REL346 Wisdom and Compassion: The Buddhist Path
3 credit hours
Fall 2017
Dr. Judith Simmer-Brown
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Office: Second Floor of the Ginsberg Library, in the Religious Studies Suite. Office hour appointments can be made on sign-up sheets on the bulletin-board in the RS Hallway. Office hours for fall: Wednesday 1:30-3; Thursday 2-3:30; and by appointment on Fridays. Please email me for a time.

Day, Time and Location of Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15-2:30, Lincoln 4130

Methods of Instruction: Classes will include contemplative meditation, lecture, discussion, text reading, films, class projects, term papers.

Course Description: Compassion Training is at the vanguard of the contemplative education movement nationally, and this course will investigate compassion from personal, societal and historical perspectives. What is compassion, and how can we become more compassionate? What has recent scientific research revealed about the cultivation of compassion? What contemplative practices and what activities deepen our empathy and compassion, and what are the results? What influence does Buddhism have on this burgeoning movement? These interdisciplinary studies will be threaded by ongoing compassion meditation training, drawing especially from the Buddhist practices of lovingkindness and compassion. 3 credit hours

Supplementary Course Description: As the third year of a pilot course exploring what a Naropa University compassion training might look like, we will interweave compassion meditation training with applied perspectives. Tuesdays will be devoted to the actual meditation training, and traditional and contemporary perspectives on meditation. Thursdays will integrate science, comparative religions, Buddhism, and practical applications of compassion in real-life situations. The course requires that students practice compassion meditation for at least three half-hour sessions outside of class each week. Record of these sessions is included in the Journal.

Student Learning Outcomes: See the end of the syllabus.

Required Readings:


**Free Online Books with selected Required Readings:**


**Recommended:**

John Makransky, *Awakening Through Love*
Fehr, Sprecher, and Underwood, *The Science of Compassionate Love*
Davidson and Harrington, *Visions of Compassion*
Lobsang Gyatso, *Bodhicitta: Cultivating the Compassionate Mind of Enlightenment*

**Course Requirements and Grading Policy:**

1. **Preparation, attendance and participation in class.** Attendance policy defined below. Class preparation refers to the timely completion of assigned readings and of Journal entries. Participation also includes compassion practices done during class, as well as the practice requirements outside of class, at least three half-hour sessions each week. **Assigned readings.** The readings assigned for each unit are the basis for both class lectures and discussions. Make sure you have completed the assigned readings before each class. Recommended readings are not assigned, but listed for further study. **25 percent of final grade.**

2. **Journal.** Students will share Journal entries every three weeks with the instructor, including specific assignments as the course progresses. Journal entries include a record of compassion practice sessions outside of class, as well as responses to specific contemplation questions. Of course, students may keep a private journal as well that includes entries not shared with the instructor. **25 percent of final grade.**

3. **Midterm and Final exams.** The midterm will be given in class, while the final will be a take-home exam, due December 8, in class. Emphasis will be on detailed information about compassion, both as personal practice and as application, drawn from science, social science, and humanities perspectives explored in the readings and discussions in this course. **Midterm 20 percent, final exam 30 percent of final grade.**

**Attendance Policy and Classroom Decorum:**
Students are to arrive for class before the hour. Two tardies of 15 minutes or more constitute an unexcused absence. If a student is absent from class three times, unexcused, the final grade for the class will be lowered one/third grade per absence (i.e. B+ to a B). Four unexcused absences will result in failure of the class. Excused absences (medical or family emergencies) must be called in to the instructor’s voicemail (303-546-3502) at least 30 minutes before the beginning of class to be considered excused. Two excused absences constitute one unexcused absence.

Please refrain from eating in class, or stepping out during class meetings. Cell phones are to be turned off before class begins; texting, emailing, or browsing the internet during class are not acceptable.

**Written work is to be handed in on time**—late work will be downgraded one-third of a letter grade per day. If there is a valid reason for late work, please discuss this with the instructor **well in advance** of the deadline, and an adjustment may be able to be made.

**Course Outline:** *Starred days indicate practice instruction days.*

**August 29**  
Why have compassion, why be kind?  
The Buddhist context, contemporary applications  
Mindfulness as the foundation  
*(Orientation to Journal assignments)*

**August 31**  
Compassion Training—who is doing it and why?  
Studying Ourselves—Introducing the Measures  
**Guest Compassion Researcher: Dr. Jordan Quaglia**

**Readings:**  
Jinpa, *A Fearless Heart*, Chapter I, V;  

**September 5**  
What the new science is telling us  
Science, pragmatism and human nature  
The Dalai Lama and Mind & Life Institute  
**Practice: Contemplating basic goodness**

**Readings:**  

**September 7**  
The History of Kindness  
Interdependence and Interbeing  
Developing our motivation—bodhicitta
“Idiot compassion” and the role of wisdom
Shaw, Radical Compassion—Ponlop Rinpoche, “The Altruistic Heart,”; Jinpa, A Fearless Heart, Chapter III.

September 12*
Self-acceptance and lovingkindness
The Basic Practice
Practice: Lovingkindness for ourselves
Readings: Jinpa, A Fearless Heart, Chapters II and VI;
Recommended: Leonardo Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, Chapters I-III;

September 14
The Science of Loving Ourselves
Overcoming Barriers to Self-Love
Readings: Kristen Neff and Christopher Germer, “Being Kind to Yourself—The Science of Self-Compassion,” and “The Mindful Self-Compassion Course,” Compassion: Bridging Practice and Science, Chapter 3:16, 4.1;
Recommended: Shaw, Radical Compassion—Reginald Ray, “Connecting Compassion to Practice in Mahayana Buddhism”

September 19*
Lovingkindness for oneself
Rediscovering Basic Goodness
Tapping our core capacity
Practice: Lovingkindness for ourselves, part II
Readings: Trungpa, Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior, 35-54; Jinpa, A Fearless Heart, Chapters III and VII;
Recommended: Shaw, Radical Compassion—Diane Musho Hamilton, “Big Heart”

September 21
The Forgiveness Instinct
Forgiving ourselves, forgiving others
Abrahamic religions and forgiveness
Journals Due—1
JSB in Providence at Brown University, Guest Teacher

September 26*
Lovingkindness for a benefactor
Learning to receive kindness from others
Perfection of generosity
Practice: Lovingkindness for a benefactor
Readings: Wright, The Six Perfections, Introduction & Chapter I;

**September 28**
Empathy versus Compassion—What’s the Difference?
Psychology looks at Compassion
Emotional Intelligence


**October 3***
Expanding the Circle of Concern
Working with “compassion traps”

*Practice: Lovingkindness for someone dear*

Readings: Jinpa, *A Fearless Heart*, Chapter VIII, first half;
Shaw, *Radical Compassion*—Judith Lief, “The Path of Authentic Compassion”

**October 5**
Compassionate Relationships
Friendship and Family


**October 10***
The cultivation of character
Perfection of discipline
Compassionate ethics

*Practice: Lovingkindness toward an acquaintance or stranger*

Readings: Wright, *The Six Perfections*, Chapter II;

**October 12**
Romantic relationships
Compassion and romantic love

*Journals Due—II*


**October 17**
Community Practice Day

**October 19***
Midterm Exam in Class
October 24*  Perfection of patience, tolerance  
Working with aggression  
Ninefold contemplation on anger  

**Practice:** Lovingkindness toward someone threatening

Readings:  
Wright, *The Six Perfections*, Chapter III;  
Shaw, *Radical Compassion*—Pema Chodron, “Compassionate Action”

October 26  War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning  
Breaking the Addiction of War  
Begin beeper instrument (2 weeks)

**Readings:**  
Recommended: Chris Hedges, *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*,

October 31*  Perfection Joyous Exertion  
Importance of the body

**Practice:** Compassionate Abiding meditation

Readings:  
Wright, *The Six Perfections*, Chapter IV;

November 2  Leaning into the sharp points  
Not Turning Away

Readings:  
Jinpa, *A Fearless Heart*, Chapter IX;  
Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, *The Way of Tenderness*, ix-34;

November 7*  The Perfection of Meditation  
Levels of meditation  

**Practice:** Compassionate Abiding meditation  
End beeper instrument

Readings:  
Wright, *The Six Perfections*, Chapter V;  
Jinpa, *A Fearless Heart*, Chapter VIII, second half;

November 9  Compassionate Inclusivity?  
Tenderness and the body

Readings:  

