

RELI 106  
PRAYER, MEDITATION, TRANCE AND ECSTASY: A  
STUDY OF THE TECHNIQUES OF SPIRITUAL  
TRANSFORMATIONS



This course explores the spiritual understandings that come not through doctrines, but rather through ways of living.

SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
Trimester one 2008

## RELI 106

### PRAYER, MEDITATION, TRANCE AND ECSTASY: A STUDY OF THE TECHNIQUES OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

**Course co-ordinator:** Dr Joseph Bulbulia,  
Hunter 322; tel: 463 5043

**Where and when:** Lectures: Maclaurin 101  
Thursday 10:00 am – 11:50 am  
Tutorials: Times and location to be advised

Religious Studies is located in the Hunter building. The programme administrator, Alik Kalliabetsos, can be found in HU 318 on 463 5299. Her email is [aliki.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:aliki.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz)

**Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the department notice board outside her office.**

**Office Hours:** The main office is open Monday - Thursday, 9.30 am 12 noon and 2:00 - 3.30 pm. Dr. Bulbulia's office hours are **Friday 2-3pm or by appointment**

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#### *Course outline*

##### **1 The course aims:**

This paper explores different models of mind, body and spirit and the ways in which spiritual practices (including rituals, bodily postures and training, drugs and music) are used to shape individual and collective understanding and experience.

While we do not try to present a comprehensive overview of all such models and practices, our selection is not random. We want to expose you to religious and spiritual dimensions of practices you may already engage in, as well as to ways of thinking and acting that you have never before encountered. Our sample aims to make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar. We use film, music, slides and an array of guest speakers to convey a sense of how religious practices generate spiritual understandings for those who participate in them.

There are two perspectives on the material that we take up in each class. From the descriptive perspective, we consider how religious and spiritual persons pray, meditate, and enter into trances and states of ecstasy. We also consider what such persons have to say about these practices and states. Viewing the phenomena from this aspect, we try to capture what these practices and states are like “from the inside,” from the vantage point of spiritual and religious practitioners themselves. The theoretical perspective considers how scholars in the humanities and social sciences, viewing these practices and states at one pace removed – that is, theoretically or “from the outside” -- make historical, political and psychological sense of them. Students are not expected to believe that either the spiritual or scholarly viewpoint has cornered the market on the truth.

There are no prerequisites to enrolling in this course.

## **2 Course objectives are:**

### **Content objectives**

- to survey and assess how different practices shape individual and collective spiritual experience.
- to explore different modes of mind, body, and spirit that inform and arise out of these practices.

### **Academic skills objectives**

- to introduce students to research methodology and practice
- to enhance critical reading and academic writing skills
- to foster creative thought
- to cultivate discursive decorum by presenting students with opportunities to express their opinions about religious matters to others who may not share their basic religious (or unreligious) assumptions.

**Discipline-focused objectives:**

- to examine certain influential theories of religion and apply them to spiritual practice and experience in an effort to gain theoretical, historical, and conceptual understanding.
- to use religious and spiritual insight and awareness as a means of evaluating and critiquing those influential theories.

**3 Rationale for assessment:** The assessment of this course relates directly to these objectives.

**The weekly in-class quizzes** are meant to ensure that students read and think about the required readings prior to lecture.

**The essay outline** serves several functions. Most immediately, it motivates students to think about and properly research their paper topics early, well in advance of the final due date. It also breaks down the research process, which can be daunting, into smaller manageable tasks. Finally, gives students the opportunity to obtain advice and feedback from their tutors and the lecturer well in advance of completing their essays.

**The essay** allows students to apply their analytical skills to information retrieved through library research on a set topic. Essays demonstrate the students' level of proficiency in finding, understanding, and using sources. They develop the skills of critical reading, analysis and organizing material necessary for continued study. The process also gives them the opportunity to develop a more in-depth knowledge of an area covered in the lectures and weekly readings.

**The test** allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the material presented in the course and presents students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning process throughout the term.

