountain Stream: Songs of Tibet's Beloved Saints, Milarepa*.
- Muktananda, Swami. *Play of Consciousness*.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *The Upanisads*.

Requirements:

- 1) Class preparation, attendance, and participation. Since this course may be the first 300-level seminar for many of you, a few words about expectations in such a course are in order. First of all, the reading load is substantial and the content of the materials is often difficult, presupposing a familiarity with basic concepts, institutions, and history of the religion(s) involved. So preparation for our discussions in class is a time-consuming and intensive process, involving not only careful reading, but note-taking and reflection as well. Second 300 level courses put a premium on the art of sympathetically and critically discussing both the source materials and each other's ideas. So, active participation by all members of the class is crucial. Of course in order to participate, you must regularly attend class. Two unexcused absences are allowed for the semester, but any absences beyond two will begin to negatively affect your class participation grade. (20% of the final grade)

- 2) There will be mid-term and final take-home essay exams. Each exam counts for 20% of the final grade (=40% of the final grade).
- 3) There will be a 12-15 page research paper, on a topic of the student's choice, in consultation with the professor. A list of suggested topics will be distributed, but you are free to look outside of this list. The paper's grade will come from both the paper itself and the timely submission of a proposal and working bibliography on the assigned date. (40% of the final grade).

Assignments and Readings:

Tues. 1/29 Introduction to the Course.

I. South & Southeast Asia

- Thurs 1/31 The Upanishads
 -Georg Feuerstein: "The Whispered Wisdom of the Upanishads" (handout).
 -*Brhadaranyaka*: 3.3-3.7 (bottom 36-44), 4.3.35-4.5 (bottom 63-71), 6.2 (middle 81-84); *Chandogya*: 3.14 (123-124), 5.3-10 (140-143), 6 (whole: 148-156), 8 (whole: 190-193).
- Tues. 2/5 The Upanishads (continued)
 -*Taittiriya* 3 (whole: 190-193); *Katha* (whole 231-247); *Svetasvatara* 1 and 2 (whole: 252-256); *Manduka* (whole: 268-277)
 -*Maitri Upanishad* (whole) (handout).
- Thurs. 2/7 A Contemporary Hindu Yoga Movement: Siddha Yoga
 -Douglas Brooks: "The Experience of Perfected Yogis" (handout).
 -Swami Durgananda, "To See the World Full of Saints" (handout).
- Tues. 2/12 Siddha Yoga (continued)
 -*Play of Consciousness*: Book One, Part 1.
- Thurs. 2/14 Siddha Yoga (continued)
 -*Play of Consciousness*: Book One, Part II, Chapters 10-15.
- Tues. 2/19 Siddha Yoga (continued)
 -*Play of Consciousness*: Book One, Part II, Chapters 16-34.
- Thurs. 2/21 Theravada Buddhist Meditation
 -Selections from the Pali scriptures (handout).

- Tues. 2/26 No class: professor away.
- Thurs. 2/28 Theravada Buddhist Meditation (continued)
-Gunaratana: Chapters 1-7.
- Tues. 3/5 Theravada Buddhist Meditation (continued)
-Gunaratana: Chapters 8-12.
- Thurs. 3/7 Theravada Buddhist Meditation
-Gunaratana: Chapters 13-16

II. East Asia

- Tues. 3/12 Introduction to Taoism.
-Eva Wong, "The Classical Period" (handout)
-Livia Kohn, "The Foundations of Chinese Mysticism (handout)
- Thurs 3/14 Introduction to Taoism (continued)
-Eva Wong, "The Transformation of Taoism", "The Development of Alchemical Taoism"
-Livia Kohn: The Immortalization of Philosophical Taoism".

****Mon. 3/18, 5:00 PM: Mid-Term Essay Exam Due****

- Tues. 3/19 Taoist Meditation
-Cleary: "Anthology on the Cultivation of Realization," and "Treatise on Sitting Forgetting."
- Thurs. 3/21 Taoist Meditation (continued)
Cleary: "Sayings of a Taoist Master Danyang," and "Secret Writings on the Mechanisms of Nature".

****Mon. 3/25, 5:00 PM: Research Paper Proposal and Bibliography Due****

- Tues. 3/26 Taoist Meditation (continued)
-Cleary: "Zhang Sanfeng's Taiji Alchemy Secrets" and "Secret Records of Understanding the Way"
- Thurs. 3/28 Zen Buddhist Meditation
-Cook: Introductory Essays
- Tues. 4/9 Zen Buddhist Meditation (continued)
-Cook: "General Recommendations for Doing Zazen"; "The Sounds of the Valley Streams, the Forms of Mountains"; "Arousing the Supreme Thought" and "Home Departure."

Thurs. 4/11 Zen Buddhist Meditation (continued)
-Cook: "Paying Homage and Acquiring the Essence"; "Spring and Fall"; and "Deep Faith in Cause and Effect".

Tues. 4/16 Zen Buddhist Meditation (continued)
Cook: "The Tathagata's Whole Body"; "Continuous Practice"; and "Everyday Life".

III. Himalayan (Tibetan) Asia

Thurs. 4/18 Introduction to "Buddhist Tantra"/Vajrayana Buddhism
-Powers: "Tantra" (handout).

Tues. 4/23 Buddhist Tantric Meditation
-Gyatso: 1-108.

Thurs. 4/19 Buddhist Tantric Meditation (continued)
-Gyatso: 109-175.

Tues. 4/30 Buddhist Tantric Meditation (continued)
-Gyatso 177-242.

****Monday 5/1: Research Papers due by 4:30 PM****

Thurs. 5/2 The Experience of a Tantric Buddhist Yogi
-Milarepa: 37-71.

Tues. 5/7 The Experience of a Tantric Buddhist Yogi (continued)
-Milarepa: 72-136.

Thurs. 5/9 The Experience of a Tantric Buddhist Yogi (continued)
-Milarepa: 138-167.

**** Friday 5/17 Final Take-Home Essays due by 4:30 PM****