

# CONTEMPLATION AND MEDITATION IN BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Plus

## THE ENCOUNTER OF WORLD RELIGIONS

Dr. James W. Jones

Spring 2015

Purpose: This seminar will: (1) expose students to some of the major meditative and contemplative practices found in Christianity and Buddhism; (2) Explore the historical contexts in which they developed, the models of human nature they imply, and some of the philosophical/theological discussions surrounding them; (3) provide a critical perspective on the contemporary Western use of these practices.

Instructor: Dr. Jones has earned doctorates in both Religious Studies and Clinical Psychology, as well as an honorary doctorate in theology from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He is distinguished professor of Religion and adjunct professor of Clinical Psychology at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He has been a lecturer in Psychiatry and Religion at Union Theological Seminary in New York; visiting Professor of Medical Humanities at the Graduate School of Drew University, and a visiting professor at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He is the author of twelve books and over twenty professional papers and book chapters. His books have been published both in the United States and Europe and translated in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Portuguese. He serves on the editorial boards of several publications both here and abroad. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and in 1993 at their annual convention, he received an award for his contributions to the psychology of religion. For six years he was co-chair of the Religion and Social Sciences Section of the American Academy of Religion. He was the vice-president of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion. He also maintains a private practice as a clinical psychologist. In addition he has extensive experience with spiritual practices in both the Christian and Buddhist traditions, has (along with his wife Dr. Kathleen Bishop) conducted retreats on Buddhist and Christian meditation, was a Fellow at the Nanzen Center for Religion and Culture (a major center for the Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Japan), and spent a week at a seminar on Buddhist philosophy with the Dalai Lama.

### Requirements

There are four requirements for this seminar: (1) Readings, (2) 1 page weekly papers (3) A term Paper, (4) Class Participation.

#### 1. Readings.

M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*. 2006, NY: Oxford University Press,

B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, 2007, NY: Columbia University Press,

A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, NY: Oxford University Press

R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 1998, NY: Oxford University Press

P. Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, 1989I, NY: Routledge

All additional readings are under resources on the Sakai site for these two courses.

2. Weekly Papers. To facilitate discussion, each week, starting with the second, each student is to bring a one page reaction paper to class. The first paragraph should summarize what you see as the most important points of the assigned reading and the second paragraph should raise some questions or issues for discussion. Papers will be graded and returned to you. All the papers are to be saved and handed in together at the end of class. [10% of final grade]

2. Term papers & presentations. Each student is required to write a 10 page paper on a topic relevant to this seminar. Each paper must contain at least the following three elements: (1) it must start with a paragraph or two clearly stating the topic and thesis of your paper; (2) it must clearly describe the religious issues you are focusing on; (3) it must then contain your own analysis and reflections comparing and contrasting the claims made. The paper will be written by process of multiple drafts. A brief (one paragraph) description of your proposed topic is due to the instructor no later than class on 2/10/15. A complete first draft of this essay is due the beginning of class on the Tuesday after spring break 3/24/15. No extensions will be given. Papers with comments will be returned to you. During the final weeks of class students will give each other feedback on their papers during the class. By noon on the Monday after the last day of class 4/4/15, students are to hand in both the final version of this essay taking account of the instructor's feedback on the first draft and the and the other students' comments during the class and the first draft with the instructor's comments. At this time they are also to hand in all of their weekly papers. [60% of final grade]

Note: No extensions will be given on any of the written assignments.

3. Class participation: Since this is a seminar, there will be a minimum of lectures and so class participation will be the major determinant of the final grade. No one will receive a passing grade who does not make a regular contribution to the class discussion. [30% of final grade]

Note: All cell phones, pagers, etc. must be turned off in class. Anyone whose device goes off during class will be asked to leave for the remainder of that period.

## Course Outline

### **1/20/15-Week 1: Introduction: Inter-religious Engagement**

Reading: [to be done before the first class] J W. Jones, *The Mirror of God*, chapters 1 & 2 [E-Reserve and delivered by Sakai]

### **Part One: Buddhism as a Contemplative Religion**

### **1/27/15-Week 2: "Meditation and the End of Suffering"—Early Buddhism**

[First weekly paper due today]

Readings: J W. Jones, *The Mirror of God*, chapter 3 [Sakai]

R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, chapters 1, 3, 6, 7

**2/3/15-Week 3: “Meditation and the Perfection of Wisdom”—The Great Mahayana**

Readings: R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, chapter 9  
 P. Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, chapters 2, 3, 8  
 “The Heart Sutra” [Sakai]

**2/10/15-Week 4: “The Taste of Emptiness”—Tantra and Meditation in Tibet**

Readings: P. Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, chapters 4, 9.  
 Selections from Dzogchen Ponlop, *Mind Beyond Death* (pp. 34-59) [Sakai]  
[Note: Seminar Paper topics due the start of class today]

**2/17/15-Week 5: “The Swans Come to the Lake”—Buddhist Meditation comes to the West**

Readings: H. Aronson, *Buddhist Practice on Western Ground*, Chapters 1, 4, 5[Sakai]  
 “The Legacy of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche”[Sakai]  
 “D. T. Suzuki” [Sakai]  
 R. Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake*, Chapter 16 [Sakai]

**Part Two: Christianity as a Contemplative Religion****2/24/15-Week 6: “The Cross in the Desert”—Meditation in Early Christianity**

Readings: “Sections from Evagrius Pontus and the Sayings of the Desert Fathers”  
 [Sakai]  
 A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, chapters 1, 4, 6

**3/3/15-Week 7: “Late Have I loved You, Oh Beauty so Ancient, yet so new”— Christian Neo-Platonism**

Readings: A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, chapters, 2,3, 7

**3/10/15-Week 8: “The Dark night of the Soul”—The Negative Way**

Readings: A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, chapters, chapters 8,9  
 “Selections from *The Cloud of Unknowing*” [Sakai]

**3/24/15-Week 9: “The Great Rediscovery”—Christian Contemplation Today**

Readings: M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, chapters 1-3  
 “Centering Prayer,” [Sakai]  
 [First Draft of seminar paper due at start of class today]

**Part Three: Contemplative Encounters****3/31/14-Week 10: “Contemplative Science”—Ancient Practice Meets Modern Concerns**

Readings: A. Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, Chapter 2, 3

**4/7/15 & 4/14/15-Weeks 11-12: Meditation and Ultimate Reality in Buddhism and Christianity**

Reading: A. Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, chapters 5, 7  
J. W. Jones, *The Mirror of God*, chapters 2 & 3 [E-Reserve]  
M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, chapters 4,5,6  
[Last weekly paper today]

**4/21/15 & 4/28/15-Weeks 13-14: Student Paper discussions and Conclusion**

**Monday 4/4/15-Final Version of Seminar Paper and all other written work due in the Religion Dept. office by noon today. No extensions will be given.**