



Buddhist Philosophy and Meditation Practice

Professor Rafael Espericueta

This course will provide a brief introduction to the basic principles of Buddhist philosophy, and their realization through meditative practices. The particular point of view is that of Zen, but the course will also explore the concepts of perennial philosophy manifested through various religious traditions in various times and places.

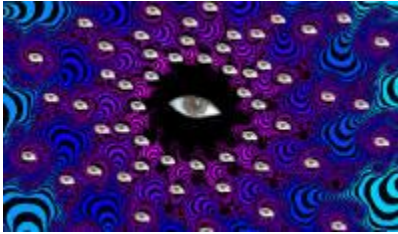
The course will include actual meditation instruction and practice. We will not just study about meditation, we'll also practice it! On the first day of class a simple basic form of meditation will be introduced, and we'll end each class with a short meditation period.

Course Itinerary

Each chapter will examine a particular mystic tradition, considered from the Zen/perennial-philosophic non-dual perspective. Tracing the roots of Zen, we'll study Chinese Taoist philosophy, as well as Mahayana Buddhism including the Vajrayana practices of Tibet. Then we'll continue south to India where we'll encounter the ancient teachings of Advaita Vedanta. From India we'll travel west to visit the Sufi mystics from the land of Islam. Then we'll explore the old Kabala of Hebraic mysticism (with its deep roots in the esoteric traditions of Egypt), along with spiritual alchemy and the Western Mystery Schools. Next we'll visit a few Christian mystics from past and present times. We'll then see that so-called "primitive" peoples are not necessarily all that primitive, when it comes to a grasp of perennial philosophy, as we take a look at indigenous shamanistic traditions. Finally we'll compare and contrast perennial philosophy with modern science, including modern physics. We'll also survey recent findings from functional brain imaging techniques on how meditation changes the brain, and how this research is yielding a deeper understanding of fundamental neuroscience.

The readings for this class are all online, freely available on the Web. Each week, we'll cover two or three chapters. In addition to readings, you'll find links to some excellent short videos that are also freely available on the Web that explore further the topics touched upon in class.

Course Table of Contents



Chapter 1 - [Perennial Philosophy](#)

Truth arises spontaneously in all times and places.
Mystics of all worlds in all times know that
the Universe itself peers out through all eyes.
God peering at God. All and in All...



Chapter 2 - [Buddhism and Zen](#)

Mindfully focusing on the present moment helps us
awaken to our true nature, the very ground of being,
the source from which arises all that is.



Chapter 3 - [Taoism](#)

The Tao that can be expressed in words, is not the true Tao.
Observe nature directly without conceptual filters,
with wide open heart/mind, to realize the true Tao.



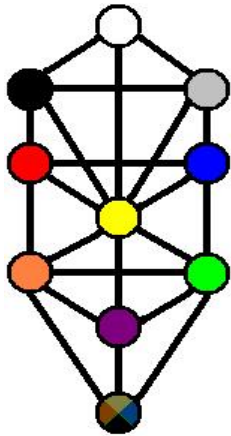
Chapter 4 - [Vajrayana](#) (Tibetan Buddhism)

Free from obsessive clinging to delusions,
see samsara as ecstatic, inconceivable dharma display.
May all sentient beings realize that their very being arises
continuously from the ocean of infinite potentiality,
infinite compassion, the Shimmering Void.



Chapter 5 - [Advaita Vedanta](#)

The Divine is the only truth; all else is but illusion.
Do not be deluded! In no way has any being ever
been separated from its divine source. All are held
eternally secure within the caressing fold of infinite
and boundless being.



Chapter 6 - [Qabalah](#), (and the Western Mystery Traditions)

Mind reflects the Universe, the Universe reflects Mind.
Mind and Universe are One Seamless Whole.
Ignorance and foolishness are but Pure Mind weaving
as yet uncompleted images of Divine Perfection.
All are that One Mind, its thought/dreams arising from
the Limitless Light, shining out from all eyes.



Chapter 7 - [Alchemy](#) (and the Western Mystery Traditions)

Use the Universal Solvent to dissolve all preconceptions,
all dogmas. Then the Philosopher's stone shall enable
one to transmute the lead of one's animal nature into the
gold of higher consciousness.



Chapter 8 - [Sufism](#)

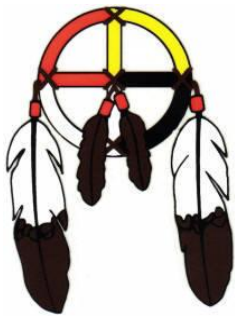
There is only one God, eternal, the Only Being.
None truly exists but this One.
Seeing the Divine Beloved in all is seeing truly.
Dissolve all sense of separateness in the
Ocean of Divine Love.



Chapter 9 - [Christian Mysticism](#)

When asked when the Kingdom of Heaven would come, Jesus responded that "...The Kingdom of Heaven is spread out all around you, but you see it not".

(According to the Gospel of Thomas)



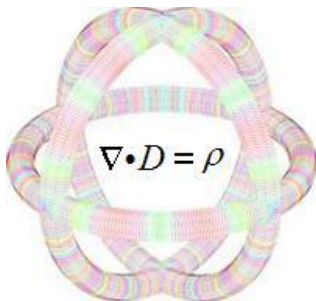
Chapter 10 - [The Shamanic Traditions](#)

Tread gently on this sacred earth, and with great reverence and thankfulness to the Great Spirit, who dwells in the heart of every being, whether they were born, hatched from an egg, or sprouted from a seed. All living beings are our brothers and sisters.



Chapter 11 - [Compassionate Communication](#)

When one gets out of one's head and into one's heart, all conflict can be resolved. Our language fosters the creation of enemy images. But these images are horrible distortions of reality. The "enemy" is a human being, just like us; we all share the same underlying needs. We all want to be happy.



Chapter 12 - [Science & Mysticism](#)

Mathematics is a product of the human mind, yet precisely describes the (external) physical universe. Brain-imaging techniques are revealing the processes whereby our brains construct an illusion of reality, and how meditation helps us to not be deluded by mind's illusions.