

## **RELI 311: Perspectives in Spirituality and Mysticism**

**SPRING 2013**

**Wed: 2:00-4:52 PM**

**Classroom: McDonnell Hall 242**

**Dr. Carol Wayne White**

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**Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12 noon & By Appointment**

### **GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Mysticism and diverse forms of spirituality have been found in all religious traditions in all ages, and are keystones of human experience in general in personal, cultural and universal contexts. This course studies the nature, role and meaning of mysticism and spirituality for Western audiences by focusing on different models, practices, and accounts. Analysis of classical expressions of mysticism and spirituality will be included along with newer forms. We will also inquire into “perceived” unique aspects of the "mystical consciousness" and the worldviews that support it.

The reading material introduces students to many exciting (and often controversial) issues, including classical and newer views of the human; the interplay of artistic creativity and spiritual practices; human consciousness and mystical practices; the social/cultural variables that influence mystical quests and spiritual desires; concepts of truth, reality, and transcendence implied in diverse mystical experiences and spiritual practices; the role of the body in spiritual quests; and the ways natural processes or nature inflect specific spiritualities. Faculty and students will also explore the language and experience of “beloving” (as opposed to believing) as mystics from days ancient to contemporary have expressed it, with special emphasis given to “practical mystics” who were able to marry their vision to their daily lives of action. This course will also address some of the current writings regarding science and spirituality, especially within the contexts of Buddhist and Christian forms of meditation. In light of these issues, some emphasis will be placed upon alternative ways of expressing spirituality and mysticism in the contemporary era.

Finally, there are two special aspects to this course. First, there is a reflective, experiential dimension. For all of the obvious reasons, students will be asked to keep a personal “academic” journal that may help them to gain a fuller appreciation of some of the ideas and concepts we will be discussing and exploring. Second, there is an experimental assignment (creation of a “digital” essay), which will culminate in a special oral presentation at the end of the semester. More details below.

## **COURSE-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To explore the various forms of knowledge (esoteric, scientific, and philosophical) that are part of current approaches to mysticism and spirituality, and what they suggest about our views of the human, the diverse worlds we inhabit, and our desires for self-transformation.
- 2) To foster an appreciation for the interdisciplinary approach endemic to studying this topic by examining and exploring the wide range of ideas, practices, and definitions of spirituality and mysticism to better understand their appeal and value in the contemporary West.
- 3) To consider various definitions of mysticism and spirituality, and the practices, concepts, and worldviews associated with them, utilizing insights from psychology, religion, philosophy, and science, literature, and the arts.
- 4) To engage each other in productive conversations about the various approaches and styles of spirituality and mysticism in the contemporary era;
- 5) To improve basic skills in critical/analytical reading and writing.

## **CCC LEARNING GOALS**

The following course objectives are in accordance with the disciplinary requirements of the Division of Arts & Humanities, as specified by the new Core College Curriculum. They emphasize textual analysis and interpretation.

- 1) Students will interpret texts with awareness of the texts' basic orientation in the world (historical, philosophical, religious, linguistic, etc.).
- 2) Students will be able to construct arguments and evaluate canons using the evidence and tools of critical analysis appropriate to the object of inquiry.
- 3) Students will develop an appreciation of the fundamental ambiguities and complexities involved in all human attempts to answer questions about knowledge, values, and life.

## **W2 COURSE**

The Writing Program aims to develop students' mastery of written language. As a W2 course, this class will include:

1. Writing instruction
2. Support of the writing process
3. Teaching of the techniques of writing needed or expected in the discipline
4. Frequent and substantial writing
5. The use of writing assignments to teach the subject matter.

## METHOD OF INSTRUCTION AND STUDY

This class will be conducted in seminar style and requires serious commitment and active engagement. The instructor will provide the necessary background and contextual information (i.e., some lecturing) at the beginning of each session, but focus is on classroom conversations. Ideas will emerge from discussions, so I ask each of you to please read the assigned reading carefully and critically so that you will be prepared to participate fully in class. Various videos/films and other media resources will be utilized during the semester.

