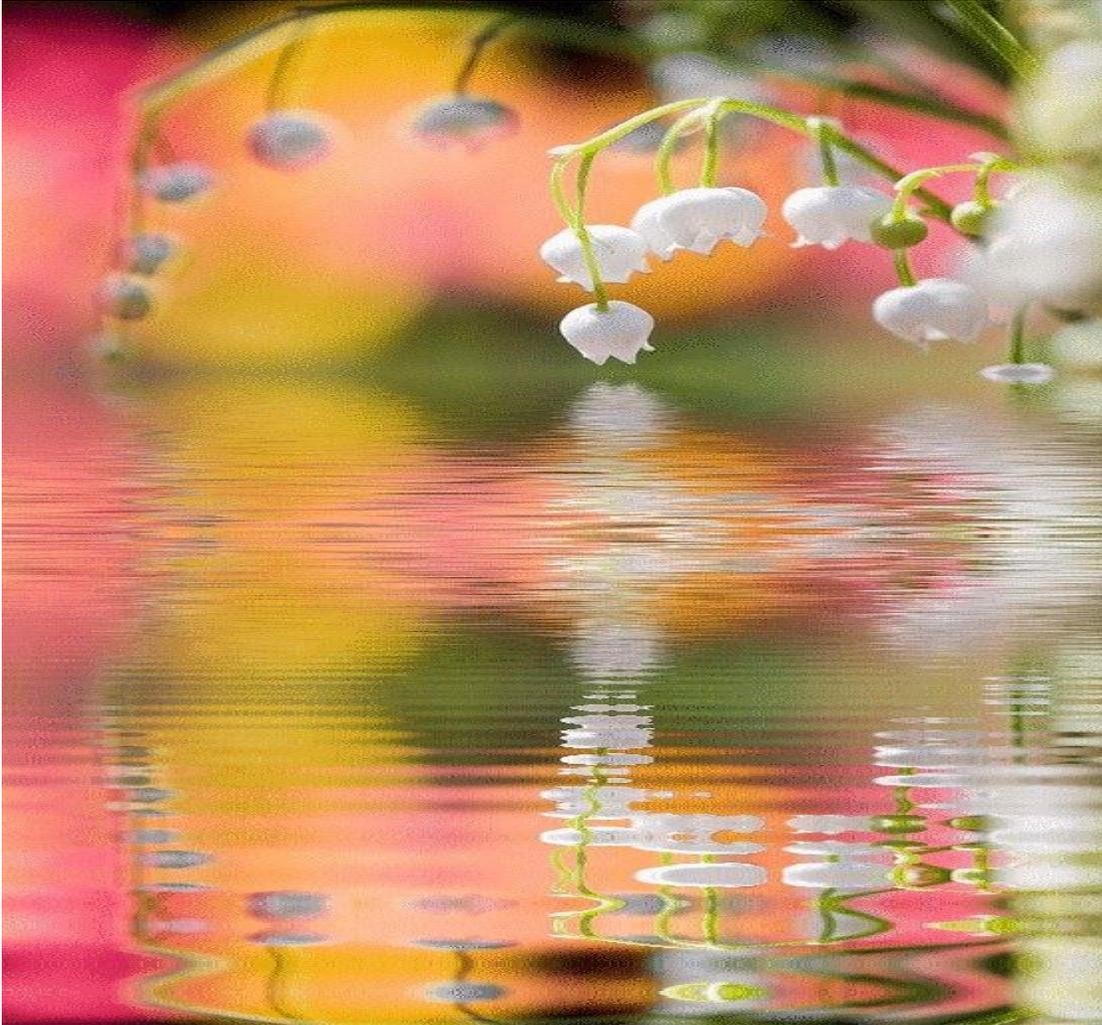


# Spiritual Practice for These Times

Spring 2014

Syllabus



*Joy does not simply  
happen to us. We have  
to choose joy and keep  
choosing it every day.*

*-- Henri Nouwen*

*Please Note: This class is open only to students who completed the Fall 2013 class in Spiritual Practice for These Times.*

**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 focused on practices for becoming mindful, keeping a sabbath, and cultivating gratitude. Spring semester will continue along similar lines, exploring and practicing what Buddhism calls “The Four Immeasurables”: Compassion, Loving-kindness, Equanimity and Joy.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of Spring semester, it is expected that students will have: (1) continued and deepened some form of personal spiritual practice; (2) contributed to 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 compassion, loving kindness, equanimity and joy promote health and well-being, counter oppressions, and help build joyful, just and sustainable communities and ministries.

