

Course Modules:

Unit 1:

Preliminary Orientations: Course overview and structure; Perspectives and interlinkages of Psychology and Contemplative Studies; Key concepts & purpose: Religion, philosophy, art forms etc.; Understanding contemplation: Definition, nature, scope; Inter-linkages and

location: Contemplation and religion, contemplation and philosophy, contemplation and art-forms, contemplation and spirituality (including mysticism) etc.; Purpose of contemplation:

Focus, awareness, transformation of Self etc.; Applications of contemplation: Personal, interpersonal, ecological, social, political etc.; Contemplative practices: Meditation, prayers,

chanting, silence, service; Literature review and advancements (& limitations) in contemplation.

Unit 2:

Landscape of World Contemplative Traditions (Familiarization): Civilizations; Religions: Taoism; Sanātana Dharma ; Buddhism; Abrahamic: Judaism, Christianity, Islam;

Philosophies: Sufism; Daoism; Zen; Vedāntic tradition; Buddhism; Bhakti movement; ṣaḍ-darśanas; Christian mysticism; Bāul; Art Forms: Karatāṇḍava; Kalarīpāyattu; Ballet; Sufi

whirling; Indian classical dance and music; Folk music; Shamanism; Theyyam; Martial arts (such as Kung fu, Tai Chi etc.); Genres of literature (such as Haiku etc.); Pañcatantra stories; Jātaka tales; Architecture (temples etc.).

Unit 3:

Contemplation and Vedic Knowledge Systems (Familiarization): Sources of Indic knowledge (Śruti and Smṛti); Vedas(traditional view of Vedas as revelation of fundamental principles and guiding spirit underlying later developments, components of Vedas (emphasis Upaniṣads - jñānakāṇḍa); Vedānta and Vedāntic traditions, Vedāṅgas, Darśanaśāstras (Sāṃkhya: Consciousness (puruṣa) and matter (prakṛti); Yoga and Yogasūtras of Patañjali);

3

a dedicated heritage school with its roots from ancient India where the disciple (śiṣya) lives near or with the teacher (guru) in the same vicinity - Gurukula is dedicated to Vedic and Āgama studies {describing cosmology, epistemology, philosophical doctrines, precepts on meditation and practices, svādhyāya, cintana, manthana, four kinds of Yoga (bhakti, jñāna, rāja, karma), mantras etc.}.

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with an emphasis on ‘Mind, Cognition & Consciousness’: e.g concept of Consciousness; functional aspects of mind in Indic philosophy (antaḥkaraṇa: citta, buddhi, ahaṅkāra and manas); Mind in Ayurveda; Perspectives in Perception and Attention (pratyakṣa, pramāṇa); Concept of vṛtti in Yoga-Vedānta; Perspectives in Learning: gurukula system (guru-śiṣya-paramparā); Oral tradition in reference to Vedas (Śruti); Perspectives in Memory: Smṛti; Law of karma (theory of saṃskāra); Perspectives in Motivation and Emotion: kleśa (Yogasūtra), saptarasa; Perspectives across Individual Differences: tri-guṇa theory (Sāṃkhya), cittabhūmi theory (Yogic), pañcakośa model of human personality

Upavedas (emphasis on Āyurveda and Gāndharvaveda); Itihāsa, Purāṇa; Aṣṭāvakraḡitā; Brahmasūtras (Bādarāyaṇa); Bhagavadgītā (Śrī Kṛṣṇa); Prasthānatrayī; Haṭhayogapradīpikā texts; Introduction to other source texts on contemplation (Śāstras): Hinduism – Śaiva, Śākta, Vaiṣṇava; Gāṇapatya tradition; Vāstuśāstra, Nāṭyaśāstra, Dharmasāstra, Saṅgītasāstra, Kāvyaśāstra; Mokṣasāstra: Yogavāśiṣṭha, Śivasūtras

Unit 5: Contemplative Practices from World Traditions

These themes would focus on diverse and representative forms of contemplative practices from the world’s major religious traditions, philosophies, sports and art forms including

music, dance, painting etc. The students can choose from the provided thematic options and along with the faculty pro-actively collaborate to design the experience—traversing ahead through a deeply profound journey. The format below is suggestive and therefore intended to grow organically.

