

**Spiritual Practice for These Times**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Preliminary Syllabus**



*This is not a time to live without a practice. It is a time when all of us will need the most faithful, self-generated enthusiasm (enthusiasm: to be filled with god) in order to survive in human fashion. Whether we reach this inner state of recognized divinity through prayer, meditation, dancing, swimming, walking, feeding the hungry or enriching the impoverished is immaterial. We will be doubly bereft without some kind of practice that connects us, in a caring way, to what begins to feel like a dissolving world. -- Alice Walker, We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For (2006)*

**Course Description:** In this year-long, on-line course, students will explore, develop and deepen their spiritual practice and encourage others to do the same. The class will be experiential and multi-faith, drawing on some of the wisdom and practices of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, as well as positive psychology, neuroscience, poetry and deep ecology. Fall semester will focus on practices for becoming mindful, expressing gratitude, living in the body, observing Sabbath, and creating rituals. Spring semester will continue along similar lines, focusing on practices involving prayer, relationships, work, nature, art and activism.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of Fall semester, it is expected that students will have (1) developed, deepened or begun some form of personal spiritual practice; (2) created a caring and collaborative learning community; (3) sampled a variety of spiritual practice exercises; and (4) be able to cite and discuss how practices such as mindfulness, gratitude and Sabbath rest promote health and well-being, counter oppressions and help build joyful, just and sustainable communities.

**Course Texts:** Students will be asked to read and use A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook (with CD) by Boh Stahl and Elisha Goldstein, 2010, (ISBN 13-978-1572247086), \$24.96. An exception may be made in cases where students have completed a formal mindfulness based stress reduction group. In addition, students will be expected - at least three times over the course of the semester to reflect on books, films, CDs, and/or events related to their interests in spiritual practice.

**Course Requirements:** The main expectation - and hope - of this course is that students develop and/or deepen their spiritual practice and support others in doing the same. This will be accomplished by the following:

- (1) Participating in the class on-line on a weekly basis;
- (2) Discussing readings and/or films related to the weekly topic;
- (3) Doing and reflecting on the week's spiritual practice exercise(s);
- (4) Developing and/or deepening a personal spiritual practice; and
- (5) Reaching out and supporting classmates in doing the same.

**Course Instructor:** This on-line course will be taught by Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and SKSM ('96) graduate. Chris has taught a variety of classes at Starr King, including: Forgiveness; Poetry, Illness & Pastoral Care; Health & Healing; Religious Education; and Compassion & Moral Repair. Her spiritual practice currently weaves together mindfulness, loving kindness, walking , writing and spiritual eldering. In addition to teaching, Chris facilitates “Write for Health” groups, the latest incarnation of a 20+ year writing ministry. She lives in Davis, California with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, a professor emeritus at UC Davis and long-time community activist. Their daughter, Esumi, is a junior at New York University.

**Office Hours:** Chris will be available to meet with students individually through email (revcfry@aol.com), by phone and, possibly on occasion, in person. Students are asked to contact Chris through email to make arrangements for phone or in-person meetings. Mondays-Thursdays are the best times to reach her.

### **Preliminary Fall Calendar**

Weeks 1-2:	Spiritual Practice: Meaning & Possibilities
Weeks 3-4:	Becoming Mindful
Weeks 5-6:	Practicing Gratitude
Week 7 –	Reading Week
Weeks 8-9:	Living in the Body
Weeks 10-11:	Observing the Sabbath
Weeks 12-13:	Creating Rituals
Week 14:	Celebrating What We Have Learned So Far