**COMM 4400**

**Contemplative Communication**

**Opening Statement**

**On Uncertainty, Flexibility and Humane Relations:**

This syllabus suggests a plan for a course of study that may be interrupted, changed, moved, altered, weirded-out and other kinds of special effects not intended or imagined at the beginning when we dare to start to open it. Thus I want to assure everyone at the outset that I am open to the values and necessities of being creative as a living-thinking being and that the only thing I can promise you is that I will remain humane throughout the semester as we make our time worthwhile and find real things to focus on so that we are learning by living and not evading each other, giving up our minds and losing heart. I imagine everything will seem piecemeal, fragmented and at times irrelevant, but I don’t want to force an artificial frame on our experience and make false claims and assumptions. Rather, I hope we can dig into the “course material” to find what is real, helpful and meaningful, honestly, and that will require that we adapt to uncertainties with some flexibility and a commitment to being humane in our relations over the time we will be sharing together.

**Brief Course Description:**

This course seeks to open thought-systems to better enable thinking to flow freely and open more fully into contemplation. The course resists academic approaches in favoring a more meditative approach, which fortunately will allow us to deepen our reflectiveness and mindfulness during this pandemic.

**Course Texts (both available free online):**

1. Tao Te Ching (ancient Chinese classic, various translations available)
2. (2) Ran Lahav’s Philosophical Contemplation (2018). A 3rd book is recommended for purchase but not required: Sebastião Salgado’s photo-essay From My Land to the Planet (2014).

Also Recommended:

--Sebastião Salgado’s art book, *From My Land to the Planet* (Contrasto, 2014).

**Course Assignments:**

1. **Discussion**. Participation in weekly online discussions. We will meet via Zoom for the first few weeks but may stagger our online meetings with “active absences” at times to allow for a more substantial discussion of ideas via eCourseware’s “discussion” mode. For now, simply adapt to the idea that you will be actively contributing each week in some manner to this fluid course of study.

--40%

1. **Meditative Journal**: This should be kept in Word format and kept throughout the semester to work out your thoughts, stimulate your thinking and build your capacity to contemplate. Formatting, length, themes are up to you but you should aim to write regularly. At least 3 entries per week is a good gauge for a solid journal. You will turn this in toward the end of the semester.

--40%

1. **Reflective Essay** to be turned in at mid-point in the semester. This essay should summarize and articulate your working perspective and understanding of the contemplative dimension of communication. In particular, you will respond to Lahav’s book on philosophical contemplation as you build your own increasingly contemplative point of view.

--20%

4. **Readings**. Each of your assignments (discussion, journal, essay) presume

close reading and reflection on our texts. The *Tao Te Ching* is a classic work of poetic philosophy in the Eastern tradition that will nicely balance our more Western tradition. Online discussion will, in particular focus on the Tao as you share your interpretations/applications each week.

## Grading Scale

All grades including the final grade will use the following scale

100-90% = A 89-80% = B 79-70% = C 69-60% = D 59% and below = F

**Schedule for Class Meetings**

Date Theme

T 8-18 Introduction to the course (via Zoom link)

R 8-20 Thinking in a pandemic

T 8-25 What is contemplation, part I

R 8-27 What is contemplation, part II

T 9-1 Contemplation as a mode of concern

R 9-3 What happened to contemplation?

T 9-8 The modern era of thought

R 9-10 Systematizing thought

T 9-14 Thought-systems

R 9-16 Dysrelationality

T 9-21 Recovery

R 9-23 Resumption

**T 9-28** Review **Responsive Essay due**

R 9-30 Future themes will develop in response to 1st half of our course

T 10-5 TBD

R 10-7 TBD

T 10-12 TBD

R 10-14 TBD

T 10-26 TBD

R 10-28 TBD

T 11-2 TBD

R 11-4 TBD

T 11-9 TBD

**R 11-11**  TBD **Meditative Journal Due**

T 11-16 Final discussion

Course Policies

Masks or face coverings must be worn for any in person class meetings. Any failure to observe this requirement will cause immediate dismissal from the classroom for the student, and possibly for the entire class. Any failure to comply with this rule will be reported to the office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action.

## Academic Dishonesty

The Office of Student Accountability defines the following on the linked website:

Plagiarism - "The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one’s own without proper attribution."

Cheating - "Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or aids in any academic exercise or test/examination. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours."

Fabrication - "Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise."

Respect and Responsibilities

Students can expect the instructor to be

* concerned for the educational experience of each student in the class
* prepared for class
* knowledgeable of and enthusiastic about the course material
* thorough and prompt in evaluating assignments
* respectful of individual differences
* encouraging of creativity
* reasonably open and accessible to discuss material and assignments
* rigorous yet supportive in maintaining high standards for performance.

Students in this course are expected to

* work, individually and together, to create an atmosphere that is safe, valuing of one another, and open to diverse perspectives.
* prepare for class participation by completing course reading and assigned work before class meetings.
* show courtesy, civility, and respect for one another and for the instructor. Sleeping, reading materials irrelevant to the class, texting or other disruptive or uncivil behavior violates these expectations and will not be tolerated.
* Comments that degrade or ridicule another, whether based on individual or cultural differences, are not acceptable.

## Resources for Students

Center for Writing and Communication

This Center offers assistance in speech development, outlining and practice for all students enrolled in COMM 2381. It is located on the ground floor of the main campus library. An appointment to meet with a tutor can be made at <http://www.memphis.edu/cwc/about/how_to.php>

Stress Management

The Relaxation Zone services are FREE to enrolled UofM students. No appointment is necessary; Drop by anytime. The Relaxation Zone located in Brister Hall 302 is open Monday - Friday between 9:00 am - 4:00 pm for the Fall and Spring and 10:00 am - 3:00 pm in the Summer.

Tiger Pantry

The Tiger Pantry is a choice pantry open to current University of Memphis students. The pantry generally carries non-perishable food items, basic toiletries, and basic household items. To access the pantry or to learn more visit Office of the Dean of Students' Student Outreach and Support services in University Center, Room 359 from Mondays through Fridays between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm.