

## Class Meetings & Work Schedule during Fall 2016

### Mindfulness Meditation and Buddhist Teachings: A Path to Insight, Peace, and Wisdom

A number of Buddhist teachings are discussed in Gil Fronsdal, *The Issue at Hand: Essays on Buddhist Mindfulness Practice*, and in my book, *Blinding Pain, Simple Truth: Changing Your Life Through Buddhist Meditation*. There are also numerous other print and online resources.

The Biblical narratives that we will read in this course are discussed in *Blinding Pain, Simple Truth*: Jacob in chapter 4 (“Face to Face with Jacob”), the creation and Garden of Eden in chapter 5 (“Conceptual Thinking Banishes Us from Eden”), and Book of Job in chapter 6 (“Becoming Job: Going Beyond Words”). There are also numerous other print and online resources.

For each narrative in Genesis that we discuss in class, if you have time, then please read before the relevant class the commentary by Richard Elliott Friedman in *Commentary on the Torah*.

There are documents listed on the course webpage under “Additional material to be discussed in class.” **These documents are optional. Please read them before the relevant class only if you have time.** Copies will be distributed in class.

#### Week 1 (September 12)

##### Topics for Discussion:

- 1) Your expectations concerning this course
- 2) Introduction to mindfulness meditation and the Four Noble Truths (the Buddha: “I teach one thing and one thing only, suffering [*dukkha*] and the end of suffering.”)
- 3) Introduction to the Torah

##### Reading:

- 1) *The Issue at Hand*, pages 1–11: the Four Noble Truths
- 2) Genesis, chapter 22 (22:1–24): the binding and near-sacrifice of Isaac
- 3) [Blinding Pain, Simple Truth, pages 14–16](#): introduction to the Torah

#### Week 2 (September 19)

##### Topics for Discussion:

- 1) Mindfulness of breathing
- 2) Biblical Hebrew and narrative technique in the Torah
- 3) The life of Jacob, part 1

##### Readings:

- 1) *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, pages 6–18: mindfulness of breathing
- 2) [Blinding Pain, Simple Truth, pages 102–107](#): introduction to Biblical Hebrew
- 3) Genesis 25:19–34: Rebekah’s pregnancy and the early years of Jacob

**Homework** (do not pass in): [homework on mindfulness of breathing](#)

#### Week 3 (September 26)

##### Topics for Discussion:

- 1) Buddhist teachings: concepts, words, and thoughts; impermanence (*anicca*), no-self (*anatta*), and suffering (*dukkha*)

2) The life of Jacob, part 2

**Readings** (we will focus on b) and e))

- 1) a) Genesis 27:1–28:9: Jacob deceives Esau
- b) Genesis 28:10–22: Jacob on the way to Haran (dream and ladder)
- c) Genesis 29:16–26: Jacob spends the night with whom?
- d) Genesis 32:4–22: Jacob prepares for confrontation with Esau
- e) Genesis 32:23–33: Jacob and unknown adversary at the Jabbok (anagram)

**Week 4 (October 3: no class because of Rosh Hashanah)**

**Week 5 (October 11: Monday schedule after October 10 holiday)**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- 1) Mindfulness of the body
- 2) The life of Jacob, part 3

**Readings:**

- 1) *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, pages 19–24: mindfulness of the body
- 2) Genesis, chapter 33 (33:1–20): Jacob confronts Esau

**Homework** (do not pass in): [homework on mindfulness of the body](#)

**Week 6 (October 17)**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- 1) Metta and loving-kindness meditation
- 2) Creation / *Bereyshit* (translated as “In the beginning [of]”)

**Readings:**

- 1) *The Issue at Hand*, pages 82–87: metta and loving-kindness meditation
- 2) Genesis 1:1–2:3: creation
- 3) [Blinding Pain, Simple Truth, pages 136–144](#): the profundity of *Bereyshit*, duality as a main structural feature of Genesis, and parallels relating days 1 and 4, days 2 and 5, days 3 and 6

**Week 7 (October 24)**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- 1) Mindfulness of emotions
- 2) Garden of Eden, part 1

**Readings:**

- 1) *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, pages 25–31: mindfulness of emotions
- 2) Genesis 2:4–25: the human, the woman, and the two trees in the Garden of Eden

**Homework** (do not pass in): [homework on mindfulness of emotions](#)

**Week 8 (October 31)**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- 1) Working with anger and other difficult emotions
- 2) Garden of Eden, part 2

**Readings:**

- 1) *The Issue at Hand*, pages 72–75: working with anger

2) Genesis, chapter 3 (3:1–24): the snake, eating the fruit, the curse, and the expulsion

**Work To Be Passed in:**

First draft of your research-based and documented paper, 5–10 pages in length, on a narrative in the Hebrew Bible

**I am omitting the following topic because there is one less class meeting this semester than last semester. Last semester this topic was covered during week 9.**

**Topics for Discussion:**

1) Transforming pain

**Readings:**

1) [The Science of Mindfulness, lecture 14](#): transforming chronic pain

2) *Blinding Pain, Simple Truth*, introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 (optional): using mindfulness meditation to heal the suffering that accompanies pain

**Online Resource:**

1) Ines Freedman, [working with pain and guided meditations](#)

**Week 9 (November 7)**

**Topics for Discussion**

1) Mindfulness of thoughts

2) Book of Job, part 1

**Readings:**

1) *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, pages 32–37: mindfulness of thoughts

2) Job, chapters 1 & 2 (1:1–2:13): prologue

**Homework** (do not pass in ): [homework on mindfulness of thoughts](#)

**Week 10 (November 14)**

**Topics for Discussion:**

1) Mindfulness of mind

2) Book of Job, part 2

**Readings:**

1) *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, pages 38–43: mindfulness of mind

2) a) Job, chapter 3 (3:1–3:26): “Perish the day on which I was born.”

b) Job, chapter 19 (19:1–29) with emphasis on 19:17–29; translating 19:25

**Work To Be Passed in:**

Second draft of your research-based and documented paper, 5–10 pages in length, on a narrative in the Hebrew Bible

**Homework** (do not pass in ): [homework on mindfulness of mind](#)

**Week 11 (November 21: no class because of Thanksgiving recess)**

**Week 12 (November 28)**

**Topics for Discussion:**

1) Mindfulness of daily life

2) Book of Job, part 3

**Readings:**

1) *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, pages 44–52: mindfulness of daily life

- 2) a) Job, chapters 38 & 39 (38:1–39:30): God’s speech from the whirlwind, part 1
- b) Job, chapters 40 & 41 (40:1–41:26): God’s speech from the whirlwind, part 2

**Homework** (do not pass in): [homework on mindfulness of daily life](#)

### **Week 13 (December 5)**

#### **Topics for Discussion:**

- 1) The promise of enlightenment
- 2) Book of Job, part 4

#### **Readings:**

- 1) [The Science of Mindfulness, lecture 22](#): the promise of enlightenment
- 2) [Blinding Pain, Simple Truth, chapter 8](#) (pages 207–211): finding equanimity on the Massachusetts turnpike
- 2) Job, chapter 42 (42:1–16): Job’s enlightenment and epilogue

#### **Work To Be Passed in:**

Final version of your research-based and documented paper, 5–10 pages in length, on a narrative in the Hebrew Bible

### **Week 14 (December 12)**

#### **Topic for Discussion:**

Summation. What we have learned about meditation, the Torah, and ourselves

**Readings:** To be announced