**Course Texts:** There will be no required course text(s). Each week there will be a selection of short readings and, occasionally, a video clip. A list of suggested books and films will be given to students before the class begins.

**Attendance.** It is the student's responsibility to show up for class each week. The only way it will be clear that a student is present, is if they post their work and interact with others. This means shy students may need a nudge to "speak up" and verbose students may need to hear "let's have someone else speak" just as would be the case in a non-virtual classroom.

Given the nature of the course, it is helpful if the student reviews the week's theme and assignments at the beginning of the week, completes those assignments during the week, and reads and comments on some of their classmates' posts by the end of the week. Many of the spiritual practice exercises will require doing something at least 2-3 days during the week, albeit for short periods of time. So this is not the kind of a course where a student can devote a Saturday or Sunday to the class and be done. On the other hand, each student is encouraged to find a rhythm that works well for them.

The class format is asynchronous meaning that we do not all show up on-line at the same time (which would be difficult given our different schedules and time zones).

If a student needs to miss a week of class, they are asked to inform their instructor and classmates, preferably in advance. There are 15 weekly sessions plus a Reading Week. **Students must complete the work for at least 12 of these weekly sessions including the final session.** If a student is having difficulty showing up to class and completing their work in a timely way, it is their responsibility to contact the professor and make alternate arrangements.

**Weekly Assignments:** Each week students will be expected to complete the assignments below as they relate to the week's theme. This will involve a minimum of 5 short posts. Students will:

- (1) Review the texts for the week (readings and some video clips);
- (2) Post a short reflection on ONE of the texts;
- (3) Comment on at least ONE of their classmates' posts in the Texts & Conversation forum;
- (4) Do at least ONE spiritual practice exercise and post a short reflection;
- (5) Comment on at least ONE of their classmates' Practice Circle posts; and
- (6) Post a short "Spiritual Practice Check-in" reflection, using the prompt provided and/or simply describing how their spiritual practice has gone - or not gone - that week.

Class materials for the week ahead will be posted by the instructor on Thursday evening (about 8 p.m.). Assignments should be completed within 10 days.

**Beyond Moodle.** Much of the work (15-20 hours) we will do for this class will continue to be done outside of our virtual classroom. Students are encouraged to deepen their understanding and practice of compassion, loving kindness, equanimity, and joy by reading books, watching films, engaging in regular conversation, attending workshops or events, working on a personal project and/or, best of all, simply PRACTICING.

**Course Instructor:** This on-line course will be taught by Rev. Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and SKSM ('96) graduate. Chris has taught a variety of classes at Starr King over the years including: Forgiveness; Poetry, Illness & Pastoral Care; Health & Healing; Religious Education; and Compassion and Moral Repair. Chris 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:** Students will "see" Chris in class often, commenting on their posts, clarifying assignments and offering encouragement. She will also be available to chat with students individually through email and, occasionally, by phone, skype or in person. Students are asked to contact Chris through email (revcfry@aol.com, not her SKSM email) to make arrangements for a phone/skype/in-person meeting. Mondays-Thursdays are the best times to reach her.

## **SPRING 2014 CALENDAR**

February 3: OPENING THE HEART

February 10: DEVELOPING SELF-COMPASSION

February 17: 12 STEPS TO A COMPASSIONATE LIFE

February 24: EMPATHY

March 3: BLOCKS TO COMPASSION

March 10: TONGLÉN MEDITATION

March 17: ANGER, COMPASSION & JUSTICE

March 24: READING WEEK

April 7: EQUANIMITY

April 14: JOY

April 21: THE POWER OF KINDNESS

April 21: LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION

April 28: EXPANDING OUR HEART

April 28: SERVICE

May 5: REJOICING

May 12: SUSTAINING OUR PRACTICES

May 19: IN CELEBRATION & GRATITUDE