Students who do not understand the grades they have been assigned or are concerned about their progress are encouraged to meet with their tutors for a discussion.

- 4 **The lecture programme** follows. Lectures may be varied from time to time. As much notice as possible will be given when changes occur and, if necessary a revised programme will be issued at lectures.
- 5 **Tutorials are held weekly** and attendance at 80% of these is mandatory. Tutorials deal with topics which complement the lecture programme and they provide an opportunity to discuss aspects of the course in a small group and develop the ability to contribute to discussions. There are 9 tutorial sessions. Please note: tutorials will cover reading material prior to the lecture that covers that material.
- 6 **The course is internally assessed** by means of the following:
- **1 detailed final-essay outline: 1000 words, due April 4<sup>th</sup> 2008, worth 20% of the final grade.** [Instructions to follow in class and on blackboard.]
  - **1 final essay of 2,500 words, due May 16<sup>th</sup> 2008, worth 30% of the final grade.** [Instructions to follow in class and on blackboard.]
  - **5 RANDOM quizzes** (only the top 4 counting for the final quiz mark) worth 20% of the final grade.
  - **a class test** worth 30% of the final grade

**The mandatory course requirements are as follows:** The completion of the final test, submission of a detailed essay outline and a final essay, attendance at 80% of tutorials.

- 7 **Required text:** There is no set textbook. The *RELI 106 Course Reader* should be obtained from the Student Notes shop at a cost of approximately \$30.
- 8 **Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences):** For 100-level 18 points one trimester courses, 12 hours per week are recommended. An average student should spend 9 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and tutorials.

[100 – level                      1 trimester                      18 points                      12 hours ]

**9 Aegrotat regulations** apply to internally assessed courses. Students who are ill, or who have difficult personal circumstances may be having problems completing assessment. The aegrotat provisions apply to all courses and apply to assessment which falls within the last three weeks of teaching or the final examination period, including preparation time for final tests and examinations.

Aegrotat provisions are detailed in section 4.5 of the Assessment Statute (*2008 Calendar*, p. 101) and also on p. 23 of the *2006 Assessment Handbook*. Students can refer to the University's website for further information: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/timetables/aegrotat.aspx>.

Application forms and information pamphlets should be obtained from the Faculty Student and Academic Services Office (MY 411) or the Manager, Student & Academic Services (MY 410).

## **10 General University statutes and policies**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the VUW homepage at:

[http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/calendar\\_intro.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html)

Information on the following topics is available electronically at:

[http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/downloads/course\\_outlines\\_general\\_information.pdf](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/downloads/course_outlines_general_information.pdf)

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student support

## 11 Academic grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances)

## 12 Student and staff conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct)

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct)

## 13 Students with Impairments (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070 email: [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz)

The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

## 14 Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contacts are

**Dr Stuart Brock, Murphy Building, room 312.** Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Māori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

### *Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme*

This programme offers:

- Academic mentoring for all Māori & Pacific students at all levels of undergraduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social Sciences. Contact [Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses
- Postgraduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities
- Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact; [Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 5842.

Manaaki Pihipihinga is located at: 14 Kelburn Parade, back court yard, Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year Commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Māori Studies mentoring is done at the marae.

### *Student Services*

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz)) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/)

VUWSA employs Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz)) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.



- 15 Taping of Lectures:** All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use audio-tapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form which advises of copy right and other relevant issues.
- 16 Use of Turnitin:** Student work provided for assessment in this course *may be* checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. *At the discretion of the School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin.* You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.
- 17 Class representatives:** Class representatives are elected in the first week or two of the term. They are supported by the VUW Students' Association, and have a variety of roles, including assistance with grievances and student feedback to staff and VUWSA. Contact details for your class rep will be listed on the Religious Studies notice board.
- 19 Student Learning Support Services:** A range of workshops, drop-ins and other assistance is provided by SLSS, covering such things as study techniques, essay writing, exam preparation and note taking skills. They are at 14 Kelburn Parade, tel: 463 5999
- 20 Supplementary Materials:** A website of materials related to RELI 106 is being maintained in Blackboard. You can find it by visiting <http://blackboard@vuw.ac.nz>. Your user name is the one issued to you by Student Computing Services. Your password is your Student ID Number. If in doubt, please contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk, 463-6666 (extension 6666 from VUW phones) or by email [scs-help@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:scs-help@vuw.ac.nz)
- 21 For guidance in essay writing** and presentation of bibliographies, please refer to Religious Studies guidelines for essays, attached.
- 23 Evaluation:** This course will be assessed by UTDC

