Course Description:
This course examines a number of theoretical research approaches, assists students in developing their own, and provides the foundations for writing theoretical papers for academic publication. Emphasis is placed on approaching research and writing as transformative spiritual practices. Theoretical research is the systematic application of a standpoint or standpoints to a body of existing knowledge with the intention of uncovering, generating, critiquing, or integrating meanings, theories, models, paradigms, or fields of knowledge. Theoretical research is carried out with critical reflection based on a thorough knowledge of the relevant literature of that standpoint or standpoints, as well as of the material to which it is being applied. Theoretical approaches surveyed in the course include hermeneutics, comparative studies, integrative scholarship, critical theory, deconstruction, and feminist theory.

Summary of Educational Purpose:
The main purpose of this course is to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to develop a theoretical approach adequate to their research interests, write theoretical papers or dissertations, and submit them for publication.

Learning Objectives:
After completing this course, students will be able to:
1. Understand the logic(s) of theoretical inquiry.
2. Be familiar with a variety of theoretical approaches in the human sciences.
3. Develop a theoretical approach appropriate to their research interests.
4. Write theoretical papers and submit them for publication.

Learning Activities:
1. Cognitive/didactic (lecture): 45%
2. Practical/applied (dialogue, class presentations): 45%
3. Experiential (meditation, group process): 10%

Criteria for Evaluation:
1. Mid-term assignment (1-4 pages): 20%
2. Final research paper (20-25 pages): 50%
3. Class presentations: 30%

Grading Options:
Letter Grade, Pass/Fail, or as allowed by the department.
Level of Instruction:
Ph.D. level / MA students with consent of instructor.

Required Texts:
- Course Reader, available at On the Mark (550 Tenth Street, Tel. 415/621-2312, Fax. 415/621-2318 Fax, Email: Sam@printotm.com).

The publication manual serves as a reference text to be used throughout the course. The rest of readings will be assigned weekly as outlined in the Course Schedule.

NOTE: Besides weekly required readings, the reader includes a number of sample papers representing different theoretical approaches. The time for the reading and analysis of these sample papers will be assigned in class. Extra handouts (such as other samples or sections of theoretical dissertation proposals) will be also distributed and analyzed in class.

Recommended Readings:

Assignments:
All papers should be written according to the APA Publication Manual (5th ed.) or The Chicago Manual of Style (14th ed.). All papers should include a cover page with title, as well as be double-spaced and written with Times New Roman 12-size font.

1. Mid-Term Paper: (1-4 pages)
   This assignment can take the form of an outline of the final paper, a theoretical research proposal, a preliminary literature review of your dissertation topic, or a dissertation proposal draft.

2. Final Paper: (20-25 pages)
   Write a theoretical research paper on a subject of your interest. Specific guidelines will be offered in class. This assignment can also take the form of a draft of your dissertation proposal, its literature review, or a paper you plan to submit for publication.

3. Presentations:
   During weeks 11-15, students optionally offer presentations on the theoretical research project they are working on. Presentations should be linked to final papers.
**Theoretical Research**  
**Course Schedule and Reading List**

**Week 1. Introduction: What is Theoretical Research? (Aug 27)**
What is theoretical research? “Productive fit” between research topic and standpoint. Varieties of theoretical approaches. Overview of the course and students’ introductions of their research interests.

**Readings:**
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, “Praise of Theory.”
- hooks, bell, “Theory as Liberatory Practice.”
- Slife, Brent D. & Williams, Richard D., “Toward a Theoretical Psychology.”

**Week 2. Research and Writing as Spiritual Practices (Sept 2)**
Research and writing as transformative spiritual practices. Mystical dimensions of hermeneutics. Spirituality and scholarship: Content, form, process, and impact. Integrating body, vital energies, heart, and spiritual awareness into the inquiry process.

**Readings:**
- Ferrer, Jorge N., Romero, Marina T. & Albareda, Ramon V., “Integral Transformative Education: A Participatory Proposal.”
- Kripal, Jeffrey J., “Roads of Excess,” “Palaces of Wisdom.”
- Metzger, Deena, “Writing as a Spiritual Practice.”