Theme 1: Contemplation and Meditation

- Introduction to guided pañckośa meditation and its daily practice. Students to journal the pattern of their thoughts and feelings in a personal diary.
- Students to visit any place of worship (preferably during the prayer hours) and note the effects of the vibrations of the place on their overall state of being. Students to journal their experience.
- An essay cum practice on any contemplative tradition (e.g. Yoga, meditation, painting, svādhyāya, sport activity etc.) that the student wishes to engage in and building a narrative around the same, relating it to their state of being. Students to discuss it within their peer-group in the subsequent class.

Additional Assignments

- Assessment of ⁵guṇa and doṣa through nāḍīparīkṣā./

Theme 2: Contemplation and Music

- Music and rasa; Vedas and genesis of music (Sāmaveda); Spiritual (Vedic) approach to music and its purpose and effects: cakras and associated emotions;
- Buddhist chanting as form of music;
- Impact of various musical instruments on the cakras (such as base instruments, string instruments; Experiments in Music and Music Cymatics: Experiments on oṅkāra (Steven Halpern), healing people through sounds (Fabien Maman), water crystal experiment (Dr. Masaru Emoto).

Theme 3: Interpretative Dialogues on Contemplative Practices and Traditions

Close Readings

- Contemporary landscapes of contemplation by Rebecca Krinke.
- Aristotle on the uses of contemplation by Mathew D. Walker.
- The Upaniṣads by Swami Nikhilananda.

Websites

- Centre for Contemplative Mind in Society.
- Mind and Life Institute.
- Naropa University.
- Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies.
- International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres.
- Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.
- Art of Living.

Practicum

- Learn and practice: Buddhist prayers, Vedic mantras, guided meditations.
- svādhyāya on “An Intimate Note to the Sincere Seeker”

Additional Assignments

- Visit to gurukula / Engage in karmayoga in any nearby community.

Theme 4: The Way of the Gods, Shinto: An Overview of Japanese Shinto

Close Readings

- Shinto from an International Perspective by Yamaguchi Satoshi.
- The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart by Yamakage Motohisa.

Websites

- The Grand Shrine of Ise <https://www.isejingu.or.jp/en/index.html>
- The Shrine of KinkazanKoganeyama <https://kinkasan.jp/>
- The Tokyo Grand Shrine <http://www.tokyodaijingu.or.jp/english/index.html>
- The Sacred Gate, 'Torii'
<https://www.nippon.com/en/views/b05202/torii-gates-to-the-sacred-spaces.html>

Films

- Prayer.
- Purification.
- Entertaining the Gods.

Practicum

- Experiencing the essence of Shinto.
- Open discussions: Exploring the contemplative aspect of Shinto and its effect on daily life.

Theme 5: Theravada Buddhist Vipassanā: Overview of Ancient Buddhism

Close Readings

- Satipaṭṭhānasutta.
- Theravada Buddhist Readings.

Websites

- Insight Meditation Society (Goldstein, Kornfield, Rosenberg, Salzberg et al.).
- Vipassanā Meditation (Goenka).
- Vipassanā Research Institute.
- Northwest Vipassanā Center.

Film

- Doing Time, Doing Vipassanā.

Practicum

- Learn and practice: Vipassanā meditation.
- Compare: Classical Yoga, Daoist Inner Observation, Thich Nhat Hahn's Walking Meditation, A.H. Almaas' Diamond Approach, F.M. Alexander's Alexander Technique.
- Open discussions: Reflection exercise -“What benefits have you received from and what challenges have you faced in your contemplative practice?”, “How has contemplative practice affected your learning and study?”, “How might contemplative practice apply to your major and future profession?”.

Theme 6: Overview of Judaism and Jewish Contemplative Practice: Kabbalah and the ShaareiKedusha

Close Readings

- Kabbalah Readings.

- ShaareiKedusha - Gates of Holiness.
- Ever Burning Light.

Websites

- Association for Jewish Studies.
- Bnei Baruch.
- Iyyun, Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, Israel).
- Kabbalah Centre.
- ShaareiKedusha – Sefaria.

Practicum

- Compare: Pure Land Visualization, Tibetan Buddhist Deity Yoga, Maharishi Mahesh's Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Theme 7: Salat - Overview of Islam and Islamic Prayer

Close Readings

- Islamic Readings.
- Muslim Prayer-Book.

Websites

- Ahmadiyya.
- Holy City of Makkah.
- Islamic Center of Tacoma.
- Islamic Society of North America.
- Mevlevi Order of America.
- Naqshbandi Muhibeen.

