

Buddhist Psychology

PSYC 7650-01

(subject to revision)

University of West Georgia

Spring 2018
TR 2:00 – 3:40 pm
Melson 218

Instructor: Alan Pope, Ph.D.
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Office Hours:
T 5:00 – 6:00 pm
W 2:15 – 3:15 pm
R 12:45 – 1:45 pm
& by appointment

Bring your syllabus to class!

One of the great tasks of Western psychology is to integrate into itself the depths of human understanding and freedom of spirit discovered by the major world religious traditions, to make psychology not just a cure of mundane human distress but to bring forth from it liberation and wholeness of the human spirit.

Jack Kornfield

All sentient beings, including ourselves, already possess the primary cause for enlightenment.

Gompopa

Samsara is mind turned outwardly, lost in its projections. Nirvana is mind turned inwardly, recognizing its nature.

Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to Buddhist psychology in its interrelated capacities as a theory/method for psychospiritual transformation and as a science of mind. We will encounter these elements in examining the three major movements in Buddhist history, comprising the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana systems. Theravada (also known as “Source Buddhism” or, more controversially, “Hinayana”) offers a foundational Buddhist psychology in terms accessible to everyday understanding. Mahayana Buddhism provides a deeper analysis whose abstract nature invites concrete understanding only through intensive contemplation and meditation practice. Finally, Vajrayana Buddhism (represented in this course through Tibetan Buddhism) introduces

an esoteric tantric vehicle featuring sophisticated systematization of all Buddhist teachings alongside a rich and elaborate set of transformative practices. We will explore how these and other systematizations represent ever-deepening levels of psychological understanding. During portions of the course, our investigation will enter into dialogue with Western psychological thought; during the last few sessions of the course, we will bracket theoretical knowledge to enter deeply into a contemplative relationship with our own mind, including its negative habitual patterns and deepest positive potentials.

According to Buddhist epistemology, psychological understanding is integrally connected with both theoretical and experiential knowing. As such, students are asked to maintain a regular meditation practice, similar to the laboratory component of a science course. This practice is designed to stabilize the mind so as to permit glimpses of its genuine nature, the same nature that Buddhism regards as the enlightened state of mind. As such, it also serves to provide experiential appropriation of the conceptual material. In support of this effort, our class time will include progressively in-depth instruction in meditation with time for questions and discussion. We also will consider the possibility of a field trip to a Buddhist meditation center and/or a short (day-long) meditation retreat off-campus.

Course Objectives

- Define, name, explicate, and analyze the basic philosophical principles of Buddhism and how they inform our understanding of human psychology.
- Define, name, analyze, and explicate the nature of mind, self, reality, suffering, and psychospiritual transformation as elucidated in Buddhist thought.
- Through reflection, demonstrate insight into the nature of mind gained through the study and practice of meditation.
- Explain and illustrate an understanding of how Buddhist psychology can be integrated with Western psychology and culture.
- Through reflective assessment, demonstrate an understanding of various personal, social, and ethical problems from a Buddhist perspective, and integrate such understanding into one's own philosophical and/or spiritual framework.
- Through reflective assessment, demonstrate deepened understanding of the human condition and one's own place in it.

Required Texts

- Rahula, W. (1974). *What the Buddha taught*. New York: Grove Press.
- Thich Nhat Hanh. *The heart of the Buddha's teaching*. (1999). New York: Broadway Books.
- Chögyam Trungpa. (1973). *Cutting through spiritual materialism*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Thich Nhat Hanh. (1988). *The heart of understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

- Welwood, J. (2000). *Toward a psychology of awakening: Buddhism, psychotherapy, and the path of personal and spiritual transformation*. Boston & London: Shambhala.
- Dzigar Kongtrul. (2008). *Light comes through: Buddhist teachings on awakening to our natural intelligence*. Boston & London: Shambhala.
- Ricard, M. (2010). *Why meditate?* Carlsbad, California: Hay House.

Additional shorter required readings will be posted on Course Den.

Class Format

Classes will be combine lecture with seminar format. We will emphasize discussion of the assigned texts, and as such, lecture will often take the form of commentary on those texts. In line with this approach, students are expected to contemplate the assigned readings and come prepared with questions and/or observations for discussion (see below for details). Class sessions typically will begin with a group meditation exercise. In addition to working with the content of course material, we will also explore contemplative discussion methods as means for bringing greater awareness and clarity to individual and group process.

