

CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES ONLINE SYLLABUS

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CIHS SPRING QUARTER, 2010

PSY/IH/CRP 502/702 LP 610 BIS 208

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed for those in the human sciences who seek to better understand the many contributions that consciousness disciplines make to our professional effectiveness and to our personal growth. Credit is available for those in CIHS Psychology, Integral Health, Life Physics, and Comparative Religion and Philosophy programs. This course is taught on a graduate level but may be adapted for those who are interested in taking the course as an undergraduate. This course also welcomes those who are not in formal education programs but who simply wish to cultivate a greater self understanding through the study of consciousness.

The approach in this course is to combine introductory readings across a broad range of topics involved in an understanding of consciousness with personal experiences in the exploration of our awareness. We draw from methods of meditation, self observation and spiritual growth associated with traditional and eastern cultures culture as well as from the Western tradition. While the methods and insight from non Western traditions are usually associated with particular religious and cultural contexts, they are available to each person no matter what their religion, philosophy, or belief system. In this way they have much in common with many other approaches in psychology which offer systems of healing and self awareness whose techniques can be used by persons from various backgrounds and of differing persuasions.

To fully grasp the benefits available from these methods, students will be given exercises and methods of exploring their own awareness. For the most part this exploration is wonderfully inspiring. It may be, however, that as we progress, occasional uncomfortable feelings or realizations will appear just as they do in life. Remember, you are completely free to opt out of any proposed exercise or experience, or withdraw from such at any time you feel the need. I am available to answer questions and for support in any matter in regard to this course and your participation. As part of individualizing this course for you, I will be sending you an

email asking for your expectations for the course and some basic background information that will allow me to get to know your interests as they apply to this course.

Online students will enter the course by accessing the class site, “Consciousness Studies 2010” following an email invitation from me. The group site will serve as the class host for both online and oncampus students, and will be set up to contain all your assignments and documents. You are responsible for reading the “Assignments”, “Key concepts”, and “Exercises” folders; and completing all work by uploading your papers to a personal folder that bears your name. If you would like to keep any of your work or responses private, please send them to me at rcavnaug@san.rr.com as attachments and note your need for privacy. Your wishes and confidentiality will be respected. I do, however, recommend that you be willing to share your work and responses with your colleagues since the normal interchange that is part of class attendance is not available to you as an online student. Many students find online conversations between students one of the most valuable features of this format.

Your individual needs are important and will be taken into account so that you can successfully complete the course requirement. Please feel free to email me or call 858- 453-4439 with any questions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1. Expand awareness of and sensitivity to consciousness as the core of our existence as persons and spiritual beings.**
- 2. Become acquainted with some of the more interesting and exciting contemporary literature that is revolutionizing the field of consciousness studies.**
- 3. Undertake a series of experiential exercises to expand our present centered awareness and open greater access to our inner resources to see how our intellectual understanding of consciousness is impacted by these personal explorations.**
- 4. Learn to apply some of the techniques and insights from the consciousness disciplines to typical psychological issues and become acquainted with integrating such methods into our personal and professional lives.**
- 5. Understand our personal and cultural values and biases in exploring consciousness.**

6. Become familiar with the major trends in psychology that are incorporating methods taken from traditional consciousness disciplines.

7. Understand the differences between natural science methodology and experiential Empiricism.

8. Begin to get acquainted with some of the core issues in the field of consciousness studies and the basic assumptions of different approaches to the study of consciousness.

9. Come to a clearer and more refined personal understanding of the nature of spirituality and consciousness.

EVALUATION

Your grade will be computed from a number of short papers, a brief midterm and brief final, and an informal research paper for those of you at the Ph.D. level. The short papers are ‘thought papers’ which are due after each weekly assignment unless that coming week is an exam week. Due dates for these short papers are specified below in the syllabus. A ‘thought paper’ is a one to two page single spaced paper that focuses on your reaction to what you have read and to the exercises assigned each week. The purpose of the paper is to give you a chance to write about what has been most meaningful to you and to demonstrate that you have read and thought about the assignments.

For students at the Ph.D. level, midterm and final exams will each be worth 20% of your grade, and the informal research paper will count for 20%. The remaining 40% of your grade will be based on the thought papers. Grades and expectations will vary for students depending on their level of study. Bachelor and masters’ levels students will not do a research paper. Their midterm and final will count for 25% each and the remaining 50% of the grade will be from the thought papers.

Consciousness exercises

Just as therapists give ‘homework’ between sessions, I will provide some consciousness exercises to bring a more experiential understanding of our readings and discussions. I will ask you to report on these exercises as part of the reflections you include in the short ‘thought papers’.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

I will post separately a number of selected bibliographies including a short list of classics in the study of consciousness, and an annotated list of some key contemporary works in the application of consciousness methods to problems in living and to psychotherapy. While these lists represent personal preferences and so is limited to what I have found useful, it is a solid jumping off point to continue your exploration. More complete bibliographies are found in your texts.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. 03/30 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: MINDFULNESS and SOURCES OF A SPIRITUAL SELF UNDERSTANDING

A. Formulating Your Personal Course Objectives.

The online students this quarter are very diverse in background, interests and level of study. In order to individualize this course, I need some information from you. Also, in this course, as in life, I would like to offer you the opportunity to be more a part of creating what you experience.

Please complete a word document answering the three questions below and also write a paragraph explaining your personal objectives for the course.

For new students only: If you have worked with me in other classes, please skip the three questions below and go on to the course Objectives.

1. The three initial questions are as follows:

a. **What program, if any, are you in at CIHS or another institution, and what academic level are you?**

b. What are the three most important books you have read or experiences that you have had that bear upon your current interest in the study of consciousness?

c. Do you have a spiritual discipline, occupation, field of psychology or particular interest such as meditation, psychosynthesis, Jung, reiki, yoga, shamanism, tai chi, martial arts, prayer, etc., that you would like me to know about so that I can better serve you in this course?

2. Your statement of Personal Objectives for the Course

I especially want to hear what your goals are in developing your knowledge base and skills as a professional or soon to be professional in the helping professions. Please also include what personal goals you have which are appropriate for the application of consciousness studies.

When you have completed the above, please upload your document to your personal folder in the 'Files' section of the Consciousness 09 group site on our host, yahoogroups.com. If you prefer to keep these responses confidential, please email them to me as an attachment.

After reading about your background and interests, I will be better prepared to work with you should you have special interests in this course.

B. Reading Assignments

1. Kabat-Zinn, Jon. Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Every Day Life. New York: Hyperion, 10th ed., 2005. ISBN-13: 978-1401307783

Please read this book at a pace which makes it possible for you to absorb and think about what is being presented. Try some of the author's exercises as well as those assigned in your weekly folder. Your reading of this book needs to be complete by the time you take the midterm exam. You are urged to read this book along with your other assignments so that you have a growing and ongoing appreciation of mindfulness.

Comment: Meditation is no longer confined to traditional societies and fringe groups in westernized cultures. It is fast becoming a universal technique practiced across many classes, ages, ethnicities, cultures and religions. Meditation is the foundation of any personal understanding of consciousness. The objective of this course is to combine personal and academic exploration, and we begin with meditation. The most well known type of meditation is mindfulness and your first reading is by a teacher and exponent of mindfulness.

Currently there are over 200 institutions, programs and healing centers in the United States that include mindfulness in the treatments they offer. Mindfulness is fast becoming a standard part of psychological services, and practitioners are integrating mindfulness into many varieties of cognitive and behavioral therapies. Accordingly, some practical and theoretical knowledge of mindfulness must be an integral part of any program that seeks an integrated understanding of the person and of any adequate professional preparation for the helping professions. Mindfulness offers a bridge to a more holistic outlook, a common language for practitioners with different points of view, and a powerful set of approaches both to our personal growth and to our clients' problems in living. Most importantly, it creates a neutral ground for bypassing religious and ideological conflicts and gives a more personal, direct and experiential component to spirituality. While mindfulness is a sound starting point and offers us much, it is by no means the sole destination for our exploration of consciousness.

2. While you read Kabat-Zinn and do the exercises in the reading and posted in the file, also go to the folder "Reading File" and read **Intro to Meditation**

C. Consciousness Exercises and Your Notes/Journal

Each week I will post a set of exercises that are to be done in conjunction with the readings. Please open the "Exercises" folder for Week One and follow the instructions.

The intent of the exercises is to give you some direct experience of the concepts we are studying. For the purposes of the course, reflection on your exercises is important. **I suggest, but do not require**, that you take notes or journal after your exercises to better round out the meaning of these

experiences for you. Writing about these experiences will also provide you with the material you need each week to complete your thought papers.

2. 04/06 THE NATURE OF THINGS; SCIENCE AND CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Every culture has primary myths that explain how it all happened and how it all works. In our modern era science is a myth maker, a teller of stories of what constitutes reality. Over time the myths of science change. These changes are thought of as paradigm shifts, the appearance of new models of what is known and how all that we experience through the approved methods of knowing fits together and gives us a more or less comprehensive picture of our selves and our world. As science proceeds there are many unanswered questions as there are answers, and different theories emerge to better explain what we know. One of the more interesting approaches to emerge is a holographic theory, a theory that uses the metaphor of holograms to explain both consciousness and physical reality. Your reading below is probably the best statement of that model. I will provide additional readings as we go.

A. Reading Assignments

1. Talbot, Michael. The Holographic Universe. New York: Harper, 1991. Please read Part I and Part II of Talbot this week.

If you have read Talbot's book, please read the reference below in its place or contact me to approve another choice:

Additional Reference: **The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World by Amit Goswami. Tarcher, New York 1995.** A synthesis of modern physics with the philosophy of consciousness developed from the long history of experiential non-dualism which understands consciousness as the primary foundation of a unitary, multidimensional reality.

Some of you may be acquainted with Advaita, Taoism, or other unitary spiritually based philosophies. Goswami's work is one of an increasing number of books inviting the western reader to explore how contemporary science and some traditional perspectives both posit a unity that includes consciousness as a primary aspect of reality.

2. Please read the comment for this book that will be uploaded in one of my messages and in your “Reading Assignments” Folder: Meditation Effects.

3. Continue to read Kabat-Zinn at the pace whereby you can absorb the material.

B. Exercises

Please find Week Two in your ‘Exercises’ folder in ‘Files’ on the group site.

C. First Thought Paper Due

Your first thought paper is to focus on your readings in Kabat-Zinn and your first week exercises. Please upload your thought paper to your personal folder in the ‘Files’ section of the group site on yahoogroups.com, CIHS Consciousness 07. **Remember, it is the quality of your thinking that matters here, not quantity.** I will not accept more than two single spaced pages.

3. 04/13 CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BODY: BIOLOGY AND BELIEF

A. Reading Assignments

**Lipton, Bruce. The Biology of Belief. Santa Rosa: Elite Books, 2005
ISBN 13-978-0975991473**

Please read all of Lipton for this week. It is a short, engaging and easily read work. I am interested in you thinking about the implications of what Lipton has to say, not in you becoming an expert in biology. Continue to read Kabat-Zinn at the pace whereby you can absorb the material.

From your “Reading Assignments’ File: Meditation Effects

If you have read Lipton’s book, please read the reference below in its place or contact me to approve another choice:

Additional Reference: **Molecules of Emotion: The Science behind mind-Body Medicine by Candace Pert. Scribner,, New York 1997.** A summary of

how the bimolecular nature of our organism links body and mind in a shared information network of thoughts and emotions mediated by chemical messengers.

This book is a story of the search for the biochemical basis of mind-body interactions and is one of the best statements of an emerging science that attempts to integrate an understanding of consciousness into mind-body theory.

B. Exercises

Please find Week Two in your 'Exercises' folder in 'Files' on the group site.

C. Second Thought Paper Due

Your first thought paper is to focus on your readings in Talbot and your weekly exercises. Please upload your thought paper to your personal folder in the 'Files' section of the group site on yahoogroups.com, CIHS Consciousness 07. **Remember, it is the quality of your thinking that matters here, not quantity.**

4. 4/20 WHAT DOES SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION OF COMMON BEHAVIORS TELL US ABOUT THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

A. Reading Assignments

Sheldrake, Rupert. The Sense of Being Stared At. New York: Crown Publishers, 2003. ISBN 0-609-60807-X

Part I, 'Telepathy' and Part II, 'The Power of Attention'. What thoughts do you have about his experiments? Are there any other hypotheses that might account for Sheldrake's findings?

B. Exercises

See Week Three in your 'Exercises' folder.

C. Third Thought Paper due

This paper includes week two exercises and your reading of Lipton.

5. 4/27 A FIELD THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: THE INTERACTION OF BIOLOGY AND PHYSICS

A. Reading Assignments

Sheldrake, Part III, 'Remote Viewing' and Part IV, 'The Seventh Sense'

How well do you think Sheldrake's field theory integrates biology and physics?

From your "Reading Assignments" File: **Meditation and Bx**

Additional Reference: [Hidden Messages in Water](#), by Masaru Emoto
[Beyond Words Pubs. Hillsboro Ore. 2004](#). Extensive evidence of the effect of thought on matter and some hypothesis about the nature of consciousness.

Some of you may be familiar with the work of Emoto using thought, prayer and intention to influence the crystallization of water. If you are browsing through a bookstore and are not familiar with Emoto, you might want to enjoy his photographs and consider the implications of his work for the study of consciousness.

B. Exercises

See the folder for your fourth week exercises.

C. Fourth Thought Paper due

This paper includes week three exercises and the first two parts of Sheldrake.

6. 5/04 MIDTERM EXAM

A. Reading Assignment

From your "Reading Assignments" File: **Experience of Meditation**

This week you have only the above file. For the exam you will have a choice of several questions that ask you to integrate the material you have read and what you have learned from the exercises. Exam questions may include some brief excerpts appropriate to the question.

B. Exercises

Please review the exercise for the midterm week before attempting the exam question. The exercise is to be done with the exam.

C. Fourth Thought Paper due

This paper includes week four exercises and the last two parts of Sheldrake. Since you are writing your exam this week, you will have no thought paper due next week. Your exam is due at that time.

7. 5/11 PHYSICS, BIOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

A. Reading Assignment

1. Please complete Talbot.

2. Braden, Gregg. The Divine Matrix: Bridging Time, Space, Miracles, and Belief. Hay House, 2006. ISBN13-978-1401905705

Part I, 'Discovering the Divine Matrix' and AS you read please ask, does Braden's work fit the empirical evidence cited by Lipton and Sheldrake? Are there any significant differences in their theoretical formulations?

B. Exercises

MIDTERM FOLLOW UP: "PART B"

There will be no requirement for a research paper for this course. Because the academic study of consciousness is inherently limited, we will be following up our midterm exercises and discussion on the nature of the self with several exercises that will run from the midterm until the final. You should include your observations on these exercises in your thought papers, and your final will ask for a summary of your observations.

The exercises ask you to observe two relationships, one more long term and more intimate and the other less intimate and much more limited in duration. The first relationship is any you choose: parent, child, God, Nature, spouse, spirit guide, inner child, girlfriend, boyfriend, etc. The first, more enduring,

relationship you choose for observation should be one that is presently active and one that you will be participating in over the next month or so while the second concerns your relationship to the online class. You are asked in each case to observe how you participate in that relationship to create your sense of self. For your online relationship I am also asking you to not only observe yourself but try to participate in a way that has not been characteristic of you in an effort to get more of a sense of what it is consciously like to create your self.

You do not have to share the content of your observations with me if you do not care to. I am interested in what you learn about the act of “selfing”, not what the content of that “selfing” is.

C. Exam due.

There is no thought paper due this week.

8. 5/18 AWARENESS AS THE MATRIX

A. Reading Assignment

1. Braden, Gregg. The Divine Matrix: Bridging Time, Space, Miracles, and Belief. Hay House, 2006. ISBN13-978-1401905705

Part II, ‘The Bridge between Imagination and Reality’ and Part III, ‘Messages from the Divine Matrix’. How convincing is Braden in his characterization of consciousness?

B. Exercises

Continue with your observation of “selfing”

C. Fifth Thought paper

This paper is to include the previous week’s reading and exercises.

9. 5/25 THE PARADIGM OF AWAKENING

A. Reading Assignment

Adyashanti. Emptiness Dancing. Sounds True, 2nd ed., 2006. ISBN 13-978-1591794592. Please read the text at your own pace so that you have completed it by the time of the final.

What is the source of the author's perceptions and understandings?

B. Exercises

See the appropriate folder for this week and continue your "selfing" observations.

C. Sixth Thought Paper

Your sixth thought paper reflects your previous exercises and readings.

10. 6/01 FINAL EXAM: INTEGRATION OF PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC WORK

Your exam is an exercise in integration of all your experiences in the course, and of what you understand as the eastern and western traditions of consciousness.

FOR THOSE IN PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS

For those of you in the psychology program your final exam will include some of the readings in your transpersonal text that I will ask you to look at in light of what you have learned.

Integration is a personal life task particularly important for both our spiritual growth and for our functioning as professionals. One of the most helpful things we can do is to examine our personal history and our own tradition of Western psychology carefully to understand our fundamental assumptions and the sources of our behavior. Doing so allows us to question those assumptions and be more aware of what we take for granted. The readings you will be asked to consider point the way to a deeper appreciation of the power of what our tradition offers and thereby encourages us to find areas of agreement with traditions from other cultures that also seek to understand and heal the human experience. Integration always produces more than the sum of its parts. You are invited in this course to see your personal growth as a continuous process that reflects itself in your capacity for integration

both within yourself and extending to your profession and the larger human community that is working its way to some fundamental shared values and understandings.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT IN THE PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM, YOUR EXAM WILL REFLECT THE EMPHASIS OF YOUR MAJOR.