

Starr King School for the Ministry
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN THESE TIMES

Syllabus

Spring 2020



This is not a time to live without a practice. It is a time when all of us will need the most faithful, self-generated enthusiasm (enthusiasm: to be filled with god) in order to survive in human fashion. Whether we reach this inner state of recognized divinity through prayer, meditation, dancing, swimming, walking, feeding the hungry or enriching the impoverished is immaterial. We will be doubly bereft without some kind of practice that connects us, in a caring way, to what begins to feel like a dissolving world. – Alice Walker, We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For (2006)

Course Description: In this semester-long, online course, students will explore, develop and/or deepen their spiritual practice and support others in doing the same. The class will be experiential and multi-religious, drawing on some of the wisdom and practices of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and earth-based traditions, as well as on neuroscience, poetry,

and deep ecology. Please see the calendar below for the list of practices that will be covered in class.

Course Requirements:

- **Participation:** Students are expected to participate in class, online, weekly.
- **Texts & Conversation:** Students will need to engage with the texts related to that week's theme, doing at least 1 post and commenting on at least one classmate's post.
- **Practice Circle:** Students will also be asked to do one spiritual practice exercise and comment on at least one classmate's practice post each week.
- **Personal Spiritual Practice Project:** By the fourth week of class, students will commit to doing a particular spiritual practice regularly each week for the duration of the semester. This will include reading and/or films as background for their practice. They will post a midterm reflection on their Personal Spiritual Practice Project (PSPP) and a final reflection at the end of class on their PSPP.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, it is expected that students will have (1) developed, deepened and/or begun some form of personal spiritual practice; (2) created a caring and collaborative learning community; (3) sampled a variety of spiritual practice exercises; and (4) be able to cite and discuss how practices such as mindfulness, gratitude, movement, the arts and soulful rest promote health and well-being, foster spiritual connection, counter oppressions, and help build joyful, just and sustainable communities and ministries.

Course Texts: There will be no required course text(s). Instead, each week there will be a selection of short readings, video clips, and poetry. A film related to the week's theme will also be suggested.

Course Instructor: The class will be taught by Rev. Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister. Chris has been teaching at Starr King for the Ministry for over fifteen years offering classes on Forgiveness and Moral Repair; Families & Spiritual Practice; and Illness, Health & Healing. She lives in Davis, California with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, a retired UC Davis professor and long-time community activist.

SPRING 2020 CALENDAR

Week of February 3, 2020

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THESE TIMES

Week of February 10, 2020

GRATITUDE

Week of February 17, 2020

MINDFULNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Week of February 24, 2020

TRAUMA & SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Week of March 2, 2020

EATING, FEASTING & FASTING

Week of March 9, 2020

SOULFUL REST

Week of March 16, 2020

EMBODIED MOVEMENT

Week of March 23, 2020

POETRY & PRAYER

Week of March 30, 2020

READING WEEK

Week of April 6, 2020

MAKING ART

Week of April 13, 2020

BEING OUTDOORS

Week of April 20, 2020

CLIMATE JUSTICE AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Week of April 27, 2020

PILGRIMAGE AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Week of May 4, 2020

CELEBRATING & REFLECTING