Course Requirements

Quality & Consistency of Class Participation and Demonstrated Learning (60%):

- Attendance/participation and class citizenship
 - Please contribute to a harmonious learning environment free of unnecessary distractions (e.g. be on time, refrain from eating in class, participate mindfully and respectfully, et al.)
 - During discussion, maintain an open and nonjudgmental stance toward others (and toward yourself).
 - Due to the seminar character of this course, your consistent attendance and engaged participation are essential.
 - Please complete assigned readings and homework projects prior to the class for which they are due. Most readings should be conducted in a contemplative manner as will be discussed in class.
 - Bring the assigned reading materials to class so that we can refer to passages together, enabling collective textual analysis. Printed media are far preferred over electronic; the latter is acceptable *only* if required by financial considerations.
- Homework assignments
 - Come to each class prepared with one or two passages from the assigned readings that you feel are especially important in themselves and with respect to the readings as a whole. You may be asked to introduce your passage and explain its significance. You may also use this passage to ground a question for discussion. Please keep questions within the province of the text itself as much as possible. This assignment will typically not involve a written submission unless notified in advance.

- I periodically will assign a directed reflection on a particular topic that is to be written up and submitted in a subsequent class. In such cases, please use care, attending to spelling, grammar, and style. Be mindful and *proofread*.
- Ground “exam”
 - On **February 13**, you will take an in-class, closed-notes exam on the material to that point. The exam will comprise a subset of questions that I will be distributing to you each week, enabling you to prepare as we go. The intention is to solidify your basic knowledge of foundational terminology and concepts before moving into more advanced material; it is not to trick you or freak you out. I assure you.
- Meditation logs
 - You are to maintain a meditation practice in which you work up to sitting for at least 15 minutes per day. Instruction will be provided in class.
 - Printed log reports are due at the beginning of class on Thursday each week. Use the form provided at the end of this syllabus, which will also be posted on Course Den. You may modify this form as seems appropriate or helpful. After printing this form, you can fill it in by hand *only* if your writing is very legible. Modifications to reporting on meditation will be considered later in the semester.
 - If you have questions or concerns about your meditation practice, please make an appointment to discuss them.

Final Paper (40%):

You will write a final paper in which you answer questions (to be distributed later) designed to help you integrate the broad scope of the semester’s materials. The hardcopy of this paper is due at the beginning of our last class on **April 26**.

Course Expectations

1. In order to facilitate a mindful and concentrated learning environment, please observe the following:
 - a. Be present for every class. (More than two absences for any reason during the course of the semester could result in a lower grade.)
 - b. Be on time.
 - c. Remain present once class begins, barring emergency.
 - d. Bring assigned readings to class, preferably in printed form.
 - e. Refrain from using your cell phone in class. Best is to turn it off.
 - f. Refrain from eating/snacking in class. See me if you have a medical or pragmatic need. Beverages are fine.
2. Unless otherwise specified, written assignments should be typed, printed, stapled, and turned in at the beginning of the class. Please keep a copy of your assignments. Late assignments will not be accepted.
3. If you must miss a class, please get new assignments or announcements from a classmate; if not possible, then you may ask me.

4. You are invited to visit me during my office hours; appointments are recommended.
5. I will reply to emails within 24 hours during the week and to weekend emails the following Monday (except for MLK day and Spring Break).
6. If you need any special accommodations, please notify me within the first two weeks of class.
7. The syllabus is subject to change. I will provide at least one-week's notice.
8. Diversity: This course honors diversity and inclusion. Please respect people of all backgrounds, sexual preferences, and gender identities.
9. Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism) naturally will not be tolerated in any form. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another's words or ideas as your own, whatever the source (e.g., print, electronic, verbal, et al.). All deliberate references to another person's ideas or words must be appropriately cited. At a minimum, an instance of plagiarism or other form of academic dishonesty (such as cheating on a test) will result in failing the course and will be reported to the administration for further disciplinary action. Please let me know if you have any questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Administrative Details

Office Hours:

Office hours (listed above) enable personalized discussion of course material or any other questions or concerns. You are advised to arrange an appointment in advance if possible.

Technological Resources:

Audio-visual equipment (e.g., computer and overhead projector) will be used for Power Point and other video presentations. Course Den will be used as an electronic learning environment. The syllabus, handouts, and other communications will be posted via this means. Any electronic communication regarding grades can and *must* be had through Course Den.

Student Rights and Responsibilities:

Please carefully review the information provided by the following link:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf.

This file contains important information pertaining to your rights and responsibilities in this class. These statements are updated as federal, state, university, and accreditation standards change, so you should review this information anew each semester.

Class Schedule

Please note:

- The following reading list is subject to revision as the semester progresses.
- I recommended you read each class's materials in the order listed.
- Readings posted on Course Den are *italicized* while readings from required texts are not.
- HBT signifies Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*

UNIT I – GROUND

Week #1 Introduction

Jan. 9—Syllabus, introduction to the course

- Syllabus

Jan. 11—Contemplative Psychology

- DeWit, *“The Case for Contemplative Psychology”*
- Ricard, Preface, *“A Lucid Assessment,”* (pp. 3-9)

Week #2

Jan. 16—The Buddhist Attitude

- Suzuki, *“Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind”*
- Karr: Ch. 1
- Rahula, Ch. 1
- Ricard, *“A Lucid Assessment,”* (pp. 9-16)

