

# **AROUSING COSMIC ENERGY IN THE SUBTLE BODY: THE SCHOLAR PRACTITIONER MODEL**

**HDS 3328, Tuesday/Thursday, 10.30 AM - 11.45 AM EST  
Rockefeller #116**

**Professor**

Sravana Borkataky-Varma

[svarma@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:svarma@hds.harvard.edu)

Mobile: 281 216 8348

**Office Hours:** By appointment after class.

**COURSE CONCERNING CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS:**

**MDiv Curriculum Distribution Categories:** Buddhism, Comparative, Hinduism, South Asia Religions

**Art of Ministry:** Religious Education and Spiritual Development

**MTS and ThM Curriculum Distribution Categories:** Buddhist Studies, Comparative Studies, East Asian Religions, Hindu Studies, Religions of the Americas, South Asian Religious Traditions

**Course Overview:**

What does it mean to be a scholar-practitioner in the academic study of religion? This course engages the scholar-cum-practitioner lens to explore and embody the arousal of the latent cosmic energy in the subtle body. Students will not only encounter exciting course contents but also engage exercises to apply the contents and track their experiences, exploding the usual insider/outsider, emic/etic, scholar/practitioner duality. Meditation, mantra, visualization, and mandala are key to recognizing the subtle body and emphasizing the shifts of meaning-making and interpretation regarding the subtle body. Course contents are selected from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, but the practice component allows students to define and explore the cosmic energy according to their own understanding, experience, and tradition. Students will be required to build and cultivate a practice of their own, and this will be supported by in-class instruction, low stake journal writing, discussions, and short writing assignments whereby the students can make sense of their experiences and correlate experiences with the reading.

## SYLLABUS

Please Note: This is a proposed syllabus. We will collectively adjust as we come together as a class and as we go through the semester.

### Requirements

- Regular class attendance and participation are assumed.
- Weekly reflections to be submitted on the Discussion Board (DB). Due Saturday EOD.
- Mid-Term paper (c. 10 Pp), due on October 22, EOD.
- End Term Paper (12 Pp), due on December 14, EOD. Papers must be related to one or more of the topics discussed in class, drawing on a course reading or readings. The topic chosen by the student in consultation with the professor is encouraged.

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>September 2</b> Introduction, Syllabus, and Expectations
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>September 7</b> Russell McCutcheon, <i>The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study Of Religion: A Reader</i> . <b>Read Pp. 1-22, Pp. 104-126</b>  Mark Singleton and Borayin Larios, “The Scholar-practitioner of yoga in western academy,” in ed. Suzanne Newcombe and Karen O’Brien-Kop, <i>Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies</i> .  <b>September 9</b> Setting boundaries and expectations for the <i>maṇḍala</i> , practice
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>September 14</b> Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman, <i>The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies</i> . <b>Read Pp. 1-80</b>  <b>September 16</b> Practice: <i>Tat Tvam Asi</i> ; I am divine, the divine is me
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>September 21</b> “Interpreting the Image of the Human Body in Premodern India,” Dominik Wujastyk, <i>International Journal of Hindu Studies</i> 13, 2: 189–228, 2009  <b>September 23</b> Practice: <i>Tat Tvam Asi</i> ; I am divine, the divine is me
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>September 28</b> James Mallinson and Mark Singleton, <i>Roots of Yoga</i> . <b>Read Pp. 171-227</b> <b>September 30</b>

	Practice: Mantra on the Body ( <i>Nyāsa</i> )
<b>Week 6</b>	<p><b>October 5</b> Madhu Khanna, “Yantra and Cakra in Tantric Meditation,” in Halvor Eifring, <i>Asian Traditions of Meditations</i></p> <p><b>October 7</b> Practice: <i>Cakra</i> Meditation with sounds</p>
<b>Week 7</b>	<p><b>October 12</b> Tenzin Wangyal, <i>Healing with Form, Energy, and Light</i>. <b>Read Pp. 1-75</b></p> <p><b>October 14</b> Practice: Activating a <i>Cakra</i></p>
<b>Week 8</b>	<p><b>October 19</b> Tenzin Wangyal, <i>Healing with Form, Energy, and Light</i>. <b>Read Pp. 76-109</b></p> <p><b>October 21</b> Practice: Mantra on the <i>Cakra</i></p>
<b>Week 9</b>	<p><b>October 26</b> Eric Huntington, <i>Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism</i>. <b>Read TBD</b></p> <p><b>October 28</b> Practice: Build your <i>maṇḍala</i></p>
<b>Week 10</b>	<p><b>November 2</b> Eric Huntington, <i>Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism</i>. <b>Read TBD</b></p> <p><b>November 4</b> Practice: Your <i>maṇḍala</i> core</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<p><b>November 9</b> Sthaneshwar Timalsina, <i>Seeing and Appearance</i>. <b>Read Pp. 139-182</b></p> <p><b>November 11: No Class, Veterans Day</b></p>
<b>Week 12</b>	<p><b>November 16</b> Ken McLeod, <i>Wake Up to Your Life</i>. <b>Read Pp.127-206</b></p> <p><b>November 18</b> Practice: Replace your <i>maṇḍala</i> core</p>

<b>Week 13</b>	<b>November 23: No Class, AAR</b>  <b>November 25, No Class, Thanksgiving</b>
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>November 30</b> Wrap-up and final paper discussions  <b>December 2</b> Practice: <i>Maṇḍala</i> : Inner core to radiating energy

**Grading (Weighted Average):**

Participation (30%): Includes attendance, class participation weekly submissions of weekly responses on the Discussion Board (DB), and journal keeping. Each submission is worth 10 points.

Mid-term paper (35%)

Final Paper (35%)

**Academic Integrity:**

The course follows Harvard College’s policies on plagiarism and collaboration. Specifically, any material submitted to meet course requirements—homework assignments, papers, projects, posted comments—is expected to be a student’s own work. All students are asked to bookmark and consult regularly the Harvard Guide to Using Sources website at <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu>. You are urged to take great care in distinguishing your own ideas and thoughts from information and analysis derived from printed and electronic sources, and you are responsible for knowing and following the College’s policy on proper use of sources. These policies are stated clearly at the Harvard Guide to Using Sources website.

**Flexibility policies:**

We are all experiencing a time of unparalleled upheavals and challenges. Thus, throughout the semester [great] flexibility will be extended to all students in reference to the assignments detailed above. A crucial element for the success of the course overall, and of this policy specifically, is communication. Unforeseen circumstances will certainly arise for every one of us. This makes it all the more important to communicate promptly about such circumstances with the instructor, the head-TF, and/or your section leader. “Attendance and full participation” should be understood as being present on Zoom with video for the entire duration of our class meetings. It is understood that sometimes being present with video may not be possible, but in those cases students are required to alert the instructor and TF in advance.

**Disabilities:**

If you have a disability that may interfere with regular class attendance or your completion of assignments on time, see the instructors at the start of the term so that necessary arrangements can be made in conjunction with the Accessible Education Office (AEO).

<https://aeo.fas.harvard.edu/>

**Student Mental Health & Wellbeing:**

Learning should be a pleasure, but sometimes stress makes coping with classes difficult. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and in need of support, please consider contacting Harvard University Health Counseling and Mental Health Services.

<https://camhs.huhs.harvard.edu/>