

RelS 123
Body, Mind and Spirit
Spring Semester, 2012

I have come to believe that virtually everyone of us has experienced,
and that everyone of us can cultivate, moments when the ordinary becomes extraordinary,
when mind and body are graced by something beyond themselves.
— Michael Murphy, *THE FUTURE OF THE BODY*

Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Mira Z. Amiras
Department: Comparative Religious Studies, Humanities Department
College of Humanities and the Arts, San Jose State University

Course Code: RelS 123 — 27816
Class Time / Location: Tuesdays 6:30-9:15 PM in SH 240
Office Hours: Tues & Wed 4:30-5:30 PM
Office Location: Clark Hall 437
Office Phone: 408 924-1364
E-mail: Campus: mira.amiras@sjsu.edu Preferred: mira.amiras@me.com
Preferred Contact: Office Hours and Email
Department Fax: 408 924-4372

NOTE: Students in BMS are required to use Office Hours four times during the term. First, to discuss individual projects; second and third, to check progress on individual projects and for some fine-tuning, and fourth, to help assess the overall course experience. These check-in points are an essential component of the course.

Course Description

This class is an exploration of ‘extraordinary human capacity’ in both theory and practice. We will explore the evolution and frontiers of human consciousness and physical ability. We will review our legacy of physical and social-cultural evolution—focusing first on transformations of the *BODY*, then on the products of the human *MIND*—and spend most of the course on the transpersonal—the idea of evolutionary transcendence—i.e., transformations entailing the *MIND-BODY-SPIRIT* complex. Sticking closely to the text, we will explore the ideas of Murphy’s *THE FUTURE OF THE BODY*, and test the main hypotheses presented.

This class requires a tremendous amount of focus, commitment, class participation, careful reading, and most of all, willingness to play and experiment. Students will follow a path of ‘integral transformative practice’ as outlined in Part III and study Murphy’s arguments for the possibilities of extraordinary human functioning. The notion of ‘human potential’ is prominent in Murphy’s work, but so too is the notion of possible ‘pathological’ transformations. We will explore the difference between healthy and pathological aspirations for achieving the ‘extraordinary.’

This course should be of interest to students in performing arts, mind/body practices, comparative religious studies and spiritual practices, anthropology, transpersonal psychology, biological science and complementary & alternative healing practices. The primary goal of the course is to better understand the human quest for transcendence despite evolutionary uncertainty and the human predilection for destructiveness.

This class is for registered students only.
No auditors or guests will be admitted.

Required Reading

Amiras, Mira	“Experience beyond Belief: The ‘Strangeness Curve’ and Integral Transformative Practice” in <i>SOCIAL ANALYSIS</i> , Vol. 52, No. 1 127-143. PDF File — Available on BMS Website.
Leonard, George	<i>MASTERY</i>
Murphy, Michael	<i>THE FUTURE OF THE BODY: EXPLORATIONS INTO THE FURTHER EVOLUTION OF HUMAN NATURE.</i>

Additional Reading

Choose at least one of the following authors and as many of their relevant works as you can find:

Bertherat, T. & Bernstein	<i>THE BODY HAS ITS REASONS</i>
Chia, Mantak	<i>AWAKENING HEALING ENERGY THROUGH TAO</i> (and more books)
Egoscue, Pete	<i>PAIN FREE</i> (and/or other books)
Ekman, Paul	<i>EMOTIONS REVEALED; UNMASKING THE FACE</i> (and other works)
Heckler, Richard, ed.	<i>AIKIDO AND THE NEW WARRIOR</i> (and/or other books by Heckler)
Johnsgard, K.	<i>THE EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY.</i>
Leonard, George	<i>THE ULTIMATE ATHLETE</i> (and/or other works by Leonard)
Leonard, G. & M. Murphy	<i>THE LIFE WE ARE GIVEN</i> (results of the ITP EXPERIMENT)
Levine, Peter	<i>WAKING THE TIGER</i> (and other works)
Lincoln, Michael J.	<i>MESSAGES FROM THE BODY</i> (and many other works)
Lindquist, Galina	<i>CONJURING HOPE: HEALING AND MAGIC IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA</i>
Monks of New Skete	<i>HOW TO BE YOUR DOG’S BEST FRIEND</i> (and other works)
Murphy, Michael	<i>GOLF IN THE KINGDOM</i> (and other novels by Murphy)
Murphy, Michael	<i>THE PHYSICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF MEDITATION</i>
Ornish, Dean	<i>DR. DEAN ORNISH’S PROGRAM FOR REVERSING HEART DISEASE...</i>
Palmer, Wendy	<i>THE INTUITIVE BODY: AIKIDO AS A CLAIRESENTIENT PRACTICE</i>
Pollan, Michael	<i>IN DEFENSE OF FOOD / THE OMNIVORE’S DILEMMA</i> (and more)
Roth, Gabrielle	<i>MAPS TO ECSTASY; SWEAT YOUR PRAYERS</i> (and more books, music, video)
Schlosser, Eric	<i>FAST FOOD NATION: THE DARK SIDE OF THE ALL-AMERICAN MEAL</i>
Tulqu, Bardok	<i>REST FOR THE FORTUNATE: THE EXTRAORDINARY PRACTICE OF NYUGNE—ITS HISTORY, MEANING AND BENEFITS</i>

Additional readings will be required in order to pursue your own individual research. See also the extensive bibliography in Murphy. Additional readings will be recommended throughout the term. You will be asked to research all available sources on your individual project for this class.

Course Requirements

Class will meet Monday evenings from 6:30–9:15 PM in SH 240. Class content and exercises will follow the course syllabus and assigned readings. Reading should be completed prior to class meetings. Active, consistent participation in class exercises and discussions are essential in this class. Participation includes more than mere physical presence. It includes being prepared for class, sharing insights as well as questions, consideration of/for the ideas and experiences of others, and most of all, being willing to explore the material at hand and facilitation of the class process. Please be prompt. Lateness is disruptive and should be avoided if at all possible. In addition to class work, a research journal and final exam are also required. Participation and written work will be assessed daily and graded as follows:

Grading

		<u>In-Class Participation Points</u>		BMS Class & Project Journal	100 pts
+	=	Full participation (daily)	10	Presentation & Write-up of Term Project (100 pts each)	200 pts
L	=	Participation, but late or leave early	7	4 Office Hour Visits	100 pts
√	=	Present, but inert (little participation)	5	Final Exam	100 pts
-	=	Absent, physically and/or mentally	0	Participation	500 pts

Individual research projects and accompanying research journals will be discussed at length in class. The final exam will be comprehensive. Be sure to read online guidelines and instructions.

Term Project, Presentations and Research Journals

TOPIC: *EVIDENCE FOR HUMAN TRANSFORMATIVE CAPACITY*

Individualized research will allow you to test in greater depth a particular principle found in *THE FUTURE OF THE BODY*. Students will be expected to follow an integral transformative practice in keeping with the principles outlined in Part III of Murphy's book. This should include a daily regimen which mobilizes the body-mind-spirit interface. Research topics must be approved by the instructor as appropriate for BMS.

Examples include practice in sports, fine arts, performing arts, martial arts, contemplative practices, including cultivating/contact with non-humans (e.g. dogs, plants etc.), psychoanalysis, writing, and more. Journals should include 1) affirmation of the practice, approved by the instructor, 2) brief daily log of regimen, 3) end of the week assessments, 4) end of the month assessments, 5) end of the term assessment. Individual research projects and journals will be discussed at length in class. Students will present their research problem, process and results in class at the end of the term.

Final Exam

The final exam will include a take-home essay question to be typewritten on the sheet provided, as well as a more experiential component. The final exam will be cumulative. It will cover readings, lectures, class discussion, individual research and class exercises. There will also be an experiential component. The final exam will be handed out on the last day of class and will be due at the time of the regularly scheduled exam period.

Office Hours

Students in BMS are required to visit Office Hours at least four times during the term. The first visit is to discuss viability of potential individual term projects; second and third, to approve projects and check on the progress of research and for some fine-tuning of the project, and fourth, to help assess the overall course experience. These check-in points are an essential component of the course.

