

Spiritual Practice for These Times
Fall 2013
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, and keeping a Sabbath. Spring semester will continue along similar lines, focusing on practices which deepen compassion, kindness, equanimity and joy.

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 & Assignments: There will be no required course text(s). Each class session, however, will include some suggested books, CDs and films. Students will be asked to read, listen and/or watch at least 10 such resources over the course of the semester and post a short reflection on each one. A list of suggested texts, films and other resources will be made available to registered students beginning in August.

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, CDs and/or films related to the weekly topic;
- (3) Doing 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 and writing. 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), phone or skype 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

September 2

Spiritual Practice in Everyday Life

September 9

Mindfulness

September 16

Mindful Eating

September 23

Living Mindfully with the Body

September 30

Living Mindfully with Feelings

October 7

Living Mindfully with Difficult Emotions

October 14

Reading Week

October 21

Living Mindfully with Others

October 28

Mindfulness, Money & Work

November 4

Gratitude

November 11

Gratitude in Hard Times

November 18

Sabbath

November 25

The Power of Pause

December 2

Keeping the Sabbath

December 9

Sabbath Rituals

December 16:

Celebrating What We've Learned So Far