November 14*  Introduction to Tonglen  
Sending and taking practice, reversing samsara  

**Journals Due—III**

**Practice:** Tonglen—sending and taking

Readings:  
Jinpa, *A Fearless Heart*, Chapter X, XI;

**November 16**
Compassionate Inclusivity
Opening to the other
Compassionate Social Activism

**Judith in Boston at American Academy of Religion, Guest Teacher**


**November 21***
Perfection of Wisdom
Applications of compassion

**Practice:** *Tonglen, part II*

**Readings:** Wright, *The Six Perfections*, Chapter VI;

**November 23**
Thanksgiving Break

**November 28***
Everyday practice, Emergency Tonglen
(Tonglen workshop)

**Practice:** *Tonglen practice, part III*

**Take-home Final Handed Out**


**November 30**
Compassionate caregiving
Compassion in Death and Dying
Working with burnout

**Reading:** Shaw, ed., *Radical Compassion*—Ken Wilber, “A Support Person”
Shaw, *Radical Compassion*—Karen Kissel Wegela, “Coming Back Home”
Review, Judy Lief, “The Compassion Traps”

**Recommended:** Cheryl Giles and Willa Miller, eds., *The Arts of Contemplative Care*; Koshin Paley Ellison, ed., *Awake at the Bedside*;

**December 5**
Can society be compassionate?
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
How Can We Help?

**Practice:** *Societal Meditation Practice*

Shaw, ed., *Radical Compassion*—Gaylon Ferguson, “Awakening Communities of Courage and Compassion”
December 7        Compassion in the Workplace  
Journals Due—IV

December 12      Warriors’ Exam in Class

December 14      Make Up Day  
Return to Measurement  
Post-testing class day  
Guest researcher: Dr. Jordan Quaglia  
Take-home Final Exam due

Accommodations for Disabilities: Naropa University will provide accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To request an accommodation, or to discuss any learning needs you may have, contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Resources whose office is located in the Student Affairs Department in Wulsin Hall on the Arapahoe Campus. The phone number is 303-245-4749.

Other Needs: If you have any other needs that may require accommodations (special arrangements) or if you will miss a class because of a religious holiday, please contact the instructor by the third week of class

Statement of Inclusivity
In keeping with Naropa’s mission, the instructor and class members in this course strive to support an inclusive learning community, respecting those of all backgrounds and beliefs. As a community, we aim to be respectful to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, veteran status, ability, immigration or economic status, gender or sexual orientation.

Gender Pronoun
This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. Please let your instructor know the appropriate gender pronoun to use for you. Also, if you would like to be called a name other than what is on the class roster, please let your instructor know. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact your instructor.

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Relevant Departmental Goals and Objectives for B.A. Religious Studies:

Goal 1: Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and appreciation for, religious phenomena, including the history and basic concepts of diverse traditions.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to identify and analyze major thematic issues across world religions, including paradigms of religious life and varieties of religious expression.
Goal 2: Students will explore at least one contemplative practice in context, and understand the integral part contemplative practice plays in its religious traditions.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to explicitly relate the contemplative practice they have studied to at least three other phenomena of the religious tradition in which it is practiced, such as doctrine, ritual, ethics, and community life.

Students will demonstrate knowledge of contemplative and ritual practices in several religious traditions.

Goal 3. The student should develop an awareness of his/her own spiritual journey in the context of different cultural and religious experiences. This awareness should include sensitivity to issues of plurality in religion and diversity in communities.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will cultivate a sense of personal identity within a context of a contemplative journey in light of their course of study.

Students will respect other religious traditions and cultures in their academic work.

Students will exhibit sensitivity to issues of race, class and gender and other diversity issues in their academic work.

Students will demonstrate an awareness of issues of cultural appropriation and cultural “othering” (for example, “orientalism”) in their academic work and contemplative practice.

Goal 4. Students should develop the ability to communicate effectively, integrating their understanding of religion with personal insight and experience.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to critically and appreciatively articulate their understanding verbally in the classroom in discussion and in presentation.

Students will be able to write effective academic term papers, with proper syntax, grammar, formatting and notation.

Student will express original reflection drawn from contemplative insight and/or personal experience in their term papers.

Students will understand and be able to articulate their work and thought in a way that takes into consideration religious studies methods and issues.

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