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 including the Senior Concentration Seminar)

COST 0100 Introduction to Contemplative Studies

Two introductory science courses addressing the biological, psychological, and neurological functioning of the human body/mind complex with health implications, and how contemplative practices affect it.

Select one from the following list:

- BIOL 0200 The Foundation of Living Systems
- CLPS 0200 Human Cognition
- CLPS 0500 Perception and Mind
- NEUR 0010 The Brain: An Introduction to Neuroscience

Select one from the following list:

- COST 0200 Meditation and the Brain
- COST 1020 Cognitive Neuroscience of Meditation
- COST 1080 Meditation, Mindfulness and Health

Two humanities courses that present important themes that can emerge from bringing a Contemplative Studies perspective to the study of contemplative religious traditions and to the philosophical analysis of the key questions of human existence.

- ANTH 1240 Religion and Culture
- CLAS 0990 Concepts of the Self in Classical Indian Literature
- CLAS 1120G The Idea of Self
- COST 0040 Great Contemplative Traditions of Asia or RELS 0040 Great Contemplative Traditions of Asia
- COST 0145 Karma, Rebirth and Liberation: Life and Death in South Asian Religions or RELS 0145 Karma, Rebirth and Liberation: Life and Death in South Asian Religions
- COST 0410 Engaged Buddhism
- COST 0420 The Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation
- COST 0425 The History and Practice of Yoga in India and Beyond
- COST 0450 Stages of the Contemplative Path
- PHIL 0010 The Place of Persons
- PHIL 0220 Introduction to Philosophy
- PHIL 0650 Psychology and Philosophy of Happiness
- PHIL 1520 Consciousness
- PHIL 1770 Philosophy of Mind
- RELS 0056 Spiritual But Not Religious: Making Spirituality in America
- RELS 0065 On Being Human: Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Self
- RELS 1370B Philosophy of Mysticism

Science Track

The Science track in Contemplative Studies gives concentrators a foundational understanding of the scientific methods used to investigate the biological, psychological, and neurological effects of contemplative practice and their potential implications on physical and mental health both for individuals and for the general public. 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.

Five thematic science courses, including a Capstone Course, drawn primarily from BIOL, COST, NEUR, CLPS, and PHP, at least one of which must include laboratory work and two of which must be 1000-level; and one Statistics course for a total of six courses.

The Capstone Course is intended to be a culmination of the students’ concentration in which they will bring to bear what their interests have been in developing their focused work in the program. The Capstone course can be either:

a. A one semester Independent Reading and Research course, either COST 1910 or 1920 or BIOL 1950 or 1960, depending on the semester; OR

b. A special project done within an existing Contemplative Studies core or related course at the 1000-level in which the student brings to bear the larger concerns of her concentration on a problem or issue within the course. It is expected that such Capstone research papers will be more substantial than a term paper.

- BIOL 0280 Biochemistry (lab)
- BIOL 0470 Genetics (lab)
- BIOL 0530 Principles of Immunology
- BIOL 0800 Principles of Physiology (lab)
- BIOL 1880 Comparative Biology of the Vertebrates
- CLPS 0700 Social Psychology
- CLPS 0710 The Psychology and Philosophy of Happiness
- CLPS 1193 Laboratory in Genes and Behavior
- CLPS 1194 Sleep and Chronobiology Research
- CLPS 1291 Computational Methods for Mind, Brain and Behavior
- CLPS 1400 The Neural Bases of Cognition
- CLPS 1490 Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging: Theory and Practice
- CLPS 1492 Computational Cognitive Neuroscience
- CLPS 1570 Perceptual Learning
- CLPS 1590 Visualizing Vision
- CLPS 1791 Laboratory in Social Cognition
- COST 0200 Meditation and the Brain
- COST 1020 Cognitive Neuroscience of Meditation
- COST 1080 Meditation, Mindfulness and Health
- NEUR 1020 Principles of Neurobiology

