

CONTEMPLATIVE LITERATURE EAST AND WEST

Comparative Literature/Chinese

(Fulfills GENERAL EDUCATION requirement)

University of Massachusetts

Fall 1987

Instructor: Professor Lucien Miller

COURSE INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION: A critical reading of contemplative literature from Buddhist, Taoist, Jewish and Christian traditions. The imaginative presentation of emptiness, self and salvation in selected Eastern and Western texts. How contemplatives and contemporary seekers from different traditions perceive ultimate reality, and how writers evoke the absolute through language and literature.

ORGANIZATION: lecture/discussion

STUDENT WORK: two 6 page papers (20% each); midterm (20%); final examination or term paper 15 pages (30%); attendance, participation in discussion, and quizzes (10%). Make-up critiques due first class after absence.

DEADLINES: Friday, Sept 18 Introductory Paper "My Encounter" (no grade); Wednesday October 14 Paper I; Friday November 20 Midterm; Friday December 11 Paper II; Final Exam/Paper Date to be announced.

PREREQUISITES: None.

ADDED NOTES: 1) Foreign language works read in English translation. Comparative Literature or Chinese majors read selected works in original. 2) Guest speakers from various contemplative traditions. 3) Paper Re-writes welcome. 4) You are encouraged to practice some form of prayer or meditation daily.

EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS: Voluntary overnight **field trip** to monastic community. **Service project:** companion 1 hour per week with disadvantaged; group meeting bi-monthly; oral report "Contemplation & Service". **Creative project:** weekly work (writing, composition, choreography, photography); end of semester performance, exhibit, publication; oral report "Contemplation & Creativity".

MEETING DAYS AND TIMES: MWF 11:15-12:05

REQUIRED TEXTS

Books:

Easwaren **The Dhammapada** Inland Book Co/Nilgiri

Lin Lao Tzu's **Tao Te Ching & Wang Pi's Commentary** Michigan

Kierkegaard **Fear & Trembling** Penguin

Geshe Wangal **Door of Liberation** Lotsawa

Theresa of Avila **Interior Castle** Doubleday

Thomas Merton **Way of Chuang Tzu** New Directions

XEROX LIST

Text excerpts listed in order of reading:

HEBREW BIBLE [Old Testament]:
from **the Jerusalem Bible: Reader's Edition**

Genesis, chapters 1-3 [Creation; Adam & Eve]
chapter 22 [The Unbinding]

Exodus, chapter 3 [Burning Bush]
chapters 19-20 [Theophany]

Jonah, chapters 1-3

Psalms 1, 5, 42, 50, 62, 64, 87, 89, 120, 138, 148, 150,
[from **The Psalms: Singing Version**]

NEW TESTAMENT: Gospel of **Matthew** [from **Jerusalem Bible**]

What the Buddha Taught [Rapola Rahula]
"Ikkyu's Skeletons" [Frederick Frank The Buddha Eye]

Buddha is the Center of Gravity [Joshu Sasaki Roshi]

Tales of a Magic Monastery [Theophane the Monk]

"Wisdom in Emptiness" [D. T. Suzuki, Thomas Merton **Zen and Birds of Appetite**]

"On Christianity and Zen" [Yamada Koun, **Japan Quarterly**]

"The Christian Contribution to the Life of Prayer in the Church of Asia" [Ichiro Okumura **FABC Papers**]

COURSE OUTLINE

I. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD (1 Week)

Adam & Eve, Abraham & Isaac [**Genesis**]
Moses [**Exodus**] & Jonah

II. SACRED SCRIPTURES: WORD-IDEA & WORD-EVENT (5 Weeks)
Psalms, Gospel of Matthew, Dhammapada, Tao Te Ching

III. POET, GURU & SAINT: PARTING THE WAY (5 Weeks)
Kierkegaard **Fear & Trembling**, Ikkyu's **Skeletons**, **Sasaki Roshi**
Buddha is the Center of Gravity, Geshe Wangal **Door of Liberation**, Saint Teresa of Avila **Interior Castle**

IV. ENCOUNTERS EAST & WEST (3 Weeks)
Merton **Way of Chuang Tzu**, D. T. Suzuki & Merton "Wisdom in Emptiness," Yamada Koun "On Christianity & Zen,"
Ichiro Okumura "Christian Contribution," Theophane the Monk
Magic Monastery

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ABSOLUTE

Week 1: Introduction to Course
Religious Experience in the Bible
William James **Varieties of Religious Experience**
Reading: Genesis 1-3, 22; **Exodus** 3, 19-20, **Jonah**

II. SACRED SCRIPTURES: WORD-IDEA & WORD-EVENT

Week 2: Word-Idea and Word-Event
Oral Art
Shigeto Oshida, Takamori Community, Japan
Walter Ong
Reading: **Psalms** & Handouts (Buddhist & Christian chants)
Paper Due: F 9/18 "My Encounter" (2 pages, ungraded)

Week 3: Inspiration and Translation
Jerusalem Commentary, John Henry Newman
Sacred Texts: Buddhist, Taoist, Biblical
Conze, Robinson, Welch
Reading: 1/4 **Matthew, Dhammapada, Tao Te Ching**
"Probable-Possible My Black Hen" [handout]

Week 4: The Way: Buddha **Dharma**
Rahula, Robinson
The Way: Tao
Welch, Wilhelm, Jung
Reading: 2/3 **Dhammapada & Tao Te Ching**

Week 5: The Way: Jesus Christ

Piper

The Sacred Text as Word-Event: **Dhammapada & Matthew**

Week 6: Enlightenment through Reading

Parable, Paradox and Ultimate Reality

Reading: finish **Matthew, Tao Te Ching**

Holiday: Monday October 12

Paper I due: Wednesday October 14

Guest Speaker: Friday October 16

III. POET, GURU & SAINT: PARTING THE WAY

Week 7: Reader Response Theory

Iser, Ruthrof

The Master-Disciple Relation

Saint Benedict, Roshi

Reading: 1/2 **Budda is the Center of Gravity**

1/2 **Interior Castle**

Week 8: Christian Mystical Prayer

Piper

Zen Practice

Aitkin, Suzuki

Reading: finish **Center & Castle**

Week 9: The Dialectic of Logic & the Absurd

Parable and Sermon

Reading: 1/3 **Fear & Tembling, Door of Liberation**

Week 10: The Teacher & the Knight

Story-telling and the Guidebook

Holiday: Wednesday November 11

Reading: 2/3 **Fear & Trembling, Door**

Week 11: Recreating Traditions

The Creative Reader

Midterm: Friday November 20

Reading: 3/3 **Fear & Tembling, Door, Ikkyu's Skeletons**

IV. ENCOUNTERS EAST AND WEST

Week 12: Buddha Moves West

Thanksgiving Holiday: Thursday November 28

Reading: **Magic Monastery**

Week 13: Taoist Hermit and Christian Monk

Zen and Contemplation

Guest Speaker: Friday December 4

Reading: 1/2 Way of Chuang Tzu, "On Christianity & Zen,"
"Christian Contribution"

Week 14: Adam and Eve

The End as a Beginning

Paper II due: Friday December 11

Reading: 2/2 **Way of Chuang Tzu**, "Wisdom in Emptiness"

Last class: Monday December 14

FINAL EXAMINATION OR PAPER: DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED