ACTIVITIES OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES INITIATIVE

• Sponsoring and mentoring undergraduate independent concentrations (13 as of 2012)
• Advising contemplative focuses within existing concentrations (34 as of 2012)
• Supporting student scientists who study research methods in our CS labs (50 or more as of 2012)
• ContemplativeStudies.org: website and clearing house with a listserv of over 900 members
• Contemplative Studies Lectures, Workshops and Retreats: over 100 events in the past 6 years
• Contemplative Pedagogy Grants: for faculty to promote contemplative practices in the curriculum
• Contemplative Practice Grants: for students to attend a contemplative retreat of their choice
• Contemplative Studies Summer Intensive: Summer Session at Brown; scholarships available
• Contemplative mentor in residence program

Related Activities at Brown

• Brown Yoga and Mindfulness Group (YAM), with over 800 members
• Brown meditation community: student operated with 500 members
• Cheetah house: a contemplative studies residential center

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

• The establishment of a Brown University Center for Contemplative Studies that would be a world leader in training a new generation of contemplative scientists, humanists, and artists.
• A building to house the new center and provide lab, office, classroom, and yoga and meditation space.

SPONSORS

The Mind and Life Institute
The Hershey Family Foundation
The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
The Frederick P. Lenz Foundation for American Buddhism
The National Institutes of Health (NIH)
Contemplative Studies is a rapidly developing academic field dedicated to studying human contemplative experiences through Science, the Humanities, and the Creative Arts.

“The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgement, character, and will... An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence.”

William James, The Principles of Psychology (1890), p. 463
A NEW ACADEMIC FIELD

1. Studying the underlying philosophy, psychology, neuroscience and phenomenology of human contemplative practices and experiences;

2. Focusing on the many ways different cultures have developed to concentrate, broaden and deepen conscious awareness as the gateway to leading more ethically responsible, and personally fulfilling lives;

3. Identifying the wide variety of contemplative experiences, cultivating both first-person and third person understanding of them; and investigating them with available scientific methods.

INTEGRATIVE CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGY™

Brown Contemplative Studies has been a pioneer in the development of new teaching methods that combine traditional third-person study with “critical first-person” study. We teach a variety of courses in the Humanities, Sciences, and Creative Arts in which direct experiential knowledge of contemplative practices is balanced by historical, philosophical and scientific knowledge of them. Peer to peer “second-person learning” and non self-referential “no person” learning are also part of the holistic training we call “integrative contemplative pedagogy.”

MEDICAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

Training young physicians in the use of contemplative methods in clinical practice, this program also supports them in developing their own skills for listening to patients and remaining calm and focused amidst challenging medical situations. Students are matched with clinical mentors who are using contemplative methods in their own practices and researchers who are studying contemplative effects on patients in multi-year projects that can lead to publishable results.

LECTURE AND RETREAT SERIES

Contemplative Studies has hosted an interdisciplinary lecture and retreat series by leading contemplatives, scientists and scholars in the field, including:

James Austin  David Hykes  David Meyer
Harvey Aronson  Amishi Jha  Larry Rosenberg
Edwin Bryant  Jon Kabat-Zinn  Donald Rothberg
Mark Epstein  Thomas Keating  Sharon Salzberg
Lawrence Fine  Anne Klein  Clifford Saron
Norman Fischer  Sara Lazar  Daniel Siegel
Rupert Gethin  Mitchell Levy  Evan Thompson
Joan Halifax  David Loy  Shinzen Young
Chip Hartranft  John Makransky  Alan Wallace
Victor Hori  Frederick Marx  Arthur Zajonc
CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES RESEARCH

The Translational Neuroscience Laboratory of Dr. Catherine Kerr

Our research looks at the ways in which contemplative practices such as mindfulness and taiji change the brain and the nervous system. The lab specifically focuses on the ways in which contemplative practices that engage body-focused attention bring about specific changes in brain synchrony and corticomuscular coherence. The goal of our studies is to understand how practices such as mindfulness and taiji bring about changes at multiple levels in the brain and body. This knowledge is directly relevant to treatments for chronic pain and depression and disorders related to aging.

The Clinical and Affective Neuroscience (CLAN) Laboratory of Dr. Willoughby Britton

Our lab conducts clinical trials of contemplative training in clinical populations in order to investigate the link between contemplative practices, brain function, and affective disturbances, such as anxiety, depression and substance abuse.

The lab also investigates the effects of contemplative education programs in middle school and university students in comparison to music and dance training. The lab is conducting a 5-year NIH-funded study that compares the effects of different meditation practices on brain function and emotional wellbeing. The lab is also conducting research on the adverse effects and difficult stages of the contemplative path.

The Laboratory in Cognitive and Perceptual Learning of Dr. Takeo Watanabe

The new Watanabe Lab, in the Department of Cognitive, Linguistic, and Psychological Sciences, is also affiliated with the Contemplative Studies Initiative.

“Education, in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society, must be based upon experience – which is always the life experience of some individual… There is no discipline in the world so severe as the discipline of experience subjected to the tests of intelligent development and direction.”

John Dewey, Education and Experience (1938) pp. 89-90