Course Description:
This course examines a number of theoretical research methods, assists students in developing their own, and provides the foundations for writing 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, deconstructing, 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 and postcolonial 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 various logics of theoretical inquiry.
2. Be familiar with a variety of theoretical methods in the human sciences.
3. Develop a theoretical approach appropriate to their research interests.
4. Write theoretical papers and submit them for publication.

Statement on Diversity:
Male white Western scholars have historically dominated many of the theoretical approaches surveyed in this course. All efforts have been made to incorporate in the course’s readings the voices of female scholars and alternative perspectives that have become available in recent years. In this regard, the course includes a session on feminist theory, postcolonial critiques of Western scholarship, and discussion of embodied, feminine approaches to writing. Further references on these and/or other areas of inquiry in relation to the course can be provided upon request.

Attendance Policy:
Attending classes is a required element of active course and classroom participation. Students who miss more than 2 classes (excused or unexcused) will be required to repeat the class and/or be given a NP grade, unless absences are caused by extraordinary
circumstances (see below) and instructor assesses that students can recover missed class activities and continue participating in the course in an informed and productive manner. If an absence is unavoidable, students need to notify the instructor via email before the class or, if practically impossible, immediately after. In all such cases of absence, students are expected to recover the missed class, for example, by asking other student to audio record class with the instructor’s permission, meeting with a teaching assistant if available, or, as minimum, meeting with other student before the following session. Tardiness and early leaving of the class meetings are not acceptable. At the instructor’s discretion, students may be permitted to deviate from these rules on the grounds of illness necessitating confinement for 24 hours or more, a death in the family, or other extreme emergencies, with written verification of the emergency situation if requested to do so.

**Learning Activities:**

1. Cognitive/didactic (lecture): 40%
2. Practical/applied (dialogue, class presentations): 40%
3. Experiential (guided meditation, group process): 20%

**Criteria for Evaluation:**

1. Mid-term assignment (1-3 pages): 20%
2. Final research paper (16-20 pages): 50%
3. Class participation and presentations: 30%

**Grading Options:**

Letter Grade, Pass/Fail, or as allowed by the department.

**Level of Instruction:**

PhD level. MA students with consent of instructor.

**Required Texts:**

- Course Reader, available at Simply Brilliant Press (2336 Market Street, San Francisco. Tel.415-431-6275; email: Greg@SimplyBrilliantPress.com).

The publication manual serves as a reference text for to write the final papers. 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 illustrating the different theoretical approaches. The time for the reading and analysis of sample papers will be assigned in class. Extra handouts (such as additional samples or sections of dissertation proposals) may be also distributed and analyzed in class.
Recommended Readings:


Assignments:

All papers should be written according to the *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.) or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed.). All papers should include a cover page with title, as well as be one sided, double spaced, and written with 12-point size Times New Roman font. *Papers not following these specifications will be returned to students without feedback.*

1. **Mid-Term Paper:** (1-2 pages; *due on Oct 22*)

This assignment can take the form of an outline or narrative summary of the dissertation proposal or final paper. Alternatively, students can submit one or more selected theoretical sections of the dissertation proposal, such as the thesis statement, research objectives, and/or theoretical tools (for theoretical proposals).

2. **Final Paper:** (16-20 pages; *due on Dec 6*)

Students are encouraged to submit selected theoretical sections from their dissertation proposal (see above). Alternatively, the assignment can take the form of a theoretical paper they plan to submit for publication.

3. **Presentations:**

In addition to presenting sample papers throughout the course, during weeks 10-15 students optionally offer brief presentations of the theoretical research project they are working on. *Priority will be given to students working on theoretical dissertation proposals.*
Theoretical Research Methods
Course Schedule and Reading List

PART I. FOUNDATIONS

Week 1. Introduction: What is Theoretical Research? (Sept 10)
What is theoretical research? Varieties of theoretical approaches. “Productive fit” between research topic and standpoint. Theoretical approaches and personal dispositions. Becoming a scholar as a rite of passage. Overview of the course and students’ introductions of their research interests.

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

NOTE: As minimum, students should read two of the above readings before attending the course’s first session. All students should read Herling and then select at least one of the other three readings (Gadamer, hooks, or Slife and Williams). Orientation: Gadamer is recommended for students with philosophical inclinations, hooks for those with critical/feminist interests, and Slife and Williams for those interested in the role of theory in contemporary psychology. Of course, everybody is encouraged to read them all!

