Eastern and Transpersonal Psychologies  
PSYC 4130-01

University of West Georgia

Fall 2014  
TR  10:40 am – 12:20 pm  
Melson 218

Instructor: Alan Pope, Ph.D.  
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Office Hours:  
W 12:00 noon – 5:00 pm  
& by appointment

Bring your syllabus to class!

Course Description

This course examines the philosophies, histories, and practices of the major Eastern religious traditions—Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism—and prominent ideas in the field of transpersonal psychology. Study of the Eastern traditions provides insight into the nature of mind, the person, and the processes of psycho-spiritual transformation, while the study of transpersonal psychology reveals the ways in which Western theorists have attempted to integrate these insights into a broadened understanding of human psychology. Owing to the broad scope of this course, we will seek a thematic rather than comprehensive understanding. In complementation to the theoretical material, we will engage in a wide variety of meditation practices aimed at focusing on our mind’s internal states in order to deepen both conceptual and personal understanding.

The course will be structured in three parts. First, we will introduce the field of transpersonal psychology and its relationship to Eastern thought. Second, we will consider each of the four major Eastern traditions in turn, with additional time apportioned for study of Buddhism owing to its growing influence on Western culture and Western psychological thought. Finally, we will consider how these various traditions collectively elucidate a general notion of psychospiritual development in line with the “perennial philosophy” that lies at the heart of the transpersonal psychology movement. At various times during the semester, short films will be shown in order to provide visual and audio images of the subjects at hand.

Required Texts

Walsh, R. N. (1999). *Essential spirituality: The 7 central practices to awaken*
Additional required articles and book chapters will be placed on Course Den. You are expected to print these out and bring them to class during the weeks they are assigned. See the Course Outline below for details.

**Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes**

- Demonstrate differentiated understanding of the basic principles of each of the Eastern systems of thought and their applicability to human psychology.
- Demonstrate understanding of the basic ideas of transpersonal psychology and how they are informed by Eastern traditions.
- Demonstrate the ability to consider various personal, social, and ethical problems from an Eastern perspective and to integrate such understandings into your own philosophical and/or spiritual framework.
- Demonstrate insight into the nature of mind gained through the study and practice of meditation.
- Demonstrate deepened understanding of the human condition and your own place in it.

**Course Format**

Classes will consist of lectures, large and small group discussion, student presentations, and occasional video presentations. Weekly reading assignments are provided in the Course Outline below. You generally are expected to have the week’s readings completed by the start of Thursday’s class, although I may announce portions required for Tuesday’s class. Whenever possible, Thursday class meetings will be devoted to discussion, group, and experiential work. You are expected to bring the assigned readings to class so that we can refer to passages together as needed. When we engage in formal group work, you will be asked to assign roles to each member and report your findings to the class as a whole.

**Course Requirements and Grading System**

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<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Citizenship</td>
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<td>Directed Reflections</td>
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<td>Group Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Class Citizenship (15%)</td>
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*Participation & Class Citizenship (15%):*

1. Participation: Attendance and active participation are required for this course. You must also abide by the principles of good class citizenship as will be discussed in class and posted on Course Den. If you come to class regularly and are otherwise a good class citizen, expect to earn a ‘B’ for participation. A better
grade requires active engagement that is considerate of your classmates and the professor. Violations to the class citizenship policy will lower this grade.

(2) **Attendance policy:** You are allowed three absences for the semester, no questions asked. **Beyond these three absences (for any reason), each additional absence will reduce your participation grade by ten percent. Two instances of being late to class will be counted as one absence.** Therefore, please be on time and save your absences for genuine emergencies or illnesses.

(3) **Reading Assignments:** It is essential that you complete assigned readings on time and come to class prepared to discuss the material and ask questions. You should allow sufficient time to conduct the readings with a contemplative attunement and/or a critical eye. **Please bring assigned readings to class.**

(4) **Cell phone policy:** Cells phones are a distraction from class and must be turned off completely and removed from view. If you are found texting in class, I will take your cell phone until the end of class and deduct points from your participation grade. If you have an emergency situation that requires access to your cell phone, you must inform me before class begins so that I can make accommodation.

(5) **Computers & other electronic devices:** Computers and other electronic devices (such as i-pads or e-readers) may not be used in the classroom. The only exceptions will be in the case of a documented special need. Notes are to be taken with pen/pencil and paper. Please print any readings posted on Course Den that we will go over together in class.

**Directed Reflections (15%):**
I will regularly assign reflection papers on specific topics. This assignment will include reflecting on material from the course, your own life experience, and your experiences with assigned meditation exercises. Unless otherwise specified, these papers are to be typed, using 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins all around. As with all written work, please use proper spelling and grammar and appropriate style. (I.e., not “texting” style) At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio of your directed reflection papers. This portfolio should be neat and well-organized, reflecting the same care and attention that went into writing your essays. Occasionally I may ask that you submit a copy of your reflection paper on a given day, but I will announce this in advance. If desired, you can submit your portfolio for appraisal and feedback early into the semester.

