

CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE AND THE ART OF MEDICINE

Spring, 2001

Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, PhD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The culture of medicine is one that privileges active, conscious modes of knowing and being in the world. But medicine also acknowledges another kind of knowing—one that is less systematic, more inductive and perspectival, and essential for good clinical skills. The skills developed through contemplative practice hone and refine this ‘other’ kind of knowing. These skills of mindfulness contribute significantly to intuitive awareness, attentive listening, and effective problem solving, and above all, they help keep the physician centered while in the midst of the pressures and stresses of clinical work.

This course has two aims: to explore the ways in which contemplative-based forms of knowledge can facilitate a deeper understanding of one’s self, one’s world, and one’s work with patients, and to introduce a range of techniques of contemplative practice from the traditions of Vipassana (Theravada) Buddhism, Jesuit Christianity, and Quakerism. Methods for learning include journaling, reading assignments, writing haiku, classroom discussion, and participation in exercises led by invited guests whose knowledge of contemplative practice is founded in a particular religious tradition.

Course requirements include attendance at all classes, completion of assignments, participation in contemplative practice workshops (which will be held during class) and keeping a journal. Portions of this journal will be handed in at the end of class in place of a final essay.

SYLLABUS

WEEK I

Mon., Feb. 26. LISTENING

Introduction to course and to journaling. Discussion of contemplative practice in the context of contemplative ways of knowing throughout the Western tradition. Reading exercise using Gwendolyn Brooks’ poem, “The Explorer.”

Music: excerpt from Beethoven’s Quartet #15.

Wed., Feb. 28. SIGHT AND INSIGHT

Readings

Excerpts from Thoreau’s Walden, Annie Dillard’s For The Time Being, Peter Noll’s In The Face of Death, Thomas Merton’s Asian Journal, James Carse, “Breakfast at the Victory,” in Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience. New York: HarperCollins, 1994: 1-18

Thich Nhat Hanh, The Miracle of Mindfulness (excerpt)

Ronald M. Epstein, “Mindful Practice,” *JAMA* 282, 9 (Sept. 1, 1999): 833-839.

In class: Visual exercise using portraits by Eakins.

Music: Rabbi David Zeller, "Ruach."

WEEK II

Mon., Mar. 5: BUDDHIST TRADITION

Guest: Lynne Heckert, Mindfulness Meditation (Theravadan Buddhism). Cofounder of the Philadelphia Meditation Center and Community Dharma Leader of Spirit Rock Meditation Center, San Francisco.

Readings:

*Jon Kabat-Zinn. Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday

Life. New York: Hyperion, 1994

Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, Seeking the Heart of Wisdom. Part I

Lynne Heckert (handout)

Music: Nawang Khechog, Tibetan Flute Music

Wed., Mar. 7: QUAKER TRADITION

Guest: Nancy Bieber, Clerk of the Lancaster Friends Meeting; psychologist; spiritual director.

Readings:

William Taber, "Four Doors to Meeting for Worship," Wallingford, Pennsylvania.: Pendle Hill Publications, 1992.

Excerpt, Quaker Faith and Practice. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends: 1987.

Music: "Simple Gifts"

WEEK III

Mon., Mar. 12: JESUIT TRADITION

Invited Guests: Oliver Morgan, S.J., & Ellen Morgan, former Pastoral Counselor (Univ. of Scranton)

Readings:

Monika K. Hellwig, "Finding God in all Things: A Spirituality for Today." Sojourners Dec. 12, 1991. 11-16.

Ronald Modras, "The Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits," America. Feb. 4, 1995.

John Donne, "At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners" [poem]

Gerard Manly Hopkins, "The World is Full of the Glory of God" [poem]

Music: Allegri's "Misere Mei"

Wed., Mar. 14: HAIKU

Discussion of visitors over the last three sessions

Readings: Haiku selections

DH Lawrence, "Bavarian Gentians"

Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"

Music: Kohachiro Miyata's shakuhachi music

WEEK IV

Mon., Mar.19: HAIKU

Readings:

Haiku selections

Writing assignment: Haiku

Music: Native American flute music and a 'surprise' selection

Wed. Mar. 21: CONCLUSION.

Dinner at my home, with class afterwards. Students read from their journals; discussion of what we've learned from the course. Other activities to be decided by course participants.

* This reading must be purchased at the bookstore. All others will be provided as handouts. The Pendle Hill pamphlet will be provided as a loan.