

RE 217: Health and Healing in Asian Religions

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores several Asian medical systems and practices, including Yoga, shamanism, Qi Gong and Chinese medicine, all of which are grounded in the belief that the body is a microcosm of universal, macrocosmic processes. We will begin our investigations of these “exotic” healing traditions by reflecting on how illness functions as a metaphor in present day North American culture. How do our own conceptualizations of disease affect our experience of it? Does the way we imagine disease reflect larger social processes, such as those based on gender or class? These questions will inform our investigation of health and healing in Asian religions.

The course will be organized around a systematic examination of the sophisticated, intricate and elegant models of the body that people in China and India have used for centuries to heal from illness, maintain good health, and, in some instances, aspire to a state of super-health that transcends the limitations of bodily existence altogether.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- to try to understand a religion as a committed practitioner might, not simply as a detached observer
- to develop a richly nuanced conception of religion that recognizes both the social and the personal dimensions of religious belief and practice
- to understand how traditional systems of medicine in India and China have been influenced by what we would call “religious” beliefs and practices, and how they have shaped religion in turn
- to acquire a basic working vocabulary that will allow one to speak in an informed and accurate way about Asian religions and systems of medical knowledge and practice
- to examine, challenge and clarify one’s own self-understanding, world view and fundamental values especially as these have to do with embodied existence and the relationship of mind and body

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. Attendance
- B. Participation
- C. Reading
- D. Writing

A. Attendance: This is not a “distance-learning” course. Regular attendance is a must! Be assured, a pattern of absences will affect your grade adversely. Attendance will be taken at each class session, either through a sign-in sheet, or by me. At the worst, **missing more than four classes will constitute grounds for failing the course.**

B. Class Participation: Class participation is a crucial component of a successful course. It is also difficult to evaluate. Variations in conditions such as temperament, interest, time and attention given to preparation will contribute to fluctuations in your own level of contribution to actual discussions. Generally speaking, when an imbalance occurs in terms of who is contributing and how frequently, those who are shy need to exercise the virtue of courage and those who are loquacious need to exercise the virtue of restraint. I reserve the prerogative to call on students in order to even out the class dynamic. You are expected to come to class having read the assignments, given them some thoughtful consideration and to have a response available if called on. Your class participation grade will depend not only on the consistency of attendance, but also on how well you contribute positively to the overall class dynamic through your comments, questions, attentive listening, prompt arrival, leadership and cooperation in small group work, etc.

However, class participation sometimes may take forms other than questions or responses to discussion. You are encouraged to come to my office to continue conversations begun in class. In addition, I welcome email. Since there is only one of me and many of you, however, please don't expect a lengthy response, but be assured that I will read everything you send me.

C. Reading: Nothing is more central to a course in the humanities than the careful, thorough, critical reading of texts, and that will certainly be the case here. We will be reading a combination of primary source materials and scholarly studies that use a variety of approaches to study and describe religion and medicine.

Texts available for purchase:

Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*
 Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*
 Barbara Stoler Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*
 David Eisenberg, *Encounters with Qi*

Other required readings are available through Electronic Reserve on Moodle, which may also be used to deliver additional readings throughout the semester.

D. Writing: The writing assignments for this course (reflective essay, take-home exams, research report and final exam) will be evaluated for style--grammar, spelling, punctuation--as well as content. Even the most accomplished writer may benefit from having a second pair of eyes look over his or her paper. Since this is a writing intensive class, I urge you to visit the Writing Center for a 45-minute, one-on-one appointment early in the semester, to get the maximum benefit from their excellent services.

<http://departments.colgate.edu/writingcenter/>

All papers for this course must be typed using a normal font (Times, Times New Roman, Helvetica, Palatino, etc.) of 12 pt. and double-spaced with margins of 1 inch. You are welcome to use recycled paper for your papers, as long as your essay is completely legible.

Note well: Late papers and exams will not be accepted unless you have explained ahead of time the reason for its being late, or are able to provide a documented reason after the fact. If you

and I agree that you may turn a paper in late, we will negotiate whether points will be taken off for tardiness.