**Group Project (15%):**
You will participate in a group project that involves original research and a presentation in class. Details will be posted on Course Den and discussed in class. Note that you will be evaluated collectively as well as individually. Group presentations will be made during week #12, #13, or #14. Group assignments and dates will be made early in the semester.

**Midterm Exam (25%):**
A midterm examination will be distributed at the end of class on **October 2.** You are to work on it individually at home and submit it at the beginning of class on **October 14.**
Your exam must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, one inch margins all around. More details will be specified at the time the exam is distributed. Exams will be accepted late only under extreme circumstances for which you can provide documentation.

**Final Exam (30%):**
The final exam will be given in-class. You must bring the smaller of the two blue-books sold on campus. The exam will consist of short-answer and essay questions. The exam is comprehensive, but will focus primarily on material following the midterm. I will provide a detailed study guide well in advance.

**Department Policy:** If you miss your final exam without having made prior arrangements, you will receive a grade of ‘0’, which may significantly affect your final grade in the class. If you miss your exam due to an emergency, please contact the Psychology office at (678) 839-6510 or go to Melson Room 123 as soon as possible in order to complete the application entitled “Missed Final Exam: Verification of Emergency.” This form will need to be approved by the department chair in order to receive an incomplete grade, which may allow you the time to make up your exam or complete your final assignments. This application will require documentation and authorization from you to verify your emergency.

**Administrative Details**

**Office Hours:**
My office hours are listed above. You are advised to make an appointment as my office hours are often claimed in advance.

**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. Presentation of the syllabus, paper assignments, and other communications will be conducted via this means. Any electronic communication regarding grades can and must be had through Course Den as opposed to email.

**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.

**Academic Honor Code:**
It is essential that you abide by the honor code described in the above document. Academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism) naturally will not be tolerated. 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 will result in failing the course and will be reported to the administration for further disciplinary action. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult me in advance of submitting your work.

Special Needs:
Students with special needs should speak with me as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements.

Course Outline

- The following readings are subject to revision as the semester progresses. This could include the addition of assignments not listed below; I will try to give ample notice and will post updated versions of the course outline on Course Den.
- When there are multiple readings listed for a given class, it is recommended (though not required) that you read them in the order listed.

UNIT I – TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Week #1 (Aug. 26, 28)
Introduction to Eastern & Transpersonal Psychologies

- Syllabus
- Mitchell, Tao te Ching

Week #2 (Sept. 2, 4)
History and Key Concepts of Transpersonal Psychology

- Valle, “The Emergence of Transpersonal Psychology”
- Walsh, “The Transpersonal Movement: A History and State of the Art”

Week #3 (Sept. 9, 11)
Contemplative Psychology & Meditation

- In-class presentation of the documentary Dhamma Brothers (Sept. 9)
- De Wit, “The Case for Contemplative Psychology”
- Ricard, pp. 3-52

Week #4 (Sept. 16, 18)
Psychospiritual Transformation and its Traps

- Welwood, “Between Heaven and Earth”
- Ram Dass, “Promises and Pitfalls of the Spiritual Path”
- Optional Reading: Pope, “Is There a Difference?”
UNIT II – EASTERN PSYCHOLOGIES

Week #5 (Sept. 23, 25)
Confucianism/Special guest topic

- September 23: Tu, “Embodying the Universe”
- September 25: Special Guest Lecture: Phakchok Rinpoche

Week #6 (Sept. 30, Oct. 2)
Taoism

ASSIGNMENT GIVEN: Take home midterm, October 2, end of class.

- Selections from Zhuangzi
- Greaves, “The Holy Man”
- Mitchell, Tao te Ching

Week #7 (Oct. 7, 9)
Confucianism & Taoism in Film

We will watch the movie Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon in class

Week #8 (Oct. 14, 16)
Hinduism

DUE: Take home midterm, October 14, 10:40 am

- Easwaran, “The Upanishads”
- “The Wish-fulfilling Tree”

Week #9 (Oct. 21, 23)
Hinduism, Source Buddhism, and the Mahayana Turning

- Rahula, “The Buddhist Attitude of Mind” (from What the Buddha Taught)
- Ricard, pp. 53-88

Week #10 (Oct. 28, 30)
Mahayana Buddhist Psychology

- Nhat Hanh, Part I
- Ricard, pp. 89-119

Week #11 (Nov. 4, 6)
Mahayana Buddhist Psychology
UNIT III – PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Week #12 (Nov. 11, 13)
Motivation

DUE: Group presentations
• Walsh, Chapters 1-4
• Walsh, Practices 1

Week #13 (Nov. 18, 20)
Emotional Wisdom & Ethics

DUE: Group presentations
• Walsh, Practices 2 & 3

*** THANKSGIVING (No classes Nov. 24-28) ***

Week #14 (Dec. 2, 4)
Concentration & Pure Vision

DUE: Group presentations
DUE: Directed Reflections Portfolio (Dec. 4)
• Walsh, Practices 4 & 5

Week #15 (Dec. 9)
Final Exam

• Final Exam (in class), Tuesday, December 9, 11:00 am – 1:30 pm

Have a great semester!!!