

RE 217: Health and Healing in Asian Religions

Dr. Eliza Kent
 Office: Ladd 209
 Office phone: 580-5405
 Office hours: Tues 10:30-11:30 and Friday 1-2 pm
 and by appt

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 WF 10:10-11:30 am
 Lib 129
 ekent@skidmore.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores several Asian medical systems and practices, including shamanism, Ayurveda, Yoga, Traditional Chinese medicine, and Qi Gong, 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 India and China 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 healing modalities in India and China have been influenced by what we would call “religious” beliefs and practices
- 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 develop the practical ability to write thesis-driven essays that synthesize secondary and primary sources in the service of original arguments
- 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 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.

Your participation grade will also include completing a number of response papers. These are not graded on the basis of style or grammar (and I can even bend when it comes to assessing factual accuracy on these), but solely on whether they are completed on time and demonstrate engagement with the readings, videos or learning exercises assigned.

Etiquette: **Please plan to arrive in class on time. Feel free to bring a beverage and/or a light snack, but not a meal. If needed, we will take a five break approximately half-way through class. This is the *only* time you should leave the room during the class period.**

Laptops, Tablets, etc.: In general, laptops, tablets, and other such devices will not be permitted in the classroom. You must bring assigned readings in paper form, whether we are using books or readings downloaded from Blackboard. Please silence all cell phones and other personal electronic devices.

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:

Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*
Barbara Stoler Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*
David Eisenberg, *Encounters with Qi*

Other required readings are available through the library e-reserve system, or on Blackboard, which may also be used to deliver additional readings throughout the semester.

D. Writing

Reading response papers: 600-800 words (must write four out of five)

Midterm Paper

Final Paper

1. **Reading response papers.** Four 600 – 800 word essays are due throughout the semester, based on a short prompt from me that invites you to reflect on the readings of the preceding weeks and generate a short, thesis-driven essay in response. These papers are meant to

encourage active, engaged reading; to offer you a chance to try out your ideas and make connections among the readings; to deepen your insight and sharpen your analyses through sustained reflection on the material; and to provide you with a sense of my expectations and grading standard.

Four papers are required by the course's end, but you may choose which ones. If you choose to write more than four, only the four highest grades will count towards your final course grade. Please use the prompts to guide your reading, even in those weeks when you are not writing.

All reading response essays should be turned in via Blackboard. All feedback will be given via Blackboard.

Grading rubric: 1) depth and complexity of your critical engagement with the texts, 2) the persuasiveness and originality of your argument, 3) the clarity and quality of your writing, 4) correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, including proper citation format.

Even the most accomplished writer may benefit from having a second pair of eyes look over their paper. I encourage you to make the most of the support provided by the Writing Center. <https://www.skidmore.edu/writingcenter/>

2. **Midterm and Final paper:** The midterm and final papers will ask you to synthesize what you've learned in this class in a 5-6 page paper by responding to a prompt (you will get a choice among them) that stimulates comparison of the religious traditions we've examined.

3. **Writing Center Plug:** The formal writing assignments for this course will be evaluated for style--grammar, spelling, and 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.*

4. **Late paper policy, borrowed from IGR:** I allow a 24-hour "grace" period after the deadline during which you may turn in a paper with no penalty, because...stuff happens. After that, though, I will deduct 1/3 of a grade for each day a paper is not turned in (e.g. a B+ would become a B, then a B-, then a C+, for each 24 hour interval it is turned in late).

IV. Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage
Response paper 1	Ongoing	10%
Response paper 2	Ongoing	10%
Response paper 3	Ongoing	10%
Response paper 4	Ongoing	10%
Midterm paper	10/21	15%
Attendance and participation	Ongoing	15%
Quizzes (2)		10%
Final Paper	5/6 1:30 pm	20%

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 all assignments and get them in on time.

In addition, to merit an "A" your writing in the formal essays 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 assignments 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. 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 Meg Hegener, in the Office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center, to determine what strategies and accommodations are appropriate for your situation and to obtain formal documentation verifying

the existence of a disability and detailing the necessary accommodations. In addition, please do speak with me early on so that we may arrange tests and assignments appropriately. http://cmsauthor.skidmore.edu/academic_services/accessibility/

D. Title IX Statement on Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct

Skidmore College faculty and staff are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. We consider sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students' personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore's values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal regulations.

If a student chooses to confide in a member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, The Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates are all options available.

More information can be found at <https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm/>

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.