Another key component of the course is attending the digital workshops throughout the semester as you create and design your digital essays for the final presentations.

## READING MATERIALS

**You should purchase the following books for use in the course. The Bucknell Bookstore will have copies of each.**

Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*  
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*  
Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom*  
Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart*  
Thich Nhat Hanh, *Essential Writings*  
Mary Oliver, *House of Light*  
B. Alan Wallace, *Mind in the Balance*

Other reading assignments (journal articles, book chapters) will be either handed out in class or placed on MOODLE. You are encouraged to print your own copies to study and bring to class.

## REQUIREMENTS

### **1. Class Participation**

Class participation is fundamental to this course. This means that the student will be present and promote the quality of the class by fully participating in the various formats of the class: lectures, discussions, films, student presentations, etc. \* If you miss more than one (1) unexcused class session, your final grade will be reduced one letter grade. **NOTE:** Please do not write (e-mail) professor apologizing for not coming to class for an unexcused absence. Simply keep track of your absences.

### **2. 5 Reflection Papers Based on Class Readings and \*Journal Entries**

These reflection papers will call for you to observe, feel, reflect, analyze, and integrate the information in the readings with class discussion, and personal reflections and experiences. Each paper should include three components: Observation; Analysis and Integration; and Reaction. More details later, along with a handout. The papers are due at the start of class and should be 1-2 pages in length, typed double-spaced; they should also incorporate a few quotes or references (cited properly) from pertinent readings.

\*Each student is also required to keep a personal (or self-awareness) journal, which you will use as one possible source for your reflection papers. These personal journals are for your eyes only, so you should feel free to express yourself authentically, without reservations. They will not be graded, nor handed into the professor, but are exercises that may help you to enter into a pattern of reflection that many Spiritual and Retreat Centers endorse. More details later, along with handouts.

### **3. In-Class Essay Examination**

This assignment will be a response to distinct problems or issues covered in lectures and in reading assignments. All submitted papers must be typed (double-spaced) with proper margination and scholarly format. More information on format will be given later.

### **4) Digital Essays/Oral Presentations**

Each student will participate in a digital learning workshop throughout the semester and will present to the class a creative, original digital essay on any research topic within mysticism and spirituality. This assignment may reflect your further understanding of a topic or theme that continues to inspire, intrigue, or fascinate you. (You may also introduce a topic that has not have been discussed or covered in class. Please see Professor White for this possibility.) All presentations should incorporate at least a three-fold development of thought: 1) identifying a topic or theme; 2) articulating some of the traditional perspectives, issues, and theories surrounding the chosen topic or problem; and 3) providing in-depth reflections, expanded perspectives, or discussion of key ideas and forms of knowledge beyond what has been discussed in class. On the day that you give your digital presentation, you must submit to the professor a **brief** written abstract or overview of your topic (**2 pages**, typed, double-spaced, including important notes and bibliography).

#### **Definition of Digital Essay**

The digital essay is a short visual communication piece that reflects the author's engagement with the story, and therefore engages others. The story told should be of interest to the author, something that touches him/her on a deeper level. The story should never be told, but felt. The digital essay is a unique exercise in strengthening digital literacy skills, communication skills, creative thinking, and deepening the level of content not just through a textual context but also through images, sound, composition, and pacing. The author must engage in and draw upon multiple elements to complete the Digital Essay. It's an art form. Your story should be unique, original, and evoke a response in you. If it doesn't matter to you, it won't matter to your audience. (More later on the structure and process of creating a digital essay.)

#### **Final course grades will be established in the following manner:**

In-Class Essay Examination: 30 %

Reflection Papers: 30 %

Digital Essay Presentations: 30 %

Attendance, Participation, and in-class writing assignments: 10 %

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## CALENDAR AND READING SCHEDULE

(Please note: This schedule is tentative and may be revised at the discretion of the professor.)

