Course Description
Meditation is a practice of sustained concentration that calms the body and quiets the mind. Research has shown that meditation can reduce stress-related issues such as anxiety, chronic pain, and sleep disorders. An ancient and universal tradition, meditation in present day has become increasingly popular, nearly trendy, resulting in greater access, yet also much confusion. This course is designed to clarify the aims and methods of meditation through both the study and the practice of the discipline. Each class meeting will consist of dialogue on the readings, theories, methods, and purposes of meditation, followed by meditation practices. By the end of the course, students will have a theoretical and embodied understanding of meditation practice and its benefits. They will emerge with a developed personal practice, equipped with tools of meditation to carry into their everyday lives, enhancing their own well-being and exuding peace to those around them.

Student Learning Objectives
*learn and integrate the study and practice of a variety of meditation techniques
*discover and refine one's personal, most effective meditation strategy
*develop the skills and discipline to successfully practice meditation, and to implement and sustain a regular time and place for the specific purpose of tapping inner wisdom
*increase focus, confidence, and calmness; eradicate negative thought patterns; reduce stress and anxiety; access inner contentment
*carry the benefits and tools of meditation into their everyday lives, enhancing their own well-being and exuding peace to those around them.

Five Questions this Course Asks
1. What is meditation and what is supposed to be “happening” while I’m meditating?
2. How will meditation help me in my daily life and with my career?
3. Who am I? What is my purpose in life? And why do these questions relate to meditation?
4. How do I meditate if I have racing thoughts? What happens when I regulate the relationship between thinking and breathing?
5. How will my personal meditation practice bring benefit to others around me?
Schedule/Outline of Topics

Unit 1
This unit offers an introduction to meditation practices, benefits and strategies, with emphasis on the power of thoughts and how to control them through breathing and strategies of concentration, such as mantra.

Unit 2
This unit introduces Meditation approaches and practices through the Yoga frameworks of Hatha/Kundalini, Bhakti, Raja/Sutras, and Jnana/Vedantic.

Unit 3
This unit applies meditation exercises and practices such as the divine light invocation and vipassana meditation, as well as examines applications such as meditation and creativity, meditation and healing, meditation and social justice.

Required Texts


*Thought Power* by Swami Sivananda ISBN: 81-7052-017-7


Additional readings provided on D2L

Required Materials
Blanket and/or Meditation Cushion
Yoga Mat
Notebook or Journal (the paper kind)

Course Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final Grading Scale

90-100% 450-500=A
80-89% 400-449=B
Assignment Descriptions

Participation
This course depends on the commitment and presence of each one of us. Your participation grade will reflect your contribution to fostering a positive learning environment both verbally and nonverbally. A good faith effort includes preparing for class by completing the readings and making notes of items to bring to discussion; respectful verbal and nonverbal participation in the discussions, and respectful listening to your classmates' ideas and opinions. **Informed contributions to the dialogue is required for a strong participation grade.** Being “present”—that is being mindful, focused and attuned to your own body during the dialogue and the meditation practices, practicing self-awareness and awareness of others around you—is an essential element to positive participation in this course.

Attendance
This course is about being ‘present’—present in your body, in the presence of others, in the classroom. Simply put, you cannot be present if you are not attending. The learning that happens during each class is embodied, experiential, and dialogic and cannot be made up, replicated, or substituted outside of class. Therefore, attendance is valuable and essential to success in this class. Each student may miss one class without penalty. For every absence thereafter, **25 points per absence will be deducted** from the student's final overall grade. **IMPORTANT: Three tardies equals one absence.** Leaving class early will result in additional point deductions. I will take attendance every class. In the event of an emergency, contact me as soon as possible.

**Basic classroom courtesies.**
**Please arrive on time.** We will begin each class with meditation, so late arrivals will be very disruptive. Being tardy will impact both your participation and attendance grades.
**No Cell Phone Use.** Please be sure your cell phones are silenced and put away before you enter the classroom. Cell phone use will result in a deduction of your participation grade.

**Journal:** To fulfill course requirements, you are required to keep a journal detailing self-reflections, embodied responses, and insights occurring during and from the meditation readings, meditation practices, discussions, and your personal practice. Your daily meditation journal should also track how long you meditated, time(s) of day, your setbacks and progress. You are required to turn in four journal entries throughout the semester that synthesizes your daily entries. **Journal Entries are due electronically on each due date before the start of class. No late journals will be accepted. No exceptions.**
The journals will be graded on their attention to three primary components (listed here and detailed more fully below): 1.) Text Portion, which includes writing on the readings and the associated themes, 2.) Reflection on Practice, Growth, and Setbacks, requiring an in-depth and specific critical self-reflection, and 3.) Adherence
to technical requirements such as word count. The Text Portion and Reflection portion do not necessarily need to be written as two separate sections if they emerge as organically integrated/mutually informing each other in your practice. Whether they are two sections or integrated as one, they must meet the following criteria:

1. **Text Portion.** Each journal assignment will be accompanied by themes/concepts specific to the readings. Your journal entry needs to address the theme(s) with specific examples and references to the readings, as you detail your critical reflections, insights, analysis, and interpretations. You must cite the texts and page numbers. If you do not address the themes and content of the readings, and if you do not cite your sources, you will receive significant point deductions. You must reference each of the readings assigned or points will be deducted.

2. **Self-Reflection.** This portion of your journal entry will consist of a critical self-reflection on your practice for each week, any growth, any observations, any new insights about yourself and your approach to the philosophies, practices, dialogues of that week. You may also incorporate into this journal entry (a typed version of) your handwritten journal insights that emerge in your classroom journaling sessions. Note that this handwritten journaling session is the beginning of your week’s practice and only a partial component of the entire week. By the end of the week, be sure you are noting any differences, contrasts, deepenings, set-backs, etc. that emerged during the week, and offer your reflections into why. Allow this segment of your writing be a method of inquiry. In other words, allow yourself to learn even more as you are writing. This segment is not just a “report” or “summary” of the week, but an integration of your insights and epiphanies that emerge through a combination of your embodied practice and your contemplative/academic study of the components of yoga of that week. You will be graded on your depth, specificity, detail of examples, and degree of critical self-reflection. Note that I have a very good eye for fluff and filler. Don’t do this. Be real, be honest and authentic with yourself, in your self-reflecting and in your writing. This is how we grow everyday into our best selves.

3. **Technical Requirements.** Each journal entry must be a minimum of 1000 words and must be typed. If your entries are less than 1000 words, you will receive automatic point deductions. (Note: You may have more than 1000 words.) Your writing must be University-level, proof-read, free of typos, and free of grammatical and mechanical errors.

**Final Essay:** You are required to write an 8-10 page double-spaced researched, critical self-reflection of your meditation journey, integrating insights and impacts of the course that arose through your practices of the meditation approaches and theories, and from the readings. The essay must cite and incorporate research, reference the readings and offer clear, concrete examples of how and what you learned. The essay must be organized around a particular theme, concept, practice, or philosophy from the readings and course content that may have emerged during your journey. The essay must contain a synthesis of your research, your embodied experience/practice, and critical self-reflexivity on your journey.
Course Calendar

The first half of every class will be comprised of Pranayama (breathing exercises) and Meditation (guided and/or silent), followed by journaling and dialogue on the readings for that week.

Week 1  Introduction
Week 2  Why Meditate; Meditation Basics; Concentration: Theory and Practice.
Week 3  Mastering Meditation; Japa Meditation: Theory and Practice.
Week 4  Mantras: Words of Power; Thought Power
Week 5  Bhakti Yoga Meditation; Metta Meditation exercises
Week 6  Raja Yoga Sutras: Theory & Practice; pranayama; kirtan
Week 7  Hatha Yoga Meditation: Kundalini & Chakras; Chakra Meditation
Week 8  Jnana Yoga Meditation: Vedantic Theory & Practice; vipassana
Week 9  Divine Light Invocation; divine light exercises
Week 10 Light and Vibration; Yoga Nidra
Week 11 Meditation and Creativity
Week 12 Meditation and Healing
Week 13 Meditation Obstacles
Week 14 Meditation Experiences
Week 15 Synthesis
Week 16 Final Exam Period
How this course provides a unique educational experience, appropriate for Honors students at SIUC

This course, Meditation Practice and Theory, provides the tools necessary to cultivate and sustain mental focus, clarity, and calm—qualities that will significantly benefit Honors students, who are typically high achievers tending to adhere to demanding schedules, rigorous levels of self-discipline, and self-imposed expectations of perfection. Meditation has been scientifically proven to provide many physical and mental health benefits including reducing anxiety and increasing overall feelings of confidence and well-being. The elevation of stress and anxiety among college students, combined with increased technology usage and multi-tasking behaviors, are creating conditions where it’s becoming increasingly difficult for students to stay focused. Meditation is a tool that teaches us how to focus our mind and sustain our concentration. By extension then, we learn how to control our thoughts and emotions, thereby remaining in a state of equanimity and centeredness. Meditation teaches us that though we may not be able to control everything that comes our way, we can learn how to control how we respond to the situation. In this way, students learn to remain centered and present with whatever discomforts and stressors they are faced with. These skills are more essential than ever in today’s world. This course in meditation is a unique educational experience as it provides not only a theory and a practice for personal health and well-being, but it also has potential impact on the larger culture by cultivating a skillset for effective leadership that Honors students learn to embody and carry with them into their careers and communities. The students who master these skills will not only benefit personally, they will benefit those around them.