

California Institute of Integral Studies

EWP6205: EMBODIED SPIRITUAL INQUIRY

Fall 2015 (3 units)

Opening Session: Wednesday, Sept 16 (3-6pm)

Weekends of Sept 19-20, Oct 3-4, and Oct 17-18 (10am-5:00pm)

Room 304 (opening session) and Rainbow Heart Studio (weekends)

Instructor: Jorge N. Ferrer, PhD. Teaching Assistant: Olga Overmyer, MA

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Course Description:

To what extent may certain spiritual views, dilemmas or systems be the fruit of disembodied states of knowing/being? Can a more embodied spiritual inquiry shed new light on perennial problems of spiritual discourse? And can such inquiry be of value in addressing other questions about human nature and culture? This course offers a practical exploration of embodied spiritual inquiry in the context of participatory and co-operative research paradigms. In contrast to the mind-centered approach of conventional education, an integral participatory pedagogy incorporates all human dimensions—body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness—into the learning and inquiry processes.

To this end, we will use “interactive embodied meditations”—which seek access to deep layers of our somatic, vital, emotional, and mental worlds—as tools to inquire into collaboratively formulated spiritual questions. Take, for example, a spiritual issue or question “X” of your choice. What we will be doing is not only asking our conscious minds what do they know, think, or believe about X, but also attempting to access the voice and wisdom of our bodies, instincts, and hearts to see what they have to say about X. In the spirit of co-operative inquiry, participants will go through cycles of experience and reflection on focused spiritual questions.

NOTE: This method of embodied inquiry involves respectful *physical contact among participants*. Students with a history of physical or sexual trauma, or with personal, cultural, or religious sensibilities about touching or being touched by others, should contact the instructor before signing up for the class.

Summary of Educational Purpose:

The main purpose of this course is to introduce participants to the practice of embodied spiritual inquiry. A second objective is to offer the foundations of participatory and co-operative research in the context of integral education and spiritual studies.

Learning Objectives:

After completing the course, students will have acquired:

1. Familiarity with the method of embodied spiritual inquiry and the practice of “embodied interactive meditations.”
2. A basic understanding of the foundations of participatory and co-operative research in the context of integral education.
3. Basic skills for constructing knowledge from experience, both individually and collaboratively.

4. An appreciation of the importance of incorporating personal experience (somatic, vital, emotional, imaginal, etc.) and spiritual awareness in the human sciences.

Statement on Diversity:

Integral education fosters "inner" and "outer" epistemic diversity. Taking into account the importance of multiple perspectives for the elaboration of valid and complete knowledge about any object of study, this course fosters "inner" or intrapersonal epistemic diversity (i.e., vital, instinctive, somatic, emotional, intellectual, imaginal, and contemplative ways of knowing). Accessing one's "inner" epistemic diversity is arguably crucial to engage and appreciate "outer" or interpersonal epistemic diversity (i.e., knowledge from the perspective of the various human collectives, ethnic groups, cultures, classes, genders, sexual identities and orientations, etc.) genuinely and beyond intellectually based political, cultural, or spiritual correctness.

Learning Activities:

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| 1. Didactic (lecture): | 20% |
| 2. Dialogical inquiry: | 20% |
| 3. Multidimensional inquiry: | 60% |

Criteria for Evaluation:

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| 1. Class presence and participation: | 50% |
| 2. Final paper (12-18 pages): | 50% |

Note: In order to gain a Pass grade, paper needs to be academically acceptable and written according to APA style.

Prerequisites:

1. Attendance to the Opening Session (Sept 16) is required to take the course.
2. Background in any contemplative or embodied spiritual discipline (e.g., meditation, mindfulness, tai chi, qi gong, yoga, conscious dance, etc.) is not required but highly recommended.
3. Openness to explore experiential ways of knowing and capability to engage in embodied practices involving physical contact.

Grading Options: Pass/Fail.

Level of Instruction: MA and PhD.

Cap: 12 participants.