Practicum

- Learn Islamic prayers.
- Compare: Catholic Stations of the Cross, ISKCON japa and kīrtana , Jewish Hasidic

Prayer.

- Prayer and contemplation: Is there a distinction?

Theme 8: Overview of Daoist Internal Alchemy

Close Readings

- Huimingjing (scripture on wisdom and life-destiny).
- Daoist Readings.
- Hui-ming-Ching – The Headless Way.

Websites

- Center for Daoist Studies.
- Daoist Foundation.
- Golden Elixir.
- Wudang Taoist Internal Alchemy.

Film

- The Way in Taoism: A Chinese or Universal Principle.

Practicum

- Learn Daoist meditation.
- Compare: Classical yoga, Hindu tantra, kuṇḍalinī yoga, Pure Land Visualization, Tibetan Kagyu Tummo Practice.

Theme 9: Contemplation and Meditation Techniques from Patañjali's Yogasūtras

Close Readings

- Patañjali's Yogasūtras.
- Yoga: Discipline of Freedom.

Websites

- Traditional Yoga Studies.
- Iyenger Yoga.
- Kriya Yoga.

Film

- Biography of Maharṣi Patañjali.

Practicum

- Learn and practise āsana, dhāraṇā & dhyāna and praṇavajapa.
- Comparison and discussions - I: Daoist Internal Alchemy, Dominican Prayer, Theravada Vipassana, Zen Meditation, Walking Meditation, Mindfulness Movement, Movement Awareness and Kinesthetic

Learning.

- Comparison and discussions – II: Mindfulness techniques of Buddhism, Centering Prayer, Contemplative Prayer, Daoist Quiet Sitting, Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, ISKCON japa and kīrtana, Transcendental Meditation.

Theme 10: Contemplative Practices and Theyyam (traditional art-form from Kerala)

Close Readings

- Theyyam: The Other Gods
- The World of Theyyam

Websites

- www.keralatourism.org
- www.lostwithpurpose.com
- www.theyyamcalender.com

Films

- 'Theyyam- the dancing Gods' by Filipe Pereira:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP7BpO8uuyQ>
- 'Only sometimes a God' by PrateekPrajosh:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zrz6qw1eeL0&t=92s>

Practicum

- Discussions: "How do you rate and relate the spectacular art-form (Theyyam) with music, dance and mime in terms of it being a divine experience?"
- Assess: The mindset of an ordinary person who transforms into God and thereafter returns to normalcy after the Theyyam presentation.

Theme 11: Usui Reiki Ryoho: Overview of Reiki (healing) as Taught by Mikao Usui

Close Readings

- The Original Reiki Handbook of Dr Mikao Usui.
- Mahāvairocana-sūtras and Vajraśekhara-sūtras.

Film

- What is Reiki? | A Short Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thMT8W6qAwg>

Websites

- <http://komyo-reiki.org>
- <https://wrludreels.org/2017/01/24/reiki-japan/>
- <https://www.reiki-classes-level-123.com>

Practicum

- Energizing your chakras with Reiki – Self healing.
- Healing others with Reiki.

Theme 12: Vedantic Meditations: śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana

Close Readings

- Meditation by Monks of Ramkrishna Order.
- Science of Happiness according to Yoga-Vedānta by Pravrajika Divyanandaprana.

YouTube Video

- All about Meditation by Pravrajika Divyanandaprana
- Existential Enquiry by Pravrajika Divyanandaprana

Practicum

- Hearing Brahmajñānāvalī of Śaṅkarācārya (available on YouTube) daily to understand the impact of śravaṇa.
- Practice 5 minute guided meditation by Pravrajika Divyanandaprana.

Theme 13: Sikhism

Close Readings

- Sikh Spiritual Practice: The Sound Way to God by Siri Kripal Kaur Khalsa

Websites

- Sikhnet.com
- Allaboutsikhs.com

Practicum

- Meditation in Sikhism by Devinderjit Singh.
- Daily spiritual practice by Sikh Dharma International Sadhana.
- Practice Guru Dharma Sadhana.
- Listening to Gurubani.

Unit 6: Research in Contemplative Studies

Theories of knowledge based on Indic perspectives; Validation of knowledge through pramāṇa; Ontology as observed in Vedānta (reality orientation); Epistemology: A study of perception in Yoga-Vedānta; Basics of contemplative inquiry; Current issues in contemplative research; Designing a first-person contemplative research methodology

Unit 7: Recap