Participation

Participation in class activities is by far the most critical part of RelS 108. It includes much more than being present in the classroom. Participation includes actively engaging in class activities and experiments, discussing results and observations, asking questions or having comments on readings, and facilitating the class experiences of others. A portion of the grading of participation will be based upon written self-assessment, part on the class check-in, and part on instructor assessment. This will be discussed further in class.

Schedule of Classes

Week	Topic	Assignments
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This schedule is quite ambitious and therefore subject to change to facilitate needed discussion and review

JAN 31	<p>INTRODUCTION: BODY, MIND, SPIRIT Course requirements, readings and expectations. Problems of definition. Introduction to theory and individual practice. Signs and portents: why asthma and diabetes, all of a sudden? <i>We live only a part of the life we are given—m. murphy</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 1-2 Look over Murphy Read <i>Mastery</i></p>
PART I	VISION	MURPHY PART I
FEB 7	<p>EVOLUTION, TRANSCENDENCE, AND GRACE Competing and complementary theories of transformation. Murphy's view of physical evolution, cultural evolution and evolutionary transcendence. Anthropological, psychological and religious views of human potential. <i>The winds of grace are always blowing—open your sails! —m. murphy</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 3, 6-7 Look over Murphy Read <i>Mastery</i></p>
FEB 14	<p>VISION, VISIONS, AND AFFIRMATION Affirmations toward vision and practice. Toward group and individual intentionality. Visionaries and personal vision. The dangers of vision, dangerous visions, and the path of mastery. The Strangeness Curve. What do you do with <i>vision</i> anyway? <i>Art consists of framing things in a new perspective —g. leonard</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 8 Begin to formulate your term project. Select your additional readings.</p>
FEB 21	<p>TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE AND ADHERENCE From martial arts to medical sciences—what it means to have a practice. What it means to practice. Leonard's five prerequisites to staying on the path. The <i>kata</i> as a focusing device. <i>The more you practice the luckier you get—g. leonard</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 4-5 Read specific section of Murphy that relate to your own project. Read Biblio as well.</p>
FEB 28	<p>VISION, PRACTICE AND PATH The alchemy of intentionality. Positive transformations combining vision, practice and path. Exploration of the path and how to walk it. Ithaka and the Mountain—two metaphors of the path. <i>The map is not the territory —g. leonard</i></p>	<p>Review Murphy Chs Read Amiras article (pdf file can be found on the class website)</p>

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Part II.	PRACTICE	MURPHY PART II
MAR 6	<p>VOLITION: DESIRE VS WILL VS MAGICAL WILL Focused surrender—the paradox of practice. The desperation of fruitless desire vs. the application of will. Relation between volition and synchronicity <i>The practice you do when you don't want to do it is the most productive —m. murphy</i></p>	MM Ch 11 & 13 MM 5.9
MAR 13	<p>PERCEPTION, AWARENESS AND PROPHECY External perception: Interpretation of empirical data, from visual to tactile perception. Internal awareness. The consequences of hard vs. soft perception of the environment. Extraordinary sensory perception and the Cassandra effect. Inward contemplative practices. <i>Expect nothing, be ready for anything—murphy & leonard</i></p>	MM Ch 18 MM 5.1-5.2
MAR 19	<p>COGNITION: BELIEF, KNOWLEDGE, PRESCIENCE How do we 'know'? Are there differences between how the body, mind and spirit 'know'? Coordination of the multiple modes of knowing. Consciousness and the unconscious. What is 'mystical knowing'? Why don't we trust what we 'know'? <i>Do not let mind get in the way of MIND —m. murphy</i></p>	MM Ch 12 & 15 MM 5.8
MAR 27	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS	
APR 3	<p>EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNICATION From telepathy to psychoanalysis. The evolution of primate and hominid communication compared with other species. Visual acuity, auditory discrimination. Empathy and persuasion: variables from individual communication to mass movements. Pollan's animism: do we select the plants or are they selecting us? Co-evolutionary biology. Sending and receiving. <i>I write because I cannot dance —fritz perls</i> <i>The greatest grace of all is having a trusting friend —mm</i></p>	MM Ch 9-10, 17 MM 5.3
APR 10	<p>BARRIERS, PLATEAUS & DIVERSIONARY PATHS Internal voices (<i>mishegas</i>), external roadblocks (<i>tzuris</i>) which impede vision and practice. Indignity and indignation as motivating and mobilizing forces. Ignorance, tedium and blocks as gifts. Cultivating good timing. What the garden teaches. <i>Compost stinks —wendy palmer</i></p>	Review Readings Continue research on term projects. Continue secondary reading assignments.