Key for Textbooks:

Evelyn Underhill, **Practical Mysticism**: PM  
Annie Dillard, **Pilgrim at Tinker Creek**: PTC  
Dalai Lama, **The Universe in a Single Atom**: USA  
Wayne Teasdale, **The Mystic Heart**: TMH  
Thich Nhat Hanh, **Essential Writings**: EW  
Mary Oliver, **House of Light**: HOL  
B. Alan Wallace, **Mind in the Balance**: MIB

Wed. 16-Jan                    **Introduction to Course and to Each Other**  
(Syllabus Overview and Objectives of Course Explained)

**Introduction of the Digital Essay (DE)**  
(Brianna Derr and Debra Cook-Balducci, Instructional Technicians, will discuss components and workflow of DE)

### SECTION ONE: WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY? WHAT IS MYSTICISM?

(Important Concepts, Definitions, and Theories)

Wed. 23- Jan                    Wiseman Article (MOODLE)

### SECTION TWO: CLASSICAL THEORIES OF MYSTICISM

Wed. 30 - Jan                    PM: All Chapters  
  
\*William James, “4 Stages of Mysticism” (MOODLE)  
**(Reflection Paper #1 Due)**

Film and Discussion

### **Cultural Expressions of Mysticism & Spirituality**

Wed. 6-Feb.                    \*Harvey: “Introduction” and “Voices of the First World”  
\*Harvey: Taoism: “The Way of the Tao”  
\*Harvey: Judaism: “The Way of Holiness”  
\*Harvey: Christianity: “The Way of Love in Action”

**Digital Workshop Session # 1**  
(Show examples of Digital Essays and discuss Technical Rubric/Equipment Training)

## SECTION THREE: CONTEMPORARY THEORIES: SPIRITUALITY & MYSTICISM

### Wayne Teasdale: Notion of Interspirituality

- Wed.13-Feb.                    TMH: Introduction, Chapters 1-3  
**(Reflection Paper # 2 Due)**
- Digital Workshop Session # 2 (Meet in Library Lab)**  
(Chloe Barnett, Humanities Library Liaison, discusses image selection and citation, resources, and the importance of research. Brianna and Deb discuss audio resources)  
\*Students bring at least 6-12 images to March 20th workshop
- Wed. 20-Feb.                    TMH: Chapters 4 -7  
Guest Speaker: Arlyne Hoyt (Qigong Session)
- Digital Workshop Session # 3**  
(Video Editing; Final Cut Pro X;  
Students bring video, images, and media to workshop;  
Review importing of media and develop timeline;  
Chloe will assist with selection of images)
- Wed. 27 – Feb.                    **In-Class Essay Exam**
- Wed. 6-Mar.                    \*Aldous Huxley, “The Perennial Philosophy” (Handout)  
**Guest Speaker** (Dashain McCabe: Buddhist Spiritual Practice)
- Digital Workshop # 4**  
(Introduce Storyboarding and Script [Narration]; Introduce AudioBooth)  
\*Storyboard and Narrative due at March 27<sup>th</sup> workshop
- Wed. 13-Mar.                    **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

## SECTION FOUR: THICH NHAT HANH & THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

- Wed. 20- Mar.                    EW: All Chapters
- Digital Workshop # 5**  
(Storyboard Review; Students should have complete Storyboard containing Narration; Chloe joining class; AudioBooth)

## SECTION FIVE: NATURE AND SPIRITUALITY

### Poetic Expressions of Mary Oliver and Others

- Wed. 27-Mar.                    HOL: Selected Poems TBD  
TMH: Chapter 8  
**(Reflection Paper # 3 Due)**
- Digital Workshop # 6**  
(Continue editing)