Week 2. Research and Writing as Spiritual Practices (Sept 17)
The natural cycle of the creative process. Spirituality and scholarship: Nature, content, form, process, and impact. Research and writing as transformative spiritual practices. Mystical and alchemical dimensions of hermeneutics. Integrating body, vital energies, heart, and spiritual awareness into the inquiry process.

Readings: • Ferrer, Jorge N., Marina T. & Albareda, Ramon V., “The Integral Creative Cycle.”
• Kripal, Jeffrey J., “Roads of Excess.”
• Romanysyn, Robert D., “The Transference Field between Researcher and the Work,” “Alchemical Hermeneutics.”
• Metzger, Deena, “Writing as a Spiritual Practice.”

Week 3. The Art of Literature Review + Dissertation Process (Sept 24)
The literature review as starting point. Creativity in literature reviews. Basic strategies and potential pitfalls. Types of literature review: Thematic, chronological, and critical. Overview of the dissertation process.

• Patten, Mildred, “Writing Literature Reviews.”
• Galvan, Jose L., “General Guidelines for Analyzing Literature,”
  “Guidelines for Writing a First Draft,” “Guidelines for Developing a
  Coherent Essay.”
• Pyrczak, Fred, “A Closer Look at Evaluating Literature Reviews.”
• Roth, Audrey, “Searching for Information,” “Recording Information” (pp.
  57-61, 106-17).

Samples:  
  • Thematic: Smith, Curtis D., “Approach to Jung”  
  • Chronological: McGinn, Bernard,  
    “Comparatist and Psychological Approaches to Mysticism”  

PART II. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Week 4. Theoretical Approaches I: Hermeneutic Studies (Oct 1)
What is hermeneutics? Mythical and religious roots of hermeneutics. The process of
understanding. Types of interpretation: Textual/non-textual; exegesis versus isogesis.
Validity standards. The limits of valid interpretations of a text. Spiritual dimensions of

Readings:
  • Jaspers, David, “Texts and Readings: Reading and Writing.”
  • Westphal, Merold, “Rehabilitating Tradition,” “On Not Clinging to the
    Prejudice against Prejudice.” “Conversation.”
  • Tuck, Andrew P., “Isogesis and the Ideal of Objectivity,” “Philosophical
    Fashions in Indian Studies,” “Holists, Hermeneuticists, and Holy Men.”
  • Madison, G. B., “Method in Interpretation.”
    Account.”

Samples:  
  • Leone, George, “Zen Meditation: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualization”  
  • Gold, Jeffrey,  
    “Plato in the Light of Yoga”  
  • Kealey, Daniel A., sections of Revisioning Environmental Ethics  
  • Brooke, R., “Towards a Phenomenological Analytical Psychology”  
  • Whicher, Ian,  
    “Yoga and Freedom: A Reconsideration of Patanjali’s Classical Yoga”

Week 5. Theoretical Approaches II: Comparative Studies (Oct 8)
What is comparative hermeneutics? Types of comparative research. Comparative
categories. Issues in cross-cultural hermeneutics: Incommensurability and translatability:  
universalism, relativism, and contextualism; ethnocentrism, orientalism, and “going native.”
Hermeneutics of the interfaith dialogue. Critical perspectives.

Readings:
  • Paden, William, “Comparative Perspective in the Study of Religion.”
  • Bernstein, Richard J., “The Hermeneutics of Cross-Cultural
    Understanding.”
  • Krieger, D. J., “Methodological Foundations for Interreligious Dialogue.”
• Holdrege, Barbara, A., “What’s Beyond the Post? Comparative Analysis as Critical Method.”


Week 6. Theoretical Approaches III: Integrative Scholarship (Oct 15)

Readings: • Scott, David, “The Scholarship of Integration.”
• Wilber, Ken, “Integral Methodological Pluralism.”