## *Lecture Programme*

28 February Introduction to the Course

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

6 March Kabbalah Rising: Jewish Mysticism, Knowledge, and Celebrity Culture

13 March Islamic Mysticism and The Whirling Dervishes

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia & Art Buehler (VUW Religious Studies)

20 March Yoga and Immortality

Lecturer: Rick Weiss (VUW Religious Studies)

27 March The Body of Tantra

Lecturer: Rick Weiss (VUW Religious Studies)

3<sup>rd</sup> April Psychedelic Drugs and Religious Experience

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

10th April Religion and Sacrifice: Comparing Aztec and Christian Sacrifice

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

**Mid term break 14 April – 27 April 2008**

1st May Buddhism, Meditation and the Brain Sciences

Lecturers: Joseph Bulbulia and Michael Raddich (VUW Religious Studies)

8th May Healing through Trance and Dance: !Kung Healers and Contemporary Dance Music

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

15th May **Life on earth everlasting: the anti-ageist movement as spiritual transformation?**

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

22nd May **Course Review, Test Preparation, Student Evaluations**

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

29th May **CLASS TEST IN REGULAR LECTURE ROOM AND TIME**

## *Essays*

The essays should be a thoughtful treatment of a well-defined topic, based on your own thinking and research.

The required readings may be used as sources for the essays, but **you must consult at least three other sources**. Once you have completed the library assignment, you will be well on the way with your research. Additional reading suggestions will be given out in lectures.

Encyclopaedias such as *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1987) in the Reference Reading Room in the library can be helpful as each article also contains a bibliography, but **the research for the essay must extend beyond such sources**.

### **Submission of essays and assignments**

Essays and assignments must be placed in the locked assignment box located near the programme administrator's office (Hunter 318) and students must date and sign the essay register when submitting an essay. **No responsibility will be taken for assignments for which there is no record.** Students should keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.

### **Due dates:**

- A **1000 word DETAILED ESSAY OUTLINE** to be submitted by 4:00pm **4<sup>th</sup> April 2008** in the essay box near HU 318
- A **2,500 word FINAL ESSAY** to be submitted by 4:00pm **16<sup>th</sup> May 2008** in The essay box near HU 318
- There will be **5 quizzes**, best 4 to count
- There is a final test on **29<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

**Penalties for late essays / assignments:**

- 1 percent point per 24 hours will be deducted for late essays, up to 2 weeks from due date
- to avoid these deductions an extension may be sought with an explanation in writing. The reason for the extension does not need to be medical; in the event that it is, a medical certificate must be submitted
- requests for extensions may be made to the tutor or the course co-ordinator
- Work received later than 2 weeks from due date will not be marked.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:**

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means **no cheating**. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. Plagiarism is **prohibited** at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows: **Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.**

**'Someone else's work'** means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.

**Plagiarism is not worth the risk.**

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct ([www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct)) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- suspension from class or university
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course.

**Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at:**

**[www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html)**

## **How to cite books, articles and internet resources for essays in Religious Studies**

It is mandatory to use a correct citation style in academic writing. The departmental standard in Religious Studies at VUW is the version of Chicago Style most usually found in the humanities, as defined in *The Chicago Manual of Style 15th ed. rev.* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). The full guide (a hefty volume) is available in the VUW library (ask at the Reference desk), at Call No. Z253 C532 15ed. However, the following information will be sufficient for most of your basic needs.

NOTE that the citation style differs for a footnote and the bibliography at the end of your essay. For each type of source, we have listed each example in both forms.