IV. Evaluation:

A. Grading Summary:

Short Essay on Metaphors and Illness	15%
2 Tests on Key Terms	10%
Paper on Healing in South Asia	22%
Response Papers	8%
Group Presentation on Research	5%
Final Report on Research	15%
Final Exam	15%
Attendance and participation	10%

B. Grading Standards: The following is designed to help you think about the level of participation you're prepared to give to this course, and the final grade you would like to shoot for. (Obviously, there are finer gradations for each of the grades discussed below, e.g. A-, B+, C+)

1. "A" signifies outstanding. To earn that, you need to (a) maintain regular attendance and participation in discussion; (b) keep up with your response papers, demonstrate consistent care and thoughtfulness in your contributions to class discussion on the issues and questions raised; (c) demonstrate in your papers and in class a thorough understanding of the key terms, historical background and basic structural features of the religious traditions we are examining; (d) do a thorough, analytically acute job on the essays and exam and get them in on time.

In addition, to merit an "A" your writing in the formal essays and exams must reflect the following: a statement in the first paragraph of what you intend to accomplish; correct grammar and accurate spelling; depth and complexity in your engagement with the materials (readings, lectures, films, etc.); and an exceptionally creative original contribution--a new idea, a different way of thinking about the issue(s) you're discussing--that takes you beyond the accurate presentation of someone else's ideas.

2. "B" signifies good; it is a solid, good grade. To earn that, you need to (a) maintain regular attendance and participation in discussion; (b) keep up with your response papers and your note taking both in and outside of class; (c) demonstrate in your papers and in class a firm grasp of the key terms, historical background and basic structural features of the religions we are examining; (d) do a thorough job on the essays and exams and get them in on time.

In addition, a "B" grade essay typically contains: a statement in the first paragraph of what you intend to accomplish; correct grammar and accurate spelling; solid engagement with the materials (readings, lectures, films, etc.); and an original contribution that takes you beyond the accurate presentation of someone else's ideas.

3. "C" stands for satisfactory. To earn that, you need to (a) maintain regular attendance and participation in discussion; (b) keep up with your response papers and your note taking both in and outside of class; (c) demonstrate in your papers and in class an adequate grasp of the key terms, historical background and basic structural features of the religions we are examining; (d)

do a satisfactory job on the essays that meets the requirements of the assignment, and get them in on time.

In addition, “C” level essays contain no statement of intent, or a confused one at best; occasionally lapse into bad grammar or incorrect spelling; replace full sentences with fragments; misconstrue or distort key ideas; display no clear development leading to a supportable conclusion.

4. To fall below satisfactory (i.e. C-, D), you could fall behind in your note taking and response papers, skip one of the in-class quizzes, turn in one of the formal papers several days past the deadline, and/or be more irregular in attendance and discussion. Below “C” level essays typically contain the errors of C level essays, just more of them.

TO EARN A PASSING GRADE IN THIS COURSE, YOU MUST TURN IN ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS.

C. Guide to Instructor’s Abbreviations in Marking Papers

Vertical line with check-mark = useful point, important idea, “yep”

Double vertical line = good, strong idea or sentence

Exclamation point = yes! excellent point

Wavy underline = something is wrong with these words (e.g. syntax, logic, diction)

Circle = error (typo, spelling, punctuation)

SF = sentence fragment (a real bad thing)

RO = run-on sentence (almost as bad as SF)

Double-lined P = start a new paragraph

D. Students with documented disabilities: I strive to create an inclusive classroom that respects the fact that our eyes, ears, brains and bodies all work a little bit differently. If you have, or think you may have a learning disability, please work with the Office of Student Academic Services to determine what strategies and accommodations are appropriate for your situation, and then do speak with me early on so that we may arrange appropriate accommodation.

http://cmsauthor.skidmore.edu/academic_services/accessibility/

E. Academic Honesty: Making references to the work of others strengthens your own work by granting you greater authority and by showing that you are part of a discussion located within a community. When you make references (by quotation or paraphrase) to the work of others, it is essential to provide proper attribution and citation. Failing to do so is considered academically dishonest, as is copying or paraphrasing someone else’s work. Please consult Appendix B for the citation format I recommend for your work in this class.

Any confirmed instances of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication or facilitating academic dishonesty) in this course will result in the work in question receiving a zero. Assignments that receive a zero for this reason may not be rewritten or redone. As per the Skidmore College Honor Code, documentation of the infraction will be kept on file with Dean’s office and may impair eligibility for honor societies, study abroad, etc.

