

Rel 321: Yoga (Spring 2017)

Professor Luke Whitmore

(CCC 417, lwhitmor@uwsp.edu)

Office Hours: Tues. 3:30-5:30, Wed. 1:30-2:30 and by appointment.

Description

The philosophy and practice of yoga has been present in the world in various forms for well over two thousand years. Today the practice of yoga is a global phenomenon. It is possible to describe this phenomenon in one or more of the following ways: as a religious practice, as a spiritual practice, as a Hindu practice, as a Buddhist practice, as a Muslim practice, as a Sikh practice, as a Jewish practice, as a Christian practice, as a wellness practice, as a physical practice, as a moral practice, as a therapeutic practice, and as a meditative practice. In this class we will engage with the diverse pasts and presents of yoga in both intellectual and experiential ways.

Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to

- Describe and explain key terms and ideas connected to the philosophy and practice of yoga
- Critically evaluate current conversations about the nature of yoga practice today
- Critically evaluate current conversations about the history of yoga
- Explain why yoga-related practice is and has been experienced as powerful, meaningful, and transformative.

Course Texts: (Text Purchase)

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali trans. Edwin Bryant

Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture by Andrea Jain

Optional: *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*, trans. Barbara Stoler Miller

Requirements

Participation and Preparedness: 15%

Attendance: 5% (one unexcused absence is fine)

Journal: 15% (10 journal entries, one per week)

Take-Home Test: 15%

Short Essay: 25% (approx. 1000 words)

Yoga Sutra Project: 25%

Explanation of Journal Assignment:

There are two journal options. For the first, you will need to attend ten yoga classes of your choice over the course of the semester, one per week. Each journal entry will consist of a brief reflection (minimum 250 words, no maximum) that discusses your experience of that hour and where you saw connections to what we read and discussed for class that week. For the second, you will need to pick one or two books written about the experiences of yoga practitioners and read your selected work for one hour per week. The books are *Going Om: Real-Life Stories On and Off the Yoga Mat*, edited by Melissa Carroll and *Poser: My Life in Twenty-three Yoga Poses* by Claire Dederer. Your journal entry will consist of a brief

reflection that discusses what you read, your reactions to what you read, and where you saw connections to the class reading for that week. Journal entries are due by the beginning of class each week.

Explanation of the *Yoga Sutra* Project Assignment

Your final project will take the form of a commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*. You will pick ten verses from the *Yoga Sutra* that reflect a theme that you find meaningful, important, and useful and write your own commentary on each of those verses (minimum 1500 words in total, to be distributed in whatever way makes sense to you). In the production of this commentary you will use both what we have learned over the course of the semester and additional information that is the product of your own independent research, research that will be undertaken in consultation with me. The format of this assignment is designed to facilitate creative forms of research and interpretation and we will spend a good deal of time during the semester preparing you for this assignment. If you have an idea for an alternative way to create your commentary, please let me know.

Note: This is not the only assignment that connects to the *Yoga Sutra*. There will also be a question on the Unit 1 take-home test about the *Yoga Sutra*.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

If you are not able to turn in on time due to particularly extenuating circumstances, some flexibility may be possible. If this is the case, you must have asked and received permission from me no later than the day before the assignment is due. Without permission, a grade penalty will be assigned at my discretion or I may not allow you to submit.

REQUIRED READINGS

If I do not provide photocopies of an assigned reading not in one of our books, you must print out the reading (you will find PDF versions on our D2L site) and bring to class at a magnification you can actually read.

SMART PHONES

Please do not use a smart phone in class without permission. Tablets or laptops for the purposes of note-taking are fine, with permission. If I feel that your smart phone use is causing the collective energy of our class to decrease I will let you know. If it continues to be an issue it will impact your grade.

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments will change. Be sure to check D2L before each assignment.

ABSENCES

Everyone is automatically entitled to one unexcused absences. Anything beyond this should be discussed with me and will impact your final grade. If you miss more than three classes we will need to meet in person to discuss how class is going. Your presence and participation matter.

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

MUTUAL RESPECT (avoid bad *karmas*)

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/rightsCommBillRights.pdf>

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT (avoid bad *karmas*)

<http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

PERCENTAGE TO LETTER GRADE CONVERSION:

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower

Schedule of Assignments for Unit 1

Week 2 (Wednesday, February 1)

- The first twenty minutes of *Why We Breathe*:
<http://www.whywebreathe.com/features/>
- Russell Simmons, the Yoga King of Los Angeles
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/fashion/russell-simmons-yoga-los-angeles-tantris.html>
- *Selling Yoga* ix-xx, 1-19
 - Note: This is a big picture reading that covers a great deal of material. In following weeks we will go back through the landscape covered in this reading.
- *Yoga Sutra*
 - xvii-xix, xlv-xlvii
 - 1-1.4
 - You can encounter these verses in one of the following three ways
 - read p. 3-27, p. 475, p. 477
 - read p. 475 and p. 477
 - some of p. 3-27, p. 475, p. 477
- If you can, do your first journal entry this week.
- Please fill out the About Me document on D2L and submit it to the About Me dropbox.