NOTE ALSO that this format is (confusingly) often NOT followed exactly in your Course Outline! This problem will be rectified in future years; for the present, please do not use the Course Outline citations as your model.

Some of the details used in these examples have been modified, and some sources therefore do not really exist in the form given below.

### **Book – single author**

#### **Footnote:**

T. N. Madan, *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 38.

#### **Bibliography:**

Madan, T. N. *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

### **Book – two or three authors**

#### **Footnote:**

Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1997), 113.

#### **Bibliography:**

Robinson, Richard H., and Willard L. Johnson. *The Buddhist Religion: An Historical Introduction*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1997.

### **Journal article – single author**

#### **Footnote:**

Abe Masao, trans., "Shobogenzo Genjokoan," *The Eastern Buddhist* 5:2 (October 1972): 132.

#### **Bibliography:**

Abe, Masao, trans. "Shobogenzo Genjokoan." *The Eastern Buddhist* 5:2 (October 1972): 129-140.

### **Journal article – two or three authors**

#### **Footnote:**

Helen Hardacre and Abe Yoshiya, "Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan: trends and methods," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5:1 (1978): 18.

#### **Bibliography:**

Hardacre, Helen, and Abe Yoshiya. "Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan: trends and methods." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5:1 (1978): 5-27.

### **Web site**

#### **Footnote:**

Bhikkhu Thanissaro, trans., "Bhikkhu Patimokkha: The Bhikkhus' Code of Discipline," <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/vin/sv/bhikkhu-pati.html> (accessed July 26 2006).

#### **Bibliography:**

Bhikkhu, Thanissaro, trans. "Bhikkhu Patimokkha: The Bhikkhus' Code of Discipline." <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/vin/sv/bhikkhu-pati.html> (accessed July 26 2006).

### **How to cite in the body of your essay**

When you refer to one of your sources in the course of your argument, you should always give your source in a footnote, which is indicated by a superscript number attached to the appropriate part of the sentence. Note that some other stylistic conventions use what is called "in-text citation", where references are given in parentheses at the end of the sentence; you will see this method of citation often as you read. **HOWEVER, IN-TEXT CITATION IS NOT PART OF THE CHICAGO STYLE INTRODUCED HERE**, and you should consistently use footnotes indicated by superscript numbers ONLY.

Footnote style has been given above. Note that footnote numbers should always come *after* any punctuation mark at the end of the word they attach to; thus, it is correct to write a footnote like this,<sup>1</sup> but wrong to write it like this<sup>2</sup>. One of the advantages of superscript numbered footnoting is that it allows you to make tangential comments, as in this example.<sup>3</sup>

When you refer to the same source several times in a row,<sup>4</sup> you can use *ibid* and the page number.<sup>5</sup> If it is the same page number, then *ibid.* is sufficient.

If you cite source A, then cite one or more other sources,<sup>6</sup> and then return to source A,<sup>7</sup> it is best to repeat only the author's name,<sup>8</sup> a shortened title, and the page number cited,<sup>9</sup> rather than to repeat the full citation.

In other words, only use abbreviated citations where you are citing the same source more than one time. Avoid old abbreviations like *loc. cit.*, *op. cit.*, and so on, which can require the reader to keep track of sources over a number of references and pages, and are thus confusing.

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<sup>1</sup> Random footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Random footnote.

<sup>3</sup> Constance Prevarication, *The Book of Tangential Comments* (Dargaville: Primrose Path Publications, 2004), 27. It is interesting to note that in this recent work, Prevarication reverses her previous hard-line stance on the literary sidetrack, and not only countenances it in principle, but herself indulges in it extensively in practice.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* [this means it is page 27 exactly like the preceding footnote]

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. [This means it is the same source with a different page number]

<sup>6</sup> T. N. Madan, *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 38.

<sup>7</sup> Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1997), 113.

<sup>8</sup> T. N. Madan, *Non-Renunciation*, 38-40

<sup>9</sup> Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, p. 113.