**Week 3. The Art of Literature Review (Sept 10)**
The literature review as the starting point of theoretical research. Types of literature review: Thematic, chronological, and critical. Creativity and literature reviews. The dangers of plagiarism. Overview of library and research resources. Internet. Electronic databases: PSYLIT, Religious Index, Philosopher’s Index, Melvyl, etc.

**Readings:**
- Patten, Mildred, “Writing Literature Reviews.”
- Pyrczak, Fred, “A Closer Look at Evaluating Literature Reviews.”
- Roth, Audrey, “Searching for Information,” “Recording Information” (pp. 54-57, 100-110).

**Samples:**
- **Standard:** Benton, S. L. et al., “Knowledge, Interest, and Narrative Knowing”  
- **Thematic:** Smith, Curtis D., “Approach to Jung”  
- **Chronological:** McGinn, Bernard, “Comparativist
and Psychological Approaches to Mysticism” • Critical: Rambachan, Anantanand, “Preface. A Review of Current Interpretations of the Significance of Sruti and Anubhava in Sankara”

**Week 4. Theoretical Approaches I: Hermeneutic Studies (Sept 17)**


**Readings:**
- Palmer, Richard E. “Six Modern Definitions of Hermeneutics.”
- Tuck, Andrew P., “The Philosophy of Scholarship,” “Holists, Hermeneuticists, and Holy Men.”
- Madison, G. B., “Method in Interpretation.”

**Samples:**

**Week 5. Theoretical Approaches II: Comparative Studies (Sept 24)**


**Readings:**
- Paden, William, “Comparative Perspective in the Study of Religion.”
- Bernstein, Richard J., “The Hermeneutics of Cross-Cultural Understanding.”

**Samples:**
**Week 6. Theoretical Approaches III: Integrative Scholarship (Oct 1)**
What is integrative scholarship? The difference between synthesis and integration. Multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity. Integral methodologies. Merits and pitfalls of integrative studies.

**Readings:**

- Scott, David, “The Scholarship of Integration.”
- Klein, Julie T., “The Problem of Interdisciplinary Discourse,” “The Integrative Core.”
- Crittenden, Jack, “What Should We Think about Wilber’s Method.”

**Samples:**


**Week 7. Theoretical Approaches IV: Critical Theory (Oct 8)**

**Readings:**

- Snyman, Johan, “Social Science according to the Frankfurt School.”
- Fay, Brian, “The Basic Scheme of Critical Social Science.”
- Geuss, Raymond, “Critical Theory.”
- Crotty, Michael, “Critical Inquiry: Contemporary Critics and Contemporary Critique.”

**Samples:**


**Week 8. Theoretical Approaches V: Deconstruction (Oct 22)**
The status of theoretical knowledge in postmodern studies. What is deconstruction? The logic of deconstructive inquiry. Critical perspectives.

**Readings:**

- Rosenau, Pauline M., “Epistemology and Methodology: Postmodern Alternatives.”
• Olivier, Bert, “Deconstruction.”
• Adams, Michael V., “Deconstructive Philosophy and Imaginal Psychology: Comparative Perspectives on Jacques Derrida and James Hillman.”
• Ellis, John M., “The Logic of Deconstruction.”

Samples:
• Burman, Erica, “Introduction” in Deconstructing Developmental Psychology • Taylor, Mark C., “…Prelude” in Earring: A Postmodern A/theology • Price, Robert, “Jesus Christ as the Effect of Christianity, Not the Cause” in Deconstructing Jesus • Cupit, Don, “The Mysticism of Secondariness”

- MID-TERM ASSIGNMENT DUE!

