

PARP 6270: Asian Spiritual Masters
Robert McDermott
Fall 2008 Tuesday, 3:00 – 6:00

Description

This course studies 20th century Hindu and Buddhist engaged spiritual teachers. The first half of the course focuses on Indian teachers: M. K. (Mahatma) Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo (and the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and Haridas Chaudhuri). The second half studies Thich Nhat Han, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Pema Chodron.

Required Texts

Louis Fischer, ed., *The Essential Gandhi: His Life, Work, and Ideas—An Anthology* (Vintage, 1963)

Eknath Easwaran, *Gandhi the Man* (Nilgiri Press, 1972)

Robert McDermott, ed., *The Essential Aurobindo* (Lindisfarne, 1974/86/00)

Haridas Chaudhuri, *Sri Aurobindo: Prophet of the Life Divine* (Cultural Integration Fellowship, 1951/1973)

Rajiv Mehrotra, ed. *The Essential Dalai Lama* (Penguin, 2005)

Thich Nhat Han, *For a Future to be Possible*. Parallax Press, 1993.

Pema Chodron. *No Time to Lose*. Shambala, 2006.

Requirements

Each student will write two 10-12pp. essays, one in the Hindu tradition and one in the Buddhist. Papers can focus on the teachers studied in the course or on teachers in their respective traditions (e.g., Gandhi or a Gandhian such as M. L. King, Jr., Vinoba Bhave, Satish Kumar); Sri Aurobindo or Mira Richard/The Mother, Haridas Chaudhuri); His Holiness the Dalai Lama or another Tibetan Buddhist teacher. Each paper will count for one third of the course grade and class and class participation will count for the remaining third. It is also permissible to submit a 20-25pp. paper on two or three of these figures by the second deadline. Papers should attempt to show the relationship between theory and practice in these teachers and the implications of that relationship for one's own worldview and spiritual striving. Deadline dates are as follows.

First paper due Class 10; to be returned Class 12; second paper due one week after the last class.

An incomplete must be requested and approved in writing, and will be given (reluctantly) only until the first day of the fall semester—after which a failing grade will be entered.

Advising Your instructor is eager to meet with you any time throughout the semester or to communicate with you by email (rmcdermott@ciis.edu) or phone: 415.722.2131.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

I. The Neo-Hindu Spiritual Tradition

1. Lecture: spiritually engaged 20th Century Hindu and Buddhist teachers
2. Eknath Easwaran, chs. 1-2
Fischer, *The Essential Gandhi*, chs. 1-2
3. Easwaran, chs. 3, 4, Appendix
Fischer, 2nd third
4. Easwaran,
Fischer, 3rd third
5. *The Essential Aurobindo (EA)*: 11-44; 225-74
Haridas Chaudhuri, *Sri Aurobindo: Prophet of the Life Divine*, pp. 1-17
6. *EA*, Part One: 47-116
Haridas Chaudhuri, *SA:PLD*, chs. 2, 7
7. *EA*, Part Two: 117-64
Haridas Chaudhuri, *SA: PLD*, 74-135
8. *EA*, Part Three: 173-221
Haridas Chaudhuri, *SA:PLD*, ch. 10

II. The Buddhist Tradition

9. *The Essential Dalai Lama*, first half
10. Cont'd., second half
11. Pema Chodron, *No Time to Lose*, first third
12. Cont'd., second third
13. Cont'd., third third
14. Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future to be Possible*, Parts One and Two
15. Cont'd., Parts Three and Four

One week after the last class: One term paper or second paper due;
first paper must also be resubmitted.