Schedule of Classes:

Thursday, Sept 16: Th. 3:00-6:00pm.

Weekend Sept 19-20: Sat. 10:00am-5:00pm and Sunday 10:00am-5:00pm.

Weekend Oct 3-4: Sat. 10:00am-5:00pm and Sunday 10:00am-5:00pm.

Weekend Oct 17-18: Sat. 10:00am-5:00pm and Sunday 10:00am-5:00pm.

Location:

Opening session in Mission building (location: room 304). Weekend retreats at Rainbow Heart Studio (1450 Cornell St., Berkeley, CA).

Required Readings:

Handouts posted at MyCIIS's course page. (See Course Schedule below for list of readings)

Highly Recommended Readings:

1. Ferrer, J. N. (2002). *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
2. Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition*. Thousands Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Recommended Readings:

1. Almaas, A. H. (2002). *Spacecruiser Inquiry: True Guidance for the Inner Journey*. Boston: Shambhala.
2. Evans, D. (1993). *Spirituality and Human Nature*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
3. Ferrer, J. N. & J. H. Sherman (Eds.). (2008). *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
4. Hart, T., Nelson, P. L., & Puhakka, K. (Eds.). (2000). *Transpersonal Knowing: Exploring the Horizon of Consciousness*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
5. Heron, J. (1998). *Sacred Science: Person-Centred Inquiry into the Spiritual and the Subtle*. Ross-on-Wye, UK: PCCS Books.
6. Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
7. Murphy, M. (1992). *The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Further Evolution of Human Nature*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee.
8. Ray, R. A. (2008). *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
9. Vennard, J. (1998). *Praying With Body and Soul: A Way to Intimacy With God*. Augsburg, MN: Fortress Publishers.

Assignments:**1. Final Paper:** (MA 12-14pp and PhD 14-18pp, including references)

Interweave personal experience and conceptual reflection in light of class readings, dialogues, and/or the fruits of the course's individual and collective embodied spiritual inquiry. Participants can focus on one of the inquiry questions explored in class, write a personal narrative describing their entire inquiry process, or write a more theoretical essay on topics such as "embodied spiritual inquiry," "participatory spirituality," or "participatory integral education." Collaborative papers are acceptable with the consent of the instructor. *Note:* PhD students need to engage class readings in their papers.

2. Journal:

Participants are asked to keep a personal journal. The journal is intended to facilitate deeper personal reflection and will *not* be collected in class, but participants are encouraged to include selected journal entries in their final paper.

Course Schedule

EWP6205: Embodied Spiritual Inquiry

The following course structure may be modified according to the evolution of the group inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

Opening Session. Embodied Spiritual Inquiry: A Participatory Approach (Sept 16)

Introduction to the course. Participants' introductions. Inquiry, spiritual inquiry, and embodied spirituality. Disembodied versus embodied spiritual knowing. Interactive embodied meditation. Participation, embodied inquiry, and epistemic diversity. The co-operative inquiry paradigm.

- Readings:*
- Almaas, A. H., "Openness in Inquiry."
 - Ray, Reginald, "Touching Enlightenment with the Body."
 - Ferrer, Jorge, "What Does It Mean to Live a Fully Embodied Spiritual Life?"
 - Heron, John, "Spiritual Inquiry and the Authority Within," "Participatory Research."

ACQUIRING THE INQUIRY TOOLS:

INTERACTIVE EMBODIED MEDITATIONS

Weekend Retreat I. Exploring Personal Reality: Body, Vital/Primary World, Heart, and Mind/Consciousness (Sept 19-20)

Unconditional acceptance as the foundation of participatory inquiry. Experiential practices: Enlightening and enlivening our bodies, vital/primary world, heart, and mind. Integrative work and verbal elaboration of the experience. Silence and contemplation. Collaborative decision-making process on our initial inquiry question.

- Readings:*
- Ferrer, Jorge, "Integral Transformative Practice: A Participatory Perspective."
 - Ferrer, Jorge, Marina Romero, and Ramon Albareda, "Integral Transformative Education: A Participatory Approach."