Week 9. Theoretical Approaches VI: Feminist Theory (Oct 15)
(Guest Lecturer: Dr. Marguerite Rigoglioso)

Readings:
• Gross, Elizabeth, “What is Feminist Theory?”
• Reinharz, Shulamit, “Conclusions” (from Feminist Methods in Social Research)
• Bertram, Vickie, “Theorising the Personal: Using Autobiography in Academic Writing.”
• Anderson, Rosemarie, “Embodied Writing and Reflections on Embodiment.”
• Rigoglioso, Marguerite, “Sections Doctoral Dissertation” (Handout)

Samples:
• Chodorow, Nancy, “Introduction,” in Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory • Ruether, Rosemary R., “Introduction,” in Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing • Lanzetta, Beverly J., “Contemplative Feminism: Transforming the Spiritual Journey” • Wright, Peggy, “Bringing Women’s Voices to Transpersonal Theory”

Week 10. Open Forum on Theoretical Approaches (Oct 29)
An open forum to discuss questions, problems, and/or loose ends in relation to the various theoretical approaches examined in the first half of the course. Linking theoretical approaches to students’ research interests. Students’ preliminary presentations of their research projects.
Week 11. Starting a Theoretical Research Project (Nov 5)

• Pyrczak, Fred, “Evaluating Titles.”
• Fulwiler, Toby, “Openings and Closings.”
• Pyrczak, Fred, “Evaluating Introductions.”

Week 12. Writing a Theoretical Research Paper I (Nov 12)
Writing as inquiry and as a way of knowing. Writing practices. Basic guidelines for writing theoretical papers. Paragraphs and sentences. Further reflections on embodied writing. Students’ presentations.

Readings: • Roth, Audrey, “Writing your Paper” (pp. 154-185).
• Goldberg, Natalie, “What I Really Want to Say,” “Reading Aloud.”
• Roberts, Brian, “The ‘Emotional’ Aspects of Research.”

Week 13. Writing a Theoretical Research Paper II (Nov 19)
Theoretical writing skills: Definitions, distinctions, analysis, dilemmas, examples and counter-examples, anticipating and addressing objections, use of metaphors. Style and form. Abstracts. Procrastination and the writer’s block. Revising your writing as polishing a piece of art. Students’ presentations.

Readings: • Roberts, Brian, “Writing Research.”
• Pyrczak, Fred, “Evaluating Abstracts.”
• Goldberg, Natalie, “Writing as a Practice,” “Fighting Tofu,” “Writing is a Communal Act,” “Rereading and Rewriting.”
• Sher, Gail. “Making Writing Periods Successful and Enjoyable,” “Writing Posture,” “Distractions,” “One Continuous Mistake,” “Writer’s Block.”
• Fulwiler, Toby, “Strategies for Revision,” “Focused Revision.”

Week 14-15. Publishing Theoretical Papers/Conclusion: The Spiritual Dimension of Contemporary Theoretical Approaches (Saturday Nov 22)
Why to publish? Selecting an appropriate journal. Survey of academic journals. The peer-review process. Submitting a paper. Guidelines for book proposals. Correspondence with

Readings:  
• Wechsler, Harold S., “Publishing a Journal Article.”  
• Luey, Beth, “Journal Articles,” “Bibliography.”  
• Ferrer, Jorge, “Dossier Publication Process.”

💥 - FINAL PAPER DUE!
COURSE READER
“THEORETICAL RESEARCH”

Required Readings


47. Anderson, R. (2002-03). Embodied writing. Presenting the body in somatic research, Part II: Using embodied writing in literature reviews, data collection and analysis, and presentation of findings. Somatics (Fall/Winter), 40-44.


**Samples**

**Literature Reviews**

**Hermeneutic Studies**

**Comparative Studies**

**Integrative Scholarship**


**Critical Theory**


**Deconstruction**


**Feminist Theory**


Research Bibliography:

A. ON THEORETICAL RESEARCH APPROACHES

Hermeneutics


Comparative Studies


Integrative Scholarship


Critical Theory


Post-structuralism & Deconstruction

Feminist Theory

B. ON WRITING THEORETICAL PAPERS
Research Papers

Literature Reviews

Style

Guides to Nonsexist Language

Scholarly Publishing

Instructor:


A distinguished scholar on transformative practices and integral epistemology at the Esalen Center for Theory and Research, Big Sur, California, in 2000 he received the Fetzer Institute’s Presidential Award for his seminal work on consciousness studies. He is on the editorial board of The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, ReVision, Spirituality and Health International, The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, and Journal of Men: Masculinities and Spirituality. Jorge offers workshops and presentations on integral spirituality and education both nationally and internationally.