

**STMA 520: Spiritualities: East and West**  
**Spring, Weekend Format, 2012-**  
**Weekend 1: March 24-25,**  
**Weekend 2: May 4 (evening 6:00-9:00), May 5 and 6-(9:00-4:00.)**  
**Instructors: Valerie Lesniak and Jamal Rahman**

### **Course Description:**

*“Until sight converges from more than one angle, the world looks as flat as a postcard. The rewards of having two eyes are practical; they keep us from bumping into chairs and enable us to judge the speed of approaching cars. But the final reward is the deepened view of the world itself.”*

*Houston Smith*

This course is designed to view **the spiritual life** from the different angles of several traditions. It will expose the participant to an **experiential appreciation** of the major traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam. The participants will design a personal spiritual program that incorporates practices and insights from these traditions. The course is an effort to aid the cultivation of *sapientia* as well as *scientia*, of wisdom and knowledge. To facilitate this end, classroom time will be divided between group process and discussion, teaching and actual prayer practice.

### **Course Objectives**

1. To develop an **appreciative understanding** of the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
2. To reflect on insight from the traditions that enhance and deepen one's own faith and beliefs.
3. To study, experience and then possibly incorporate worship practices, meditations, and techniques from different religions that blends in well with one's unique personal spiritual practices.
4. To experience a spaciousness in one's mind and heart by becoming aware of the wealth of insights and practices from the diverse traditions.

This course contributes to the following MATS learning outcomes:

- Ability to listen and respond to how the Spirit is active and alive in local, global and cosmic communities
- Ability to discern and nurture spiritual experience in relation to self and others
- Ability to be a responsive, discerning listener who can enter another's worldview

### **Required Reading:**

Easwaran, Eknath. **Meditation.** Nilgiri Press. 1991.  
0-915132-66-4

Brown, Patricia. **Paths to Prayer: Finding your Way to the Presence of God.** Jossey-Bass, 2003.  
0-7879-6565-0

Hanh, Thich Nhat. **Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers.** Riverhead Trade 2000.  
1-57322-8303/978-157-322-8305

MacKenzie, Donald, Falcon, Ted and Rahman, Jamal. **Religion Gone Astray: What we Found at the heart of Interfaith.** Skylight Paths, 2011.  
978-1594733178

Rahman, Jamal. **The Fragrance of Faith: The Enlightened Heart of Islam,** The Book Foundation, 2004.  
1-904510-08-6

Smith, Houston. **The Illustrated World Religions.** Harper. 1995.  
978-0060674403

**Prior to Weekend 1, - Students should acquaint themselves and start reading the books by Smith, Brown, Easwaran, Hanh and Rahman. By acquaint we mean read pertinent sections associated with the description of the scheduled themes of the block syllabus below. (i.e. Smith on Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism etc.) Please read MacKenzie et.al. pp. vii-14 "What we Found at the Heart of Interfaith."**

*Please do some type of note keeping, journaling, scrape booking, or highlighting of each of the texts so that you will be able to participate in class room discussions.*

**Prior to Weekend 2. - Students should read the entire books of MacKenzie et.al. and Hanh.**

**The Brown, Rahman, Easwaran, Hanh and Smith books will be used during both weekends.**

**Tentative Schedule: (Schedule may be changed and adapted at the discretion of the instructors to meet the learning needs of the participants.)**

**Weekend One:**

**Block One:** Introduction to course; expectations  
Introduction to spiritual teachings of  
Of the world religions: **Buddhism**

**Block Two:** Introduction to spiritual teachings of  
**Hinduism and Islam**

**Third Block:** Insights from the Spiritual traditions of **Sufism and Taoism**

**Fourth Block:** Experience of a variety of practices, meditations,  
Breathing techniques, chanting.  
Creating a spiritual practice that draws from several  
Traditions

**Weekend Two**

**First Block:** Experience of a variety of practices, meditations,  
Breathing techniques, body movements and chanting

**Block Two:** Reclaiming aspects of the traditions

**Block Three:** Divergence/Convergence within traditions

**Block Four:** Continuation of practice

**Block Five:** Practices continued and implications for ministry and  
Social justice and compassion

**Course Requirements:**

1. Class participation and a keeping of some type of notes or journal of readings and reflections about each type of practices engaged in the course.
2. Completion of Reading assignments.
3. Reflection Paper # 1: Dialogue with another tradition by conversing with someone of another tradition. **Due the beginning of the Second Weekend. (3-5 pages). More instructions will be given during the first sessions of the course.**
4. Reflection Paper #2 (3-5 pages)  
Drawing on the insights, techniques, rituals and practices discussed and experienced in class, design a personal spiritual practice that integrates spiritual traditions. Due date to be decided by the course participants in dialogue with instructors.

Grade Distribution:

Class Participation: 60%

Written Assignments: 40%