Others with approval

COST 1950 Senior Concentrators’ Seminar

Track Requirements (6 additional courses Including a Capstone Course)

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

Others with approval

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NEUR 1030  Neural Systems
NEUR 1540  Neurobiology of Learning and Memory
NEUR 1600  Experimental Neurobiology
NEUR 1940I Neural Correlates of Consciousness
PHP 1600 Obesity in the 21st Century: Causes, Consequences and Countermeasures
PHP 1920 Social Determinants of Health

Others with approval

One statistics course (others with approval) 1
APMA 0650 Essential Statistics
APMA 1650 Statistical Inference I
BIOL 0495 Statistical Analysis of Biological Data
CLPS 0900 Statistical Methods
EDUC 1100 Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods
PHP 1501 Essentials of Data Analysis

Humanities Track

The Humanities track explores the origin and development of contemplative practices within specific religious, cultural, and historical contexts and gives students a foundation in the Philosophy of Mind relevant to the scientific study of contemplative practice. Students will choose a concentration program that includes three intermediate and three advanced seminars drawn from the two areas below. While it is recommended that students focus primarily on one of these two areas, the precise balance of the individual concentration program for each student will be established with the concentration advisor when the student applies to enter the concentration, normally in their fourth semester of study.

Six courses, including a Capstone Course, from across the two areas below: 6

The Capstone Course is intended to be a culmination of the students' concentration in which they will bring to bear what their interests have been in developing their focused work in the program. The Capstone course can be either:

a. A one semester Independent Reading and Research course, either COST 1910 or 1920 OR BIOL 1950 or 1960, depending on the semester; OR

b. A special project done within an existing Contemplative Studies core or related course at the 1000-level in which the student brings to bear the larger concerns of her concentration on a problem or issue within the course. It is expected that such Capstone research papers will be more substantial than a term paper.

Contemplative Religious Traditions

CLAS 0210Y The Philosophy of Classical Indian Yoga
CLAS 0820 Epics of India
CLAS 0850 Mythology of India
CLAS 0990 Concepts of the Self in Classical Indian Literature
CLAS 0995 India’s Classical Performing Arts
CLAS 1140 Classical Philosophy of India
CLAS 1160 Classics of Indian Literature
COST 0145 Karma, Rebirth and Liberation: Life and Death in South Asian Religions
COST 0420 The Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation
COST 0530 Laozi and the Daodejing
COST 0550 Tibetan Buddhism and the West
COST 0955 The Bhagavad Gita (CLAS 0955)
EAST 0180 Japan: Nature, Ritual, and the Arts
EAST 1420 The Confucian Mind
EAST 1880D Early Daoist Syncretism: Zhuang Zi and Huainan Zi

RELS 0045  Buddhism and Death
RELS 0100  Buddhist Thought, Practice, and Society
RELS 0120  The Classical Chinese Philosophy of Life
RELS 1441  Zen Meditation in China, Korea, and Japan
RELS 0570  Science, Religion, and the Search for Happiness in Traditional Asian Thought
RELS 0580  Experiencing the Sacred: Embodiment and Aesthetics in South Asian Religions
RELS 1370B  Philosophy of Mysticism
RELS 1425  Buddhist Poetry
RELS 1440  The History, Philosophy, and Practice of Rinzai Zen Buddhism

The Philosophy of Mind

COST 1520  Consciousness
PHIL 0350  Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 0650  Psychology and Philosophy of Happiness
PHIL 0990L Valuing Persons
PHIL 0990M Descartes Meditations
PHIL 1290  Kant's Moral Philosophy
PHIL 1590  Philosophy of Science
PHIL 1650  Moral Theories
PHIL 1660  Metaphysics
PHIL 1720  Kant: The Critique of Pure Reason
PHIL 1750  Epistemology
PHIL 1770  Philosophy of Mind
PHIL 2150G Aristotle’s Metaphysics
UNIV 1520  The Shaping of World Views

Others with approval

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:

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