Provisional Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week One

9/4 W – Introduction to the course and each other

9/6 F - Illness Narratives

Read: Arthur Kleinman, Introduction, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition*, pp. 1-30 (Blackboard)

To Do: Create a sketch of your personal understanding of the relationship between mind, body and spirit

Week Two

9/11 W – Mind, Body, Soul, Society

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

Read: Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy, Meditation One and Meditation Two* (13-25) (Blackboard ER)

9/13 F – Mind, Body, Soul, Society in late 19th Century Vienna

Read: Sigmund Freud, selections from *Studies on Hysteria*, (pp. 3-11 and 135-160)

Response paper 1: What are the main symptoms of hysteria? What meaning is given to them by Freud? How does Freud reframe the illness of hysterical women as diseases to be treated? How well or poorly does he attend to the biopsychosocial dimensions of disease?

View: Powerpoint slide show on medical pluralism in India

Week Three

9/18 W – Healers and Healing in South Asia

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

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>

9/20 F – Healers and Healing in South Asia: Spirit Possession

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

Read: Goslinga, “Embodiment and the Metaphysics of Virgin Birth in South India: A Case Study,” *Summoning the Spirits*.

View: Poojari’s Daughter (dir. Gillian Goslinga, 2015, 66 minutes)

Week Four

9/25 W – Comparative Interlude – Saratoga Springs as Health Pilgrimage Destination

Visit to Pohndorff Room

Read: TBA

9/27 F – Ayurveda

Read: Robert Svoboda, “Theory and Practice of Ayurvedic Medicine,” 67-97 (Library Course reserves)

Read: Selections from the Caraka Samhita (handout)

Week Five

10/2 W – Ayurveda

Read: Robert Svoboda, “Theory and Practice of Ayurvedic Medicine,” 67-97 (Library Course reserves)

Read: Selections from the Caraka Samhita (handout)

Response paper 2: What’s your dosha? Describe a typical day for you, and analyze it through the lens of Ayurvedic medicine

10/4 F – Ayurveda

Read: Francis Zimmerman, “The Gentle Purge: The Flower Power of Ayurveda,” in Charles Leslie and Allan Young, *Paths to Asian Medical Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1992)

Week Six

10/9 W – Visions of Perfect Health in South Asia - Yoga

Read: Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*

Take Key Terms Test on-line at home

10/11 F - Visions of Perfect Health in South Asia - Yoga

Read: Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*

Week Seven

10/16 W - Modern Positional Yoga

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

View: Websites on history of modern postural yoga (Blackboard – Course Content page)

View in class: historical footage of Iyengar doing his postures

10/18 F - 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] (BB)

Read: Defendants’ Brief (1-7, pdf) *Sedlock v. Baird* (BB)

Read: <http://www.nyspirit.com/body/yoga/feeling-the-burn/>

Debate!

Week Eight

10/21 M – Due in Dropbox

Write: Midterm Paper on Health and Healing in India

10/23 W - Buddhism – Introduction

Read: Rupert Gethin, chapter 1, Introduction to Buddhism

Read: Jane Naomi Iwamura, “The Oriental Monk in American Popular Culture,” from eds. Forbes and Mahan, *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Berkeley 2005) (BB)

10/25 - F Buddhism as healing path

Read: Linda Hess, “Craving”

View at home: *Vice* video on Wat Krapong – healing addiction in Thailand

View: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2014/08/pictures-thailand-buddhist-det-2014816121141245993.html>

Week Nine

10/30 W – Buddhist Meditation and Science

Read: Ricard, Lutz, Davidson, “Mind of the Meditator,” *Scientific American* (Nov. 2014): 39-45. (BB)

Read: Donald Lopez, “The Scientific Buddha”

11/1 F – Buddhism

Read: John Kabat-Zinn, “Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR, Skillful Means and the Trouble with Maps,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, 1 (May 2011): 281-306 (BB)

Read: Ron Purser and David Loy, “Beyond McMindfulness,” HuffPost Religion (BB)
Response paper 3 – “What would Candy Gunther Brown have to say about Kabat-Zinn’s transformation of Buddhism into MBSR?”
DEBATE!

Week Ten

11/6 W – The Religious Context of Healing Traditions in China

Read: Joachim, “The Four Traditions” *Chinese Religions: A Cultural Perspective*, 5-22 (BB)

Read: Tu Wei-Ming, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature,” 67-78 (BB)

11/8 F – Nature and Person in Chinese Thought

Read: Kohn, “Introduction,” *Daoist Body Cultivation*, p. 1-14 (BB)

Read: Chinese Myths Handout (BB)

Response paper 4: Consider a landscape, real or imagined, and analyze it terms of yin and yang. What elements are yin, what elements are yang, and how is a balance achieved between yin and yang?

