

DRAFT
GTU 2017 – 2018

Course Title: Psychology and Meditation (PS/IR 4000)

Instructor: Daniel Mocerì, under the Newhall mentorship of Dr. Gabriella Lettini

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

As a large category, “Meditation” can include a host of ancient religious practices, common to many traditions. This activity often sits at the heart of experiential, mystical, and monastic traditions. In this class, we will look at sacred texts, cultures, theologies, and lived practices that are associated with meditation. Specifically, we will be exploring Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian forms, in dialogue with and interpreted through the lens of Theoretical and Clinical Psychology. What happens when we put these fields in dialogue? What is illuminated? What tensions emerge?

Psychology is one of the fundamental lenses through which Religion is approached and studied. Additionally, a variety of sub-disciplines blend norms and insights from these two fields in unique ways, including most notably: Psychology of Religion, Counseling Psychology, Religious Studies, Practical Theology, Pastoral Theology, and Pastoral Psychology. Although sometimes overlapping, each of these areas has a distinct audience and goal that we will become aware of. This course is designed to meet the unique needs of the GTU environment where some students are in academic programs with very different concentrations, and others are preparing for professional ministry. This course content will allow us to move between Theological and Social Science realities with fluidity, engaging the strengths and interests of the students enrolled.

This course relies on foundational theorists (James, Jung, Freud, Maslow, and Erickson) that once grasped, will allow students to both understand and critically engage with a wide range of contemporary scholarship. Feminist and Cross-cultural (cross-ontological) critiques of both Psychology and Religion will be explored in every lecture. Additionally, students will gain a basic introduction to three different religious traditions through sacred texts and commentaries, as well as comparative considerations.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1 Students will produce written material which critically evaluates the use of Psychological theory as an interpretive lens for the Study of Religion
- 2 Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of James’s Psychology of Religion, in contrast to Freud’s hermeneutic of unconscious drives and memories.
3. Students will be able to identify basic theories of Developmental Psychology as taught by Erickson and Maslow.
4. Students will respectfully and critically engage with sacred texts from different religions.

5. Students will demonstrate critical engagement with the course reading materials in weekly reflection papers and through active participation in class discussions

6. Students will explore the pros and cons of Religious Studies and Theological approaches to our topic, developing a greater understanding and articulation of their own preferences.

Methods of Instruction and Evaluation:

The course will consist of one weekly meeting where there will be a lecture and class discussion. Each week, students will come to class with a 1-2 page reflection paper prepared in response to the reading assignment, which will include three questions for class discussion. Students will write a 15-page research paper due on the last week of class. (Turabian style is required with 1-inch margins and 12-point font.) The paper topic will need to be approved in writing by reading week, and a grading rubric will be distributed at that time. Students are encouraged to produce work that will be useful for their thesis projects, or applicable towards a GTU certificate. Class participation is essential, and will count towards 30% of your final grade. Please arrive on time, prepared to contribute to a well-informed discussion.

Grading: Class Attendance and Participation: 30%
 Weekly Reflection Papers: 30%
 Term Paper: 40%

Class Participation Grading:

A = Student arrives prepared for class, having read the material and actively engaged in discussion, shares insightful reflections. 2 or less unexplained absences.

B = Student is frequently late, rarely engaged in discussion, frequently unprepared. 3 unexplained absences.

C = Student is usually unprepared, does not participate in discussions, 4 or more unexplained absences.

Materials:

One reader will be required for purchase; additional class readings will be posted on Moodle.

Class Schedule and Readings:

Week 1

Lecture topic:

Introducing the study: What is the goal of Psychology? What is the goal of Religion? What is meditation? Why meditate? How does a Psychologist study meditation? How can meditation be supported or improved by engaging the field of Psychology?

Readings:

Jung, Carl. *Psychology of Religion*

Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion*

Week 2

Readings:

Upanishads

Bhagavad-Gita

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Week 3

Readings:

Yogananda, Paramahansa. *Autobiography of a Yogi*

Vivekananda, Swami. *Raja Yoga*

Week 4

Readings:

Siegel, Dan. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*

Hanson, Rick. *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love & Wisdom*

Week 5

Readings:

Satipatthana Sutta

Avatamsaka Sutra

The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion Sutra

Week 6

Readings:

Koller, John. *Ox Herding: Stages of Zen Practice*

Dalai Lama XIV, H.H. *Stages of Meditation: Training the Mind for Wisdom*

Yeshe, Lama. *Be Your Own Therapist*

Week 7

Readings:

Erickson, Erik. *The Life Cycle Completed*

Maslow, Abraham. *Towards a Psychology of Being*

Week 8

Readings:

Fowler, James. *Stages of Faith*

Conn, Joann and Conn, Walter. *Developmental Psychology: From Moral Theology to Spirituality*

Week 9

Readings;

James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

Week 10

Reading:

Besant, Annie. *Thought Power: Its Control and Culture*

Krippner, Stanley. *Debating Psychic Experience: Human Potential or Human Illusion*

Week 11

Readings:

The Cloud of Unknowing

The Philokalia

Week 12

Readings:

Cassian, John. *Conferences*

Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*

Week 13

Readings:

Keating, Thomas. *Intimacy With God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer*

Main, John. *Word Into Silence*

Week 14

Readings:

Clooney, Francis. *Beyond Compare*

Knitter, Paul. *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*

Week 15

Readings:

Matus, Thomas. *Yoga and the Jesus Prayer*

Huxley, Aldous and Nikhilanda, Swami. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*

Additional Notes:

Academic Integrity. GTU is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to produce their own work and to cite any sources they use. Breaches of the GTU honor code will result in a failing grade.

Inclusive Language Policy. The GTU requires the use of gender inclusive language in all academic work relating to individuals and groups.

Special Accommodation. If you will need special arrangements for meeting course requirements because of documented physical or learning disabilities, please inform me as soon as possible so that accommodations can be arranged.

Laptop, smartphone and tablet usage. Attentive class participation is essential. Devices will be allowed provided they are used exclusively for taking notes or referring to work. Browsing, texting, and recreational use of electronic devices can be disruptive and harmful to the class environment. A warning will be issued if use is inappropriate; habitual misuse will result in a lowered participation grade.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change at any time at the discretion of the Instructor.