Week 7. Theoretical Approaches IV: Critical Theory and Postcolonial Hermeneutics (Oct 22)

Readings: • Alvesson, Mats & Sköldberg, Kaj, “Critical Theory: The Political and Ideological Dimension.”
• Fay, Brian, “The Basic Scheme of Critical Social Science.”
• Geuss, Raymond, “Critical Theory.”
• Leavy, Patricia, “The Emergence of Transdisciplinary Research Practices: Conducting Social Research after the Social Justice Movements and in the Age of Globalization.”
• Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, “Introduction;” “Writing Theory.”
**Samples:**  
- Santikaro Bhikkhu, “The Four Noble Truths of Dhammic Socialism”  
- Jacoby, Russell, “Conformist Psychology”  
- Sharma, Arvind; Rampersad, Pandita Indrani, “Preface;”  
- Religious Studies: Projecting One’s Shadow on the ‘Other;’  
  “Chakra hermeneutics,” in *Invading the Sacred.*

- **MID-TERM ASSIGNMENT DUE!**

**Week 8. Theoretical Approaches V: Feminist Theory (Oct 29)**  
(Guest Lecturer: Claudia Moutray)


**Readings:**  
- Gross, Elizabeth, “What is Feminist Theory?”
- Reinharz, Shulamit, “Conclusions” (from *Feminist Methods in Social Research*).
  - Alvesson, Mats & Sköldberg, Kaj, “Feminism.”
  - Handouts by guest lecturer TBA.

**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 9. Theoretical Approaches VI: Deconstruction (Nov 5)**


**Readings:**  
- Griffin, David R., “Constructive Postmodern Thought.”
- Rosenau, Pauline, “Epistemology and Methodology: Post-Modern Alternatives.”
- Ellis, John M., “The Logic of Deconstruction.”

**Samples:**  
- Taylor, Mark C., “…Prelude” in *Earring: A Postmodern A/theology*  
- Price, Robert, “Jesus Christ as the Effect of Christianity, Not the Cause”  
- Cupit, Don, “The Mysticism of Secondariness”  
- Agger, Ben, “Critical Theory and Postmodernity.”
PART III: BECOMING AN INTEGRAL SCHOLAR: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Week 10. Personal Experience in Scholarship (Nov 12)
The inclusion of personal experience in scholarship. Approaches and examples. Impact on academic style. Pitfalls and antidotes. Discussion of loose ends in relation to the various theoretical approaches examined in the first half of the course. Linking theoretical approaches to students’ research interests.

           • Anderson, Rosemarie, “Embodied Writing and Reflections on Embodiment.”


Week 11. Public Speaking: Exoteric and Esoteric Dimensions (Nov 19)

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

Week 12. On Writing I: Basic Elements (Nov 26)

Readings:  • Roth, Audrey, “Writing your Paper” (pp. 160-97).
           • Pyrczak, Fred, “Evaluating Abstracts.”

Week 13. On Writing II: Style and Process (Dec 3)
Readings:  
• Goldberg, Natalie, “What I Really Want to Say,” “Reading Aloud.” “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.”

Week 14-15 The Publication Process + Conclusion: The Spiritual Dimension of Contemporary Theoretical Approaches (Sat. Dec 6)  

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

Location for retreat: The Rainbow Heart Studio, 1450 Cornell Ave, Berkeley, CA 94702.

- FINAL PAPER DUE!
COURSE READER
Required Readings


Samples

Literature Reviews

Hermeneutic Studies

Comparative Studies

Integrative Scholarship


Critical Theory and Postcolonial Hermeneutics


Feminist Theory


Deconstruction


Personal Experience and Scholarship

Research Bibliography:

A. ON THEORETICAL RESEARCH APPROACHES

General Overviews

Hermeneutics

Comparative Studies

Integrative Scholarship

Critical Theory & Postcolonial Hermeneutics

Post-structuralism & Deconstruction

Feminist Theory

B. ON WRITING

Research Papers

Literature Reviews

Style

Guides to Nonsexist Language

Scholarly Publishing

Instructor:
Jorge N. Ferrer, Ph.D. is core faculty member at the Department of East-West Psychology (CIIS). He is the author of Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality (SUNY Press, 2002) and coeditor (with Jacob H. Sherman) of The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies (SUNY Press, 2008).

He is on the editorial board of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, *ReVision*, *Spirituality and Health International*, *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, *Journal of Transpersonal Research*, *The Transpersonal Psychology Review*, and *Journal of Men: Masculinities and Spirituality*. In 2000 he received the Fetzer Institute’s Presidential Award for his seminal work on consciousness studies. Jorge offers workshops and presentations on integral spirituality and education both nationally and internationally.

**Guest teacher:**

**Claudia Moutray, MA**, is a PhD student in the Women’s Spirituality Program at CIIS. Her concentration is in Eco-Feminist/Feminist Philosophy and Activism. She is primarily involved in social justice issues regarding conflict resolution. She is also a Fellow in the Integral Teaching Fellowship. In her life outside of school she coaches a swim team at the Boys & Girl’s Club in San Francisco.