

(Non)Courses

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I have previously taught within the confines of particular curricular and educational parameters, specifically in Religious Studies and conventional universities. As I am now outside of institutional constraints and mandated forms, I am free to imagine courses that have never been taught, might never be taught, and might not be able to be taught. The present list of “(non)courses” is aspirational, uninhibited, emancipatory, and wild. They represent multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary courses that *could be taught*. Perhaps they will be offered in the future, an alternate and currently undreamt and forbidden future. Such is one expression of my new imaginarium.

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Alternate Presents

Examines the work of Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) through his later claim that “everything I wrote is true.” Reframes his “science fiction” as “paranormal fact,” specifically his suggestion that we are living in the Roman Empire and that Nazi Germany won WWII. Involves investigating and discussing deeper, underlying cultural/intellectual structures, altered states, and alternate realities by reading the work of PDK and viewing related cinematic adaptations. The latter include *Blade Runner*, *Man in the High Castle*, and *Minority Report*. Encourages participants to reimagine consensus mind/reality through alternate pasts/presents/futures, through trans-temporality.

Subdiscipline(s): Consciousness Studies, film studies, & philosophy of mind

Archives of Tomorrow

Facilitates the creation of personal archives, specifically by exploring and identifying cultural materials and influences deserving preservation and transmission. The latter may include artwork, books, music, and so forth. One way to think about this involves materials of lasting value that could be deposited in *underground* libraries and/or sealed cellars for post-apocalyptic survival. At least some of these materials should be idiosyncratic, taboo, and/or revolutionary. Perhaps they may help to reseed human consciousness and culture in an alternate future (or past).

Subdiscipline(s): Bookmaking, ethnography & library sciences

Being Animal/Animal Presence

Explores the experience of being a human-animal as well as inter-animal and inter-species relationality (ISR). Examines the existential conditions of actual animals and living animal communities, symbolic representations of different animals, and the political use of the human-animal binary. Also utilizes experiential approaches to meeting, observing, and working with animals. Encourages individuals to find specific animal affinities and companions.

Subdiscipline(s): Animal Studies, Contemplative Studies, ecology, & zoology

Contemplative Inquiry

Considers a “contemplative approach” to being and aliveness. “Contemplative” refers to practices and approaches that are rooted in and develop interiority and silence, including such qualities as

the preconditions for and expression of deeper meaning and purpose. Ultimately, contemplative practice involves “something more.” Investigation of the full spectrum of contemplative expression and the potential application of a contemplative approach to various aspects of our identities and activities, including relationality, study, and work. Some specific topics include formal contemplative discipline; art and craftwork; psychologies of realization; the importance of place; life as sacred journey; poetry and aliveness; animals and contemplation; and self-directed learning.

Subdiscipline(s): Contemplative Studies

Mountains, Rivers, & Forests

An experiment in outdoor education and wilderness exploration. Emphasizes a contemplative approach to embodied being, geographical participation, ecological relationality, and naturalistic observation. Involves actual wilderness travel (e.g., hiking and mountaineering) and mountain seclusion. Key aspects include movement awareness, reading, journaling, and spiritual dialogue. Some important literary foundations consist of Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), Wendell Berry (b. 1934), Aldo Leopold (1887-1948), John Muir (1838-1914), Gary Snyder (b. 1930), Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), and Walt Whitman (1819-1892).

Subdiscipline(s): Ecology, geology, literature, mountaineering, movement studies, & outdoor education

Fragments for a Superstory

Experimental approach to autobiography and biography. Encourages individuals to imagine life in terms of an unfolding superstory, one uninhibited by consensus mind/reality and radically free and open. A life rooted in imagination and vision. Utilizes the framework of “super-powers” and “X-factors,” in the sense of anomalous, non-ordinary and numinous abilities and states. Here there is some overlap with spiritual autobiography, including the use of “autoethnography.” May include the composition of a personal graphic novel.

Subdiscipline(s): Consciousness Studies, literature, philosophy of mind, & psychology

Monks, Mystics, and Madmen

Examines the characteristics, contributions, and potential limitations of monasticism, mysticism, and madness. Specifically, inspires reflection on the relationship between “madness” and “enlightenment.” This partially occurs through the consideration of specific “case studies,” including Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253), Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-ca. 1328), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), and Theodore (“Ted”) Kaczynski (b. 1942). Attention is, in turn, given to the question of “cults” (alternative religious movements) and individual participation/responsibility, with a critical investigation of so-called “brain-washing” and “mind-control.”

Subdiscipline(s): Psychology

Movement Awareness and Somatic Experiencing

Experiential exploration of embodiment and physicality, including organicism, relationality, and spatiality. Through various movement awareness practices, including contemplative walking, individuals cultivate and actualize a greater sense and expression of somatic presence. Also involves consideration of energetic views and approaches, such as those actualized through Daoist Yangsheng (Nourishing Life) practices. This includes what may be referred to as “subtle anatomy and physiology.”

Subdiscipline(s): Anatomy, physiology, movement studies, & somatics

Sacred Journeys

Investigates the theme of “travel” in various genres of writing, especially nature writing and travelogues. Particular attention is given to life as “pilgrimage,” including the relationship between walking and transformations of consciousness. Throughout the relevant literature, one consistent insight involves the correspondence between exterior exploration and interior depth. Some key writers include Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), John Muir (1838-1914), and Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582).

Subdiscipline(s): Literature, mountaineering, & outdoor education

The Outsider

Drawing upon the work of Colin Wilson (1931-2013), consideration of the characteristics, conceptions, roles, and contributions of “outsiders” in mainstream societies. Poses the possibility that “belonging” is an existential problem on the path of authenticity, as the former involves conforming to the status quo and being “socially useful.” In turn imagines the state of being “exiled,” “outcaste,” and the like as an opportunity to become free. To explore one’s own deeper aspirations and purpose. Includes the potential contributions of “outsider-artists” and “outsider-scholars.”

Subdiscipline(s): Literature, philosophy, & psychology

The Possibility of Being

Inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke’s (1875-1926) poem “This is the creature…” as contained in his *Die Sonette an Orpheus* (Sonnets to Orpheus). There we are told that “there is a creature that has never been,” but that nonetheless exists. It has been fed only with “the possibility of being.” By reading and discussing what may be labelled “the poetics of possibility,” individuals explore their own inmost potentials and self-actualization. This includes awakening, divine presence, mystical being and experiencing, and the like. Some key poets include Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984), e.e. cummings (1894-1962), Odysseus Elytis (1911-1996), Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207-1273), and Walt Whitman (1819-1892).

Subdiscipline(s): Literature

Theologies of the Impossible

Contemplative, mystical and philosophical investigation of actual theology, or *theo-logia* (“speaking [about/from/of] the divine”). This involves an inquiry into the sacred-as-sacred, beyond human constructs. Challenges dominant “theologies” that presuppose specific historically and culturally bound conceptions, usually a Christocentric or at least Abrahamic view (“God”). In contrast, “theologies of the impossible” require reflection of the full spectrum of theological views, including as informed by and manifest in contemplative practice and mystical experience. For this, writings beyond the “canon of (Christian) theology” must be engaged.

Subdiscipline(s): Comparative theology and interreligious dialogue (IRD)