Week One

1/21 W – Expectations for the course, pass out syllabus
Illness as a Metaphor

Week Two

1/26 M - Mind and Body in Western Traditions

Read: “Rene Descartes,” by Diane Collinson (to be passed out)

Read: Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy, Meditation One and Meditation Two*, trans. by (Blackboard ER)

1/28 W - Mind and Body in Western Traditions

Read: Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*: “Preliminary Communication” (3-17), “Case 3: Miss Lucy R” (106-124)

Week Three

2/2 M – Mind and Body in Western Traditions

Read: “Case 5: Fraulein Elizabeth von R.” (135-181)

Submit: three Asian healing modalities you would be interested in researching

2/4 W – Mind and Body in Western Traditions

Read: “The Psychotherapy of Hysteria” (255-305)

Week Four

2/9 M – Healers and Healing in South Asia

Read: Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, 1-13 (“Introduction”)

2/11 W - **Meet:** In Library XXX for instruction session with Dun-lang Chen, Research Librarian

Week Five

2/16 M – Healers and Healing in South Asia

Read: Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, 15-52 (“Soul Knowledge and Soul Force: The Pir of Patteshah Dargah”)

Watch from home: *Drugs and Prayers: Indian Psychiatry in the Realm of the Saints* (55 min), watch from 21:10 on 28:00 (if you have trouble accessing, log on through library website using your Skidmore logon and password [e.g. logon: ekent, password: password])

<http://search.alexanderstreet.com.lib2.skidmore.edu:2048/view/work/1879568>

2/18 W – Healers and Healing in South Asia

Read: Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, 53-88 (“Lord of the Spirit World”)

2/20 F - **Essay on Metaphors and Illness due in Blackboard dropbox**

Week Six

2/23 M – Ayurveda

Read: Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, 219-278 (“Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives on Ayurveda,” “The Good Doctor of Jharsetli,” and “Epilogue”)

2/25 W – Ayurveda

Read: Robert Svoboda, “Theory and Practice of Ayurvedic Medicine” (Library Course Reserves)

Read: Selections from the Caraka Samhita (handout)

2/25 W – 7 pm - lecture and practicum on Ayurveda at the Tang Museum: What’s your doṣ a?

Week Seven

3/2 M – Ayurveda

Read: Robert Svoboda, “Theory and Practice of Ayurvedic Medicine” ((Library Course Reserves)

Test: Key Terms - 1

3/4 W– Ayurveda

Read: Francis Zimmerman, “Gentle Purge: The Flower Power of Ayurveda,” 209-223 (Library Course Reserves)

Debate!

Presentations

Week Eight

3/9 M – Visions of Perfect Health in South Asia - Yoga

Read: Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*

3/11 W – Visions of Perfect Health in South Asia - Yoga

Read: Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*

Presentations

Week Nine

3/16-3/20 – Spring Break Recess – No Class!

Week Ten

3/23– Modern Positional Yoga

Read: Mark Singleton, “Transnational Exchange and the Genesis of Modern Postural Yoga,” 37-56 (Library Course Reserves)

For visual support of the argument that modern postural yoga is a synthesis of Indian hatha yoga forms and early 20th century European gymnastics and physical culture exercises see:

<http://www.sandowplus.co.uk/India/Streamlines/streamlines-1.htm>

<http://www.sandowplus.co.uk/India/Iyer/iyer-index.htm>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmOUZQi_6Tw

3/25 – Modern Yoga – Religion or Spirituality? Litigation surrounding Encinatas Public School District’s Yoga Curriculum, 2013

Read: Candy Gunther Brown, Declaration (1-36), [University of Indiana, Professor of Religion, expert testimony]

Read: Defendants' Brief (1-7, pdf) *Sedlock v. Baird* [, 201

Debate!

**3/27 - DUE: PAPER ON HEALTH AND HEALING IN SOUTH ASIA
UPLOAD TO MOODLE DROP BOX**

Week Eleven

3/30 M – The Religious Context of Healing Traditions in China

Read: Joachim, “The Four Traditions” *Chinese Religions: A Cultural Perspective* (Library Course Reserves)

Read: Chinese Myths of Origin (handout)

View in class: *The Long Search: A Question of Balance* (52 min.) - selections

4/1 W – Nature and Person in Chinese Thought

Read: Tu Wei-Ming, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature” (Library Course Reserves)

Read: Eisenberg, *Encounters with Qi*, 11-50

View in class: Bill Moyers' *The Mystery of Chi* [1993, with David Eisenberg]

Submit: Annotated Bibliography of sources for research report

Week Twelve

4/6 – Models of the Body in Chinese Medicine

Read: Ted Kaptchuk, *The Web that Has no Weaver*, “Introduction” and “Chapter 1” 1-33 (Library Course Reserves)

Read: Selections from *Neijing Suwen* (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine)

Test: Key Terms - 2

4/8 – Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine

Read: Eisenberg, *Encounters with Qi*, 51-90, 122-135

Week Thirteen

4/13 M – Visions of Perfect Health in China

Read: Eisenberg, *Encounters with Qi*, 136-168, 197- end

Presentations:

4/15 W – Visions of Perfect Health in China

Read: Livia Kohn, “Eternal Life in Taoist Mysticism,” 622-640 (Library Course Reserves) + Reading Guide

Presentations:

Weeks Fourteen

4/20 M - NO CLASS

4/22 W - Chinese medicine in modernity: Falun Gong in China

Read: Nancy Chen, “Healing Sects and Anti-Cult Campaigns,” 505-520 (Library Course Reserves)

Week Fifteen

4/27 M – Chinese medicine in modernity: Falun Gong in the Chinese Diaspora

Read: David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China*, Ch. 5 (Library Course Reserves)

4/29 W – Hydrotherapy in Saratoga Springs

Presentations

Research reports due

Final Exam: May 6th, 1:30-4:30

Appendix A
Readings for Class
RELG 232: Health and Healing in Asian Religions

Susan Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989).

“René Descartes,” in *Fifty Major Philosophers: A Reference Guide*, ed. Diané Collinson (London: Croom Helm, 1987) – Electronic Reserve (ER)

Robert Svoboda, “Theory and Practice of Ayurvedic Medicine,” in *Oriental Medicine: An Illustrated Guide to the Asian Arts of Healing*, ed. by Jan van Alphen and Anthony Aris, 67-97 (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1996). (ER)

Christian Joachim, “The Four Traditions,” *Chinese Religions: A Cultural Perspective* edited by Robert S. Ellwood Jr., 5-22 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986) (ER)

Tu Wei-Ming, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature,” in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, 67-78 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). (ER)

Ted J. Kaptchuk, *The Web that Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*, “Introduction” and “Medicine East and West: Two Ways of Seeing, Two Ways of Thinking,” xix-xxi, 1-33 (Chicago: Congden and Weed, 1983). (handout)

Livia Kohn, “Eternal Life in Taoist Mysticism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110, 4 (Oct-Dec 1990): 622-640. (ER)

Nancy Chen, “Healing Sects and Anti-Cult Campaigns,” *The China Quarterly* 2003: 505-520. (ER)

Appendix B Citation Format

For this class, please use the MLA in-text citation system for citing quotations and ideas that you have arrived at from reading other authors. See Purdue University's OWL guide to citations, for a complete discussion of this system [<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>].

Briefly, in this method of citation, one introduces the source in a signal phrase that gives the author's name (first and last at first mention, last name only thereafter). Parenthetical references following the cited material supply the page number or numbers. No abbreviations like p. or pp. precede the page number, unless the absence of them would cause confusion for the reader. These parenthetical references are keyed to a list of works cited, which is placed at the end of the paper. This list is arranged alphabetically and may bear the title "Works Cited," or "Bibliography."

If you want to comment on a citation but do not want to do so in the body of the paper, you may add a footnote, which is easily done with the footnote function of your word processing software.

CITATION EXAMPLE

In *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, Sudhir Kakar argues that Indian medical systems depend on a distinctive sense of "freedom." He writes, "Human freedom in the traditional Indian context, then, seems to imply an increase in the potential to experience different inner states while limiting action in the outer world" (272). This notion of freedom inhering in mental states rather than external conditions is corroborated by the philosophy of Yoga. Barbara Stoler Miller emphasizes this by titling the fourth section of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras*, "Absolute Freedom" (74). This is not to say that India lacks this-worldly thinkers who have worked hard to win political and social freedom by changing external conditions; rather, it is to emphasize the role that ascetic other-worldly thinkers have had in defining and shaping core Indian values.

[**Note:** It seems odd at first, but the concluding period or other punctuation mark must go outside the final quotation mark, and *after* the closing parenthesis].

Works Cited

Dinnage, Rosemary. Review of *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, by Sudhir Kakar. *The New York Review of Books* 17 February 1983: 15.

Heesterman, J.C. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

"Hinduism." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2010. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, 2010. Web. 25 Aug. 2010. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/266312/Hinduism>>.

Kakar, Sudhir. *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and Its Healing Traditions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

_____. "Psychoanalysis and Religious Healing: Siblings or Strangers?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (1985): 841-53.

Miller, Barbara Stoler. *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

Smart, Ninian. "Soteriology: An Overview." *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade. New York: McMillan, 1987.