

Religious Studies 2MT3
Asian Meditation Traditions
McMaster University, Term I 2018
{Last Updated July 13 2018}

Lectures—Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30–3:20. MDCL 1110.

Tutorials— Tutorial 1: Fridays 2:30—3:20, KTH B124
Tutorial 2: Fridays 2:30—3:20, KTH B132
Tutorial 3: Tuesdays 12:30—1:20, KTH 106
Tutorial 4: Tuesdays 12:30—1:20, KTH B126

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Office hours—TBD

Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of meditation systems in Asia. In addition to scholarship on meditation, we will read a lot of primary texts—works written by and for meditators. Although we will not learn how to meditate in this course, we will be attentive to the mental and physical experiences of meditation practices. I may suggest that we try to experience certain techniques of meditation in class, but these experiential elements are entirely optional. I will not require you to do anything that you feel uncomfortable doing. Please allow others in the class to participate or not in any experiential elements. All I ask is that you approach the class and its contents with an open mind.

Course Requirements and Grading

There are no formal prerequisites. No knowledge of Asian languages is required.

Attendance & participation in Tutorials and online discussion (10%)

Regular preparation, attendance and participation are essential to understanding new material and acquiring knowledge. Your TA will determine this portion of your mark. Specific activities in tutorials (e.g., presentations, brief reports, leading discussion) may be required. In addition, we

will ask you to post materials in online discussions on Avenue. Online participation will also be part of your mark.

Make sure to read the assigned passages prior to attending Lectures and Tutorials and bring the relevant books to both!

Tests (30%)

Three online tests, 10% each. You will take three tests on Avenue. The tests are designed to ensure that you are attending lectures and completing assigned readings. The tests are not timed and you are encouraged to consult your notes and books.

Essay (30%)

Details of the essay (5-6 pages) will be circulated separately via Avenue. It is due on November 13. Work submitted late will not be accepted.

Final Examination (30%)

Date, time and place of the examination TBA. Expect to answer three written questions that require analysis and interpretation as well as a solid grasp of the facts.

NB. We will practice our writing in class regularly. Please bring something to write with (pen, paper, laptop, tablet, phone, etc.) to the Lecture and Tutorial meetings.

Policies

- **Don't Cheat**
- **We will be using Avenue to Learn. Your rights may be affected.**
- **Use your McMaster email account.**
- **Check the MSAF policy.**

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC

Staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will not date-stamp or receive papers and other assignments.

**UNIVERSITY MANDATED
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AVENUE TO LEARN

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

POLICY FOR MODIFYING A COURSE:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check her/his McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY:

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account.

This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

MCMASTER STUDENT ABSENCE FORM (MSAF):

The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report MEDICAL absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work (that is less than 25% of the course grade). Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a

maximum of ONE Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent for more than 3 days, exceed one request per term, are absent for a reason other than medical, or have missed work worth 30% or more of the final grade, you MUST visit your Faculty Office. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Books

Required:

Halvor Eifring, ed. *Asian Traditions of Meditation*, University of Hawai'i Press 2016
Sarah Shaw, *The Spirit of Buddhist Meditation*, Yale University Press 2014.

Schedule

Week One

September 5. Introduction and orientation.

Week Two

No Tutorials this week.

September 10. What is meditation?

September 12. How can we study meditation?

Read Eifring, 1-26.

Week Three

Tutorials begin

Tutorial:

September 17. What is meditation for?

September 19. Understanding the technical terminology of meditation

Read Eifring, 27-47; "Meditation Nation," *Tricycle*

<https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/meditation-nation/>

Week Four

Online Test 1 this week

Tutorial:

September 24. Where is meditation from? Where is it going?

September 26. Body-breath-mind connections

Read Bhikkhu Bodhi, "What Does Mindfulness Really Mean? A Canonical Perspective," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (May 1, 2011): 19-39. Via avenue.

Eifring 93-121.

Week Five

Tutorial:

October 1. The basics: Posture, breath

October 3. Fundamental techniques: counting breaths

Read, Luis Gomez "Meditation," *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, via avenue.

Week Six

October 8. Fall Break. Do **not** come to class.

October 10. Still Fall Break. Chill.

Week Seven

Online Test 2 this week

Essay assigned.

Tutorial:

October 15. India. Non-Buddhist meditation

October 17. Overview of Buddhist meditation techniques

Read Eifring, 48-92.

Week Eight

Tutorial:

October 22. Paths of Buddhist meditation 1.

October 24. Paths of Buddhist meditation 2.

Read Rupert Gethin, "On Some Definitions of Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (May 1, 2011): 263–79, via avenue.

Week Nine

Tutorial:

October 29. Visualization 1

October 31. Visualization 2

Read

Week Ten

Online Test 3 this week.

Tutorial:

November 5. Daoist meditation

November 7. Confucian meditation

Read

Week Eleven

Essay Due November 13

Tutorial:

November 12. East Asian Buddhist meditation: Tiantai 1

November 14. East Asian Buddhist meditation: Chan/Son/Zen 1

Read

Week Twelve

Tutorial:

November 19. Instructor away at conference

November 21. East Asian Buddhist meditation Chan/Son/Zen 2

Read Harvey 114–150

Week Thirteen

*****No Tutorial this week*****

November 26. Modern Vipassana meditation

November 28. Contemporary mindfulness

Read Britta K. Hölzel et al., “How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work? Proposing Mechanisms of Action From a Conceptual and Neural Perspective,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 6 (November 1, 2011): 537–59, via avenue.

Robert H. Sharf, “Is Mindfulness Buddhist? (And Why It Matters) , Is Mindfulness Buddhist? (And Why It Matters),” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 52, no. 4 (August 1, 2015): 470–84, via avenue.

Week Fourteen

Tutorial: Exam review

December 3. Final reflections

December 5. Exam review

Draft