EMBODIED SPIRITUAL INQUIRIES

Each embodied spiritual inquiry (I & II) consists of three experience/reflection cycles and a final module for conceptual clarification of inquiry outcomes. Each inquiry focuses on a specific spiritual question collaboratively formulated by group participants. To deepen the investigation, both cycles of inquiry can be focused on the same spiritual question if the group so decides it. Handouts may be provided in class to complement the experiential inquiry process, as necessary.

Weekend Retreat II. Embodied Spiritual Inquiry I (Oct 3-4)

1. First experience / reflection cycle: The body and somatic knowing
2. Second experience / reflection cycle: The primary world and vital knowing
3. Third experience / reflection cycle: The heart and emotional knowing
4. Clarification of inquiry outcomes: The mind and conceptual/intuitive knowing
5. Assessment of inquiry process: Further clarification of inquiry outcomes. Collaborative assessment of inquiry process. Decision-making process on next inquiry question.

Readings: • TBA

Weekend Retreat III. Embodied Spiritual Inquiry II (Oct 17-18)

1. First experience / reflection cycle: The body and somatic knowing
2. Second experience / reflection cycle: The primary world and vital knowing
3. Third experience / reflection cycle: The heart and emotional knowing
4. Clarification of inquiry outcomes: The mind and conceptual/intuitive knowing
5. Final assessment of inquiry process: Further clarification of inquiry outcomes and conclusions. Collaborative evaluation of inquiry process. Final Circle of Sharing and ritual closure.

Readings: • Osterhold, Helge O., Elizabeth Husserl, & David Nicol, “Rekindling the Fire of Transformative Education: A Participatory Case Study.”
• Overmyer, Olga, Baumann, Ross, Albero, Amatta, & Ferrer, Jorge N., “Embodied spiritual inquiry: A second-person contemplative study of the nature of human boundaries.”

Instructor:

Jorge N. Ferrer, Ph.D., is core faculty at the Department of East-West Psychology, where he teaches courses on transpersonal studies, comparative mysticism, embodied spiritual inquiry, and spiritual dimensions of sexuality and relationships. He is the award-winning author of *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (SUNY Press, 2002), *Participation and Spirit: Transpersonal Essays in Psychology, Education, and Religion* (SUNY Press, forthcoming), and co-editor of *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (SUNY Press, 2008). Featured in *The Journal of Transformative Education, Religion & Education*, and *Journal of Holistic Education*, his participatory integral pedagogy is the focus of Yoshiharu Nakagawa and Yoshiko Matsuda’s *Transformative Inquiry: An Integral Approach* (Kyoto, Japan: Institute of Human Sciences, 2010), an anthology of writings based on Ferrer’s teaching of his method of Embodied Spiritual Inquiry at Ritsumekian University, Kyoto. Embodied Spiritual inquiry will be featured in two upcoming SUNY Press volumes on contemplative education. Jorge offers workshops and presentations on embodied spirituality and integral education both nationally and internationally. He was born in Barcelona, Spain.

Teaching Assistant:

Olga D. Overmyer, MA, is a recent East-West Psychology graduate. She is an experiential educator and life coach passionate about exploring the contours of the human

body, mind, heart, soul, and spirit. Her interests include archetypal astrology, depth psychology, community ritual, and intimacy. Through her work and daily life she hopes to contribute to healing the way human beings relate to ourselves, each other, and the Earth, our home. Olga has participated in Embodied Spiritual Inquiry and Holistic Sexuality as a student and an assistant and continues to be inspired by the power of the work to deepen our experience of being alive. She is the first author of an upcoming book chapter based on a past ESI: “Embodied Spiritual Inquiry: A Second-Person Contemplative Study of the Nature of Human Boundaries” in *The Intersubjective Turn in Contemplative Education: Shared Approaches for Contemplative Learning and Inquiry Across Disciplines* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press).