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APR 17	<p>VITALITY, DISABILITY, AND SUPERPOWERS The idea of <i>fitness</i> in physical, cultural and future evolutionary terms. Transcending incapacity, adversity, disability—and ability. Vitality, movement and mental health. When it's gone, why does it feel so irretrievable? Is it possible to reset the vitality dial without a run to the pharmacy? <i>The way you are in the body will radically alter and influence everything —g. leonard</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 14, 19 MM 5.4-5.5</p>
APR 24	<p>PAIN, PLEASURE AND TRANSCENDENCE Sacrifice, self-sacrifice and altruism. The Darwin-Kropotkin debate. Physical deprivation, suffering and asceticism in religious and secular practice. Conflict theory. Can we really transcend pain? <i>Q: do you know how they tell “pioneers” here in Texas?</i> <i>A: by the arrows in their back. —dean ornish</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 20-21 MM 5.7</p>
MAY 1	<p>LOVE, ECSTASY, RAPTURE AND GRACE Transcending the Self, merging with the Other. Longing for the Beloved in mystical traditions such as Kabbalah and Sufism. What does it mean to receive the love of the Beloved? <i>Rhythms are the language of love-making, not a kind of birth control —g. leonard</i> <i>Grace is something given, not earned. it surprises us ... precisely because we are unfamiliar with it —m. murphy</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 22-23 MM 5.11</p> <p><u>Student presentations</u></p>
Part III	PATH	MURPHY PART III
MAY 8	<p>CHOP WOOD, CARRY WATER Eastern and Western notions of “progress.” Goals and goallessness. Paths for the householder and the adept. The problem of context: pathless cultures vs. goalless cultures. <i>The goal is to enhance our practice, not practice to enhance our goals —g. leonard</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 24 Begin assessing the progression, not the ‘progress’ of your term project. <u>Student presentations</u></p>
MAY 15	<p>INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE Evolution vs. transformation. The human potential movement as an example of revitalization theory and world systems theory. Human destructiveness vs. human wholeness. Culturally determined vision, practice and path vs. the ‘freedom’ to choose. <i>Big changes are easier to make than small ones —d. ornish</i> <i>Q: Are you a Hindu?</i> <i>A: No, I’m an Un-Do. It’s all about UN-doing —d. ornish</i></p>	<p>MM Ch 25-26 BMS Journals due in class tonight. No late Journals accepted.</p> <p><u>Student presentations</u> <u>Receive Final Exam</u></p>

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MAY 24	<p>FINAL EXAM—THE FUTURE OF THE BODY, MIND ... Reunification of body-mind-spirit. The contemporary compilation, understanding, and syntheses of world sacred traditions. Is global vision/practice/path possible or even desirable in American society? The future of the future—from Murphy’s vision to your own. <i>Plato was a wrestler. He said you could learn more about a person in one hour wrestling than a year of talking —joel kirsch</i> <i>I’m tired of talking of “mind” and “body”—it’s all of a piece. Rather: talk about perception, vitality... and grace —m. murphy</i></p>	<p>7:45–10:00 PM Remaining student presentations Final Exam</p>
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BMS Learning Objectives

Learning Objective 1: Students shall be able to assimilate and comprehend the principles of integral transformative practice as put forth in their primary text, *THE FUTURE OF THE BODY*, and in their selected secondary texts.

Learning Objective 2: Students shall develop an experiment in integral transformative practice through their own research and practice and be able to embody the core principles of ITP.

