Contemplative Studies

The concentration in Contemplative Studies investigates the underlying philosophical, psychological, and scientific bases of human contemplative experience. Students pursue a “third person” academic approach drawn from the humanities and sciences to analyze the cultural, historical, and scientific underpinnings of contemplative experiences in religion, art, music, and literature. This is developed in combination with a “critical first-person” approach based in practical experience of contemplative techniques and methods to provide an integrated understanding of the role of contemplative thought and experience in societies and on the individuals who constitute them.

Concentration Core (6 courses total including Senior Capstone Seminar)

- COST 0100 Introduction to Contemplative Studies
- Two science courses that focus on the cognitive neurological functioning of the human brain and how contemplative practices affect it
  - Select one from the following list:
    - CLPS 0040 Mind and Brain: Introduction to Cognitive Neuroscience
    - CLPS 0200 Human Cognition
    - CLPS 0500 Perception and Mind
    - NEUR 0010 The Brain: An Introduction to Neuroscience
  - UNIV 0090 Meditation and the Brain: Applications in Basic and Clinical Science
  - UNIV 1000 Cognitive Neuroscience of Meditation
- Two humanities courses that introduce students to contemplative traditions and to the philosophical analysis of the key questions of human existence from following list:
  - ANTH 1240 Religion and Culture
  - CLAS 1120G The Idea of Self
  - CLAS 1140 Classical Philosophy of India
  - PHIL 0010 The Place of Persons
  - PHIL 0020 Mind and Matter
  - PHIL 0350 Ancient Philosophy
  - RELS 0040 Great Contemplative Traditions of Asia
  - RELS 0065 On Being Human: Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Self
  - RELS 0120 The Classical Chinese Philosophy of Life
  - RELS 0130 Religions of Classical India
- Senior Capstone Seminar (UNIV 1010)

Track Requirements (6 additional courses)

Students must complete either a Science or Humanities track in addition to the concentration core.

Science Track

The Science track in Contemplative Studies gives concentrators in-depth understanding of the scientific methods used to investigate the cognitive neuroscience of contemplative practice. Students will be taught how to critique current research as well as how to develop, operationalize, and test hypotheses related to contemplative practice. Students will become well-versed in how to study first-person reports related to the phenomenology of contemplative experience as a foundation for formulating third-person tests of the effects of practice on brain function and behavior. The Contemplative Studies Science Track trains students to investigate these types of questions not only for academic scholarship, but also to provide a method of self-inquiry that can be used to augment any area of life.

Honors Requirement

Students with a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the concentration may apply for entrance into the Honors program in the middle of their sixth semester. To apply, students submit a proposal for a senior thesis project describing the work to be undertaken and its relevance to the field of Contemplative Studies, along with a copy of their academic transcript. Students accepted into Honors must complete the required Capstone seminar, UNIV 1010, and enroll in an additional semester of independent study in their advisor’s department. Students must complete an Honors Thesis to the satisfaction of their advisor and present the results of their studies in formal talks or poster sessions open to all interested faculty and students.
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Helvética was used instead of Arial.
The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.