**Annie Dillard: Nature and Mystery, Death, Beauty, and Violence**

Wed. 3-Apr. PTC: All Chapters

**Digital Workshop # 7**  
(Peer Group Review)

**SECTION SIX: SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENCE**

Wed. 10-Apr. USA: Chapters TBD

**Digital Workshop #8**  
(Continue Editing)

Wed. 17-Apr. USA: Chapters TBD  
MIB: Chapters TBD  
Yoga Session & Guest Speakers

**(Digital Presentations Begin)**

Wed. 24-Apr. MIB: Chapters TBD  
**(Reflection Paper # 5 Due)**

**(Digital Presentations Continue)**

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**ADDENDUM I**

**ACADEMIC POLICIES REGARDING CLASS ATTENDANCE**

(\*Source: Memo from Provost Office, August 15, 2012)

“Policy on Conflicts between Regularly Scheduled Classes and Other Activities”

**Principles**

The academic goals and achievements of individual students are the University's primary purpose. The University also recognizes the significant contribution of other activities to the academic and personal development of Bucknell students. It is inevitable that conflicts will arise between the pursuit of extra-curricular activities and students' academic schedules. With the emphasis on active learning in the College of Engineering and the Common Learning Agenda of the College of Arts and Sciences, class attendance has taken an even more vital role in the instructional goals of the University.

It is desirable, when conflicts do occur, that students have a policy available to guide their decisions concerning class attendance. The present policy states the expectations placed on faculty members, students, and extra-curricular advisers, so that students may know their options and the ramifications of their choices. In addition, faculty are encouraged to include

a statement about their individual expectations for class attendance in course syllabi.

## **Policy**

### **I. Responsibilities about class attendance:**

A. Students are expected to attend the regularly scheduled meetings of the courses for which they are enrolled.

B. Classes scheduled during regular class hours should be given priority over other activities. "No student who participates in an extra-curricular event, team, or program can be penalized solely for missing such extra-curricular activities when they are scheduled in conflict with regularly scheduled meeting times of the student's courses." (Action of the faculty, October 1993)

C. Faculty should provide, on the first day of classes, a clear statement of:

1. The consequences of any absences.
2. Scheduled time commitments outside of class.

D. Students should not be required to attend extra or rescheduled academic events that conflict with other classes or other important commitments.

### **II. Responsibilities about non-class activities:**

A. Extra-curricular advisers should, during the first week of classes, inform students of those dates upon which they will be asked to miss a class due to an extra-curricular activity.

B. Students should give faculty as much advanced warning of a class absence as possible.

C. University units regularly sponsoring extra-curricular activities are urged to develop guidelines about the appropriate level of demands to place upon student participants with respect to missing class.

### **III. General responsibilities:**

A. Since students are ultimately responsible for their education at Bucknell, they must be the ones to weigh the consequences of missing classes or other activities, and make their choices accordingly.

B. Both faculty and advisers of extra-curricular activities are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in addressing attendance requirements.

Students and faculty may seek advice in these matters from their College Dean.

\*Adopted by Committee on Instruction and Committee on Complementary Activities; reported to University faculty, March, 1994.



## ADDENDUM II

### **BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT**

#### **I. Bucknell University Honor Code**

As a student and citizen of the Bucknell University community:

1. I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors.
2. I will forthrightly oppose each and every instance of academic dishonesty.
3. I will let my conscience guide my decision to communicate directly with any person or persons I believe to have been dishonest in academic work.
4. I will let my conscience guide my decision on reporting breaches of academic integrity to the appropriate faculty or deans.

#### **II. Bucknell University expectations for academic engagement**

Courses at Bucknell that receive one unit of academic credit have a minimum expectation of 12 hours per week of student academic engagement. Student academic engagement includes both the hours of direct faculty instruction (or its equivalent) and the hours spent on out of class student work. Half and quarter unit courses at Bucknell should have proportionate expectations for student engagement.

#### **III. Grading System from the Bucknell Course Catalog**

Grading: The performance of a student in each course is evaluated on the grade report by the use of the following symbols:

- A: Superior achievement
- B: High pass
- C: Pass
- D: Low Pass
- F: Failing work