Jan. 18—Buddhist History and Schools

- Nhat Hanh (HBT), Chapter 4
- Karr: Ch. 2
- Salzberg, *Relearning Loveliness*
- Ricard, *“Meditations on Altruistic Love,”* pp. 81-88

Week #3

Jan. 23—Four Noble Truths (Theravada)

- Rahula, Ch. 2-3
- Olendzki, *“Buddhist Psychology”*
- Ricard, *“Training the Mind”*

Jan. 25—Four Noble Truth (Theravada)

- Rahula, Ch. 4-6
- Ray: *Abhidharma*
- Ricard, *“Preliminary Instructions”*

Week #4

Jan. 30—Four Noble Truths (Mahayana)

- Thich Nhat Hanh (HBT): Chs. 1-3; 5-8
- Pema Chodron, *“How We Get Hooked, How We Get Unhooked”*
- Ricard, *“Turning the Mind Toward Meditation”*

Feb. 1—Four Noble Truths (Mahayana)

- Thich Nhat Hanh (HBT): Chs. 9-14
- Ricard, “Mindfulness Meditation”

Week #5**Feb. 6--The Four Noble Truths (Mahayana)**

- Nhat Hanh (HBT): Chs. 15-17, 23-25, 27
- Ricard, “Inner Calm,” pp. 53-63

Feb. 8—STOP & REFLECT

- <No additional readings>

UNIT II – PATH**Week #6****Feb. 13**

In-class **exam** on “Ground” unit

Feb. 15—Buddhism and Western Practice

- *Engler*
- Ricard, pp. 64-70

Week #7**Feb. 20—Spiritual Bypassing**

- Welwood: Intro, Chs. 1, 14
- Ricard, pp. 70-79

Feb. 22—Personality & Passion

- Welwood: Chs. 2, 19
- Ricard, “A Sublime Exchange” (pp. 89-93)

Week #8**Feb. 27—Spiritual Materialism**

- Trungpa: Intro, Spiritual Materialism, Surrendering, Initiation
- *Ram Dass*
- Ricard, “Soothing Physical Pain”

Mar. 1—Psychology of Opening

- Trungpa: Self-Deception, The Hard Way, The Open Way
- Welwood, Ch. 12

- Ricard, “Deeper Insight,” pp. 101-106

Week #9

Mar. 6—Development of the Ego, Samsara

- Trungpa: Development of the Ego, Six realms
- Ricard, “Deeper Insight,” pp. 106-114

Mar. 8—Ego & the Unconscious

- Welwood, Chs. 3, 5
- Ricard, “Deeper Insight,” pp. 114-119

Week #10

Mar. 13—The Bodhisattva Path, Part I

- Trungpa: The Bodhisattva Path
- *Introduction to Shantideva’s Way of the Bodhisattva*
- *The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva* (Part I)
- Ricard, “Deeper Insight,” pp. 119-125

Mar. 15—The Bodhisattva Path, Part II

- *The Wishfulfilling Tree*
- *The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva* (Part II)
- Welwood, Chs. 15, 18
- Ricard, “Deeper Insight,” pp. 125-131

March 19, 21

Spring Break—NO CLASSES

Week #11

Mar. 27—Mahayana philosophy of emptiness, part I

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding* (entire book)
- Ricard, “Dedicating the Fruits of our Efforts”

Mar. 29—Mahayana philosophy of emptiness, part II

- Trungpa: Shunyata
- Welwood, Ch. 4
- Ricard, “Bringing Meditation and Everyday Life Together”

UNIT III – FRUITION

Week #12

Apr. 3—Tantra

- Trungpa: Prajna and Compassion; Tantra
- Sarah Harding, *Introduction, Creation and Completion*

Apr. 5—Contemplating our Natural Intelligence

- Dzigar Kongtrul, Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-4

Week #13

Apr. 10— Contemplating our Natural Intelligence

- Dzigar Kongtrul, Chapters 5-8

Apr. 12—SPARC Conference

NO CLASS

Week #14

Apr. 17— Contemplating our Natural Intelligence

- Dzigar Kongtrul, Chapters 9-12

Apr. 19— Contemplating our Natural Intelligence

- Dzigar Kongtrul, Chapters 13-16

DUE: Directed Reflection Portfolio, beginning of class

Week #15

Apr. 24—Catch up/Review

- No additional readings

Apr. 26—Final Reflections on the course

DUE: *Final Paper Due, beginning of class.*

Best wishes for a great semester!

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(Sample) Meditation Log

Name:

Week:

DAY	# minutes	Type of meditation	Quality*
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			

*By quality, do not give a judgment (e.g., good or bad), but rather a description of what your experience was like (e.g., clear, like a hood over my head, sinking with sporadic clarity, rapid thoughts, calm, etc.). Please be as precise as possible in your description. Elaborate on the week's experience below. [You can delete this note about quality.]

Additional comments: