

Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation

Brown University, Fall 2016

Office Hours, by appointment: T/Th 1-2pm

Religious Studies, Rm. 300
The Shirley Miller House
59 George Street

jacob_davis@brown.edu, jhdavis@vijja.net

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Examines the theory and practice of Buddhist meditation in historical and modern contexts. Traces this practice from its origins in 6th-century B.C.E. India to its transmission through Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and on to modern insight meditation movements in the West. Students will examine selected textual sources and explore how Buddhist meditation is practiced today, both as an individual practice and as part of broader social institutions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSESSMENT VALUES

*Reading Questions (1 points per class * 24 classes):* Students will be asked to submit on Canvas answers to questions posted about the readings for each of the 12 classes no later than 24 hours before the start of class (that is, 12pm on Monday and Wednesday). For seminar discussions to be successful, it is critical that students come to class having engaged with the readings ahead of time. For this reason, **there is no way to make up these points (nearly 1/4 of your final grade) after the due date.** In short, do the readings and the reading questions on time.

*Active engagement in class (1 percentage point per class * 24 classes):* Participation in this course requires both contributing to discussion by speaking (I will try create space for and encourage those who are less inclined to jump in), and also listening attentively. In order to achieve this, all transmitting devices (phones, computers, tablets, etc.) will be switched to non-transmitting (airplane) mode after the first 5 minutes of class. **Earning the point for engagement for a given class requires both bodily presence and attentive presence (adhering to the above and not distracting yourself otherwise, listening attentively to others' contributions), as well as active**

contribution to the discussion. There is no other way to earn these points (**another 1/4 of your final grade**) than by being present in body and mind.

Reading Questions: 24% of Final Grade

Class Participation: 24% of Final Grade

Four Response Essays: 1500-2000 words: (4 essays x 13 pts each) 52 percentage points

Late Policy: 4pts will be deducted for every 24hrs past the due date. So a 13 pt Response Essay, submitted no more than 24hrs late earns a maximum of 9pts (that is, if it is perfect it only gets 70%), and 0 points if more than four days late. You are welcome to turn in assignments ahead of time!

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will learn basic Buddhist meditation practices
- Students will investigate the historical and philosophical background of contemporary presentations of these meditation practices
- Students will develop the ability to critically assess the claims made by various meditation teachers and traditions

READINGS

McMahan, David. 2008. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. Oxford.

Analayo. 2013. *Perspectives on Satipatthana*. Windhorse.

Course Reader: PDF on Canvas

COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to revision)

8 Sept		(Introduction)
13	Salzberg	Watch 4 videos Read 3 blogs (Kindness , Right Effort , Personality Types); Read Salzberg's list of influences

15	Goldstein	“Settling Back into the Moment”
20	Goenka	watch “Day1” read The Discourse Summaries , Day 1-5
22	Sumedho	From Intuitive Awareness , read Introduction, Intuitive Awareness, Sound of Silence
27	McMahan	1. Introduction, First essay due.
29	McMahan	Ch. 3. Buddhism and the Discourse of Modernism
Oct 4	McMahan	Ch. 6. A Brief History of Interdependence
6	McMahan	Ch. 7. Meditation and Modernity
11	Sharf	“The Rhetoric of Meditative Experience” pp 228-265
13	Sharf	“The Rhetoric of Meditative Experience” pp 265-end
18	Braun	<i>The Birth of Insight</i> : Introduction; Ch. 5
20	Braun	<i>The Birth of Insight</i> : Conclusion Chronology of Theravada Buddhism
(25,27)	(no class)	Oct 25 Second essay due
Nov 1	Mahasi	Basic Vipassana Meditation Exercises, Progress of Insight
3	Ledi	The Manual of Insight
8	Chah, Mun	Unshakeable Peace, A Heart Released
10	Vsm	Personality Types, (87-112),
15	Vsm	Divine Abidings, (291-314)
17	Vsm	Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way (666-699)
22		Satipatthana Sutta, Third Essay Due
(24)		(no class – Thanksgiving)
29	Analayo	<i>Perspectives</i> : Introduction; Ch. 1. Aspects of Satipatthana
Dec 1	Analayo	Ch. 3 The Body
6	Analayo	Ch. 9 Contemplation of Dharmas
8	Analayo	Ch. 12, Satipatthana Meditation
Dec 13		Fourth Essay Due