Learning Objective 3: Most important: Students shall engage in the process of integral transformative practice and come to comprehend the degree of focus, commitment and actual practice that such endeavors require.

University, College, and Department Policy Information

Grading Information

Grading is not on a curve in this class. Grading in RelS 123 is based primarily on class participation, presentation and write-up of your term project, the BMS Journal submitted at the end of the term, and the Final Exam. Credit is also given for the four required visits to Office Hours. See Course Guidelines for additional information about writing, research, analysis, style guides and bibliographic format, and grading.

Grading Percentages Breakdown

94% and above	A
93% - 90%	A-
89% - 87%	B+
86% - 84%	B
83% - 80%	B-
79% - 77%	C+
76% - 74%	C
73% - 70%	C-
69% - 67%	D+
66% - 64%	D
63% - 60%	D-
below 60%	F

Disabilities

Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) to establish a record of their disability.

This syllabus and course assignments posted online are designed to be compliant with SJSU Accessibility Requirements for preexisting courses and accessible to JAWS Readers. If you have additional needs for special accommodation because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please discuss your needs with me at the beginning of the term, either at my regularly scheduled Office Hours or at another time scheduled by appointment, to discuss your needs.

Academic Integrity Policy (from the Office of Judicial Affairs)

From the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development: “Your commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.” The full policy on academic integrity can be found at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/AS1350.pdf>.

Honor Code: “I have read the Honor Code and agree with its provisions. My continued enrollment in this course constitutes full acceptance of this code. I will NOT:

- Take an exam or quiz, or write a paper in place of someone else, or have someone take an exam in my place, or give my work out to be copied.
- Give information or receive information from another person during a written quiz or exam.
- Use more reference material during an exam or quiz than is allowed by the instructor.
- Plagiarize: i.e., knowingly or unknowingly incorporate the ideas and/or words of another without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one’s own work.
- Obtain a copy of an exam or quiz prior to the time it is given.
- Discuss the contents of a quiz or exam with students who have not yet taken the exam in question.
- Alter an exam, quiz or paper after it has been graded, and then return it to the instructor for re-grading.
- Leave the classroom without returning the quiz or exam to the instructor.

Cell Phones: Students will turn their cell phones off or put them on vibrate mode while in class. They will not answer their phones in class. Students whose phones disrupt the course and do not stop when requested by the instructor will be referred to the Judicial Affairs Officer of the University.

Eating: Eating and drinking (except water) are prohibited in the classroom. Students are expected to eat outside of the classroom and/or building. Students who disrupt the course by eating or drinking and do not leave the building are to be referred to the Judicial Affairs Officer of the University.

Computer Use: In the classroom, students are allowed to use computers only for class-related activities. These include activities such as taking notes on the lecture underway, following the lecture on Web-based PowerPoint slides that the instructor has posted, and finding Web sites to which the instructor directs students at the time of the lecture. Students who use their computers for other activities or who abuse the equipment in any way, at a minimum, will be asked to leave the class and will lose participation points for the day, and, at a maximum, will be referred to the Judicial Affairs Officer of the University for disrupting the course. (Such referral can lead to suspension from the University.) Students are urged to report to their instructors computer use that they regard as distracting and/or inappropriate (i.e., used for activities that are not class related).

Academic Honesty: Faculty will make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct in their courses. They will secure examinations and their answers so that students cannot have prior access to them and proctor examinations to prevent students from copying or exchanging information. They will be on the alert for plagiarism. Faculty will provide additional information, ideally on the green sheet, about other unacceptable procedures in class work and examinations. Students who are caught cheating will be reported to the Judicial Affairs Officer of the University, as prescribed by Academic Senate Policy S04-12.

Appendix

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawal, etc. found at <http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/S04-12.pdf>

For expectations regarding classroom behavior; see [Academic Senate Policy S90-5](#) on Student Rights and Responsibilities.

See the university policies regarding plagiarism, as that found on Judicial Affairs website at <http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/plagiarismpolicies.htm>

If you would like to include in your paper any material you have submitted, or plan to submit, for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Integrity policy S04-12 requires approval by instructors.

Please be cognizant of the evacuation plan for the classroom in case of emergency.