Week 3 (Wednesday, February 8)

- The second twenty minutes of *Why We Breathe*.
- <https://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/yoga-hindu-origins>
- <https://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/yoga-public-school>
- *Yoga Sutra*
 - xix-xxx, xlvii-lii
 - 1.5-1.11
- journal entry
- excerpt from Katha Upanishad (PDF on D2L).

I have included the entire Katha Upanishad for those interested. In your preparation for class please focus on the following: 1.1-1.29; 6.1-6.18.

Week 4 (Wednesday, February 15)

- The rest of Why We Breathe
- *Yoga Sutra*
 - liii-lvii
 - 1.12-1.16
- journal entry
- selections from Yoga: The Art of Transformation (PDF on D2L)
 - "Jain Yoga: Non Violence of Karmic Purification"
 - "Yoga and Tapas: The Buddhists and the Ajivikas"
- "Establishing Mindfulness" (PDF on D2L)

Week 5: (Wednesday, February 22)

- Yoga Sutra
- 1.17-1.39. ***Read all of the verses first*** Then go back and work through the parts of the commentary that are useful to you.
- selections from the *Bhagavad Gita* (PDF on D2L)
- take-home test 1 handed out

Week 6: (Wednesday, March 1)

- take home test 2 due by the beginning of class to D2L
- beginning tantra
- and tantric Hinduism, hatha yoga

Week 7: (Wednesday, March 8)

- Yoga Sutra 2.1-2.13
- "Yoga in Transformation" (PDF on D2L -- print out in black and white and bring to class)
- "The Subtle Body" (PDF on D2L -- print out in black and white and bring to class).

These last two are wacky and difficult, but worth it. Read carefully.

- "Yoga in the Yoga Upanishads (PDF on D2L - print out and bring to class)
- "The Original Gorakshataka" (PDF on D2L - print out and bring to class)

Week 8 (Wednesday, March 15)

- Yoga Sutra 2.14-2.28
- "The Six-Phased Yoga of the Abbreviated Wheel of Time Tantra" (PDF on D2L)
- "Is Yoga Hindu" (Nicholson, PDF on D2L). *Note: This reading is optional* for this week but will be assigned (and will be part of the basis of an essay later in the semester. Feel free to read it now but we will not discuss it yet.
- Journal Entry
- Add several more rows to the Varieties of Yoga chart (available on D2L) yourself, using the information found in weeks 7-8. Bring a printed/digital copy of your version to class.

Week 9 (Wednesday, March 29)

- Yoga Sutra 2.29-2.46
- "Is Yoga Hindu" by Andrew Nicholson (PDF on D2L)

Week 10 (Wednesday, April 5)

- Yoga Sutra 2.47-3.7
- "Hinduism and Modernity" (PDF on D2L)
- Reread *Selling Yoga* ix-xx, 1-19
- "Company Paintings" and "Colonial Photography" (PDF on D2L)

Journals: It should, at this point, go without saying that you'll want to be keeping yourself on track, journal-wise, for the rest of the semester.

Week 11: Wednesday, April 12.

- *Selling Yoga* 20-72
- *Yoga Sutra* 3.8-3.16
- Sally Powell visits class.
- Handout and discussion of Short Essay Assignment. Discussion of Yoga Sutra Final Project.

Week 12: Wednesday, April 19.

- *Selling Yoga* 73-129
- Please prepare a paragraph-length written summary of each chapter from *Selling Yoga* that summarizes the arguments found in the chapter and mentions several of the main examples used.
- *Yoga Sutra* 3.17-3.55.

Week 13: Wednesday, April 26.

- *Selling Yoga* 130-173.
- Please prepare a paragraph-length written summary of each chapter from *Selling Yoga* that summarizes the arguments found in the chapter and mentions several of the main examples used.
- Discussion of *Yoga Sutra Project*.

Week 14: Wednesday, May 3.

- **Short Essay Due**
- Focus on *Yoga Sutra Project*
- Continue in class with *Yoga Sutra*.

Week 15: Wednesday, May 10.

- Concluding of *Yoga Sutra*.
- Final Conversations
- Each student should email me a 1-3 sentence written description of their final project by no later than 2 PM on Wednesday, May 10.

Yoga Sutra Final Project: Due to D2L dropbox by Wednesday, May 17 at 9:15 PM.