Week Eleven

11/13 W – Traditional Chinese Medicine

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

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

11/15 F – Practice Session – Mindfulness Meditation

Week Twelve

11/20 W Models of the Body in Chinese Medicine

Read: Ted Kaptchuk, *The Web that Has no Weaver*, pp. 1-33 (BB)

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

Test: Key Terms - 2

11/22 F – The Politics of Illness and Medicine

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

Week Thirteen

11/27 – The Politics of Illness and Medicine

Read: Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock, “Speaking ‘Truth’ to Illness: Metaphors, Reification and a Pedagogy for Patients,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (137-140) (BB)

Read: Susan Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor* (selections)

Response paper 5: TBA

11/29 F – Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS!

Weeks Fourteen

12/4 W - Qi Gong: Visions of Perfect Health in China

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

12/6 F - Chinese medicine in modernity: Falun Gong in China

Read: Nancy Chen, "Healing Sects and Anti-Cult Campaigns," 505-520 (Blackboard)

Week Fifteen

12/11 W – Chinese medicine in modernity: Falun Gong in the Chinese Diaspora

Read: David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China*, Ch. 5 (Blackboard ER)

FINAL PAPER ON CHINESE MODALITIES OF HEALING DUE ON FINAL EXAM DAY

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.

Notes on pronunciation and transliteration system for Indian languages

To simplify things, I will cite Buddhist terms mostly in Sanskrit and not both Pali and Sanskrit

- 1) a, ā a bar (macron) over a vowel indicates that it is lengthened, so that *a* is like the “a” in “woman,” but *ā* is like the “a” in “father,”
i is like the “i” in “sit,” and *ī* is like the “ee” in “meet,”
u is like the “u” in “put,” and *ū* is like the “u” in “rule.”

Examples: *Mahābhārata* (a Hindu epic), *pūjā* (ritual worship) *saṃsāra* (cycle of death and rebirth), *Theravāda* (way of the elders), *dhyāna* (meditation),

- 2) ṣ s with a dot underneath means it is pronounced as “sh” and is retroflex (farther back in the mouth than palatal s)

Examples: *doṣa* (one of the fundamental component parts of the body, essential to its function, but which has a tendency to go out of balance); *bhikṣu* (Buddhist monk)

- 3) ś s with a slash above is also pronounced as “sh” and is palatal (closer to the front of the mouth than retroflex s)

Examples: *śāstra* (a commentarial text), *Śākya* (the clan into which Siddhartha Gautama Buddha was born), *śīla* (charitable action, virtuous conduct)

- 4) ṛ a dot under an r indicates a vocalic r, which is pronounced “ri” with a short i, as in the English “sit”

Examples: *Ṛg Veda* (a Hindu scripture), *trṣṇā* (lit. “thirst”, craving, desire)

- 6) dh, th, bh an “h” directly after a consonant means that it is aspirated; that is, a small breath is exhaled while it is pronounced. “Th” is never pronounced as in the English “the” or “theory.”

Examples: *bhakti*, *artha*, *dharma* (Hindu usage: religious duty or action in accordance with the order of the world; Buddhist usage: the teachings of the Buddha, the underlying order of the world [in accordance with which it is best to live])

Simple Pinyin/Wade-Giles conversion and pronunciation chart

Pinyin	Wade-Giles	Pronunciation
Zh	Ch	"ch" as in "chair," slightly explosive. Zhuang zi/ Chuang-tzu = legendary author of the Tao te ching
D	T	Unaspirated "d" as "donut." Dao/Tao = the Way; Dao de jing/Tao te ching
K	K'	"kh," unaspirated. Kongfuzi (K'ung-fu-tzu, Confucius) = author of the Analects
Q	Ch'	"ch" as in "chair." Qi/Ch'i = vital energy/matter
R	J	"r" as in "run." Ren/Jen = virtue, humanity, benevolence
T	T'	As in English only softer. Tien/T'ien = Heaven
Z	Ts/tz	"ssu" as in "sit down supper." "zi/tzu" = honorific title, "Master"
-ao	-ao	"ow" as in "cow" but less fused. Dao/Tao = the way
-in	-in	"een" as in "sheen." Yin/Yin = one of the two essential modalities of qi
-a	-a	Long "a" as in "father." Yang/Yang = the other essential modality of qi