

MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling: Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration

The Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration is a unique, 63-credit clinical training program integrating traditions from clinical counseling and psychology with the contemplative wisdom of Buddhism. A pioneer in the use of meditation as a foundation for the clinical training of counselors, the Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration has challenged and supported students for over forty years to recognize "brilliant sanity" in themselves and others and to discover compassionate presence as a ground for their clinical work. A strong value of the program is training counselors to work skillfully across cultural difference with awareness and humility.

Students in the Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration move through their studies as a cohort and changes to course sequencing (outlined in the degree requirements) is only permitted in extenuating circumstances. To change course sequencing, students must apply for an Exception to Policy with the Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology graduate adviser.

Students participate in small and large process groups throughout the program. The group aspect of the program takes mindfulness-awareness practice into relationship and allows students the opportunity to study their relational patterns in real time. Another important aspect of the the Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration is the five maitri meditation retreats. Maitri is a Sanskrit term that can mean "unconditional friendliness," and this teaching and practice becomes the ground for the nine weeks that students spend on retreat over the course of the program. Each retreat has a different focus, beginning with a strong emphasis on sitting meditation, and gradually incorporating practices designed to cultivate relational awareness, compassion, and emotional intelligence. One of these practices, Maitri Space Awareness, was designed by Naropa's founder, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and has become a hallmark of the program.

The Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration prepares students for a clinical counseling career and meets the educational requirements for licensure as a professional counselor in Colorado. The semester-long practicum and the year-long supervised internship provide essential clinical experience. While in their internship, students participate in contemplative supervision with clinical faculty and practice applying a contemplative view and case conceptualization to their counseling relationships. These groups provide intensive mentoring to help students with the transition into the world of professional counseling.

The curricular arc in the Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration is designed to guide students on a

journey of practice and study that leads to inner resilience and warmth, as well as giving them basic confidence in their capacity to help others.

Degree Requirements

First year, fall

- CNSC600 [Opening Retreat](#) (noncredit)
- CNSC603 [Buddhist Psychology I: Foundations of Practice](#) (2)
- CNSC609 [Group Process I](#) (0.5)
- CNSC610 [Social and Multicultural Foundations](#) (3)
- CNSC620 [Human Growth and Development: Contemplative View](#) (3)
- CNSC660 [Maitri I](#) (1)
- CNSC711 [Career Development: Work, Transition, and Path](#) (3)

SUBTOTAL 12.5

First year, spring

- CNSC623 [Buddhist Psychology II: Abhidharma and the Psychology of Confusion](#) (2)
- CNSC629 [Group Process II](#) (0.5)
- CNSC631 [Counseling & Helping Relationships: Skills Practice I](#) (3)
- CNSC638 [Psychopathology I: Lineages of Understanding](#) (3)
- CNSC665 [Maitri II](#) (1)
- CNSC710 [Research and Statistics](#) (3)
- CNSC728 [Large Group Process](#) (0.5)

SUBTOTAL 13

Second year, fall

- CNSC703 [Buddhist Psychology III: Compassion and the Heart of Emptiness](#) (2)
- CNSC709 [Group Process III](#) (0.5)
- CNSC751 [Group Counseling: Theory and Practice](#) (3)
- CNSC760 [Maitri III](#) (1)
- CNSC770 [Family Systems](#) (3)
- CNSC790 [Counseling Practicum](#) (3)

SUBTOTAL 12.5

Second year, spring

- CNSC700 [Assessment](#) (3)
- CNSC723 [Buddhist Psychology IV: The Practice of Counseling and the Path of the Bodhisattva](#) (2)
- CNSC729 [Group Process IV](#) (0.5)
- CNSC738 [Psychopathology II: Psychosis and Ordinary Mind](#) (3)
- CNSC765 [Maitri IV](#) (1)
- CNSC801 [Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice: Skills Practice II](#) (3)
- CNSC828 [Large Group Process II](#) (0.5)

SUBTOTAL 13

Second year, summer (optional)

- CNSG871 [Extended Internship I](#) (0)

Third year, fall

- CNSC803 [Buddhist Psychology V: The Way of the Contemplative Counselor](#) (3)
- CNSC809 [Group Process V](#) (0.5)
- CNSC871 [Internship I: Placement & Contemplative Supervision](#) (2)
- CNSC890 [Special Topics](#) (0.5)

SUBTOTAL 6

Third year, spring

- CNSC823 [The Art of Contemplative Clinical Mental Health Counseling](#) (3)
- CNSC829 [Group Process VI](#) (0.5)
- CNSC860 [Maitri V](#) (0.5)
- CNSC891 [Internship II: Placement & Contemplative Supervision](#) (2)

SUBTOTAL 6

Third year, summer (optional)

- CNSG891 [Extended Internship II](#) (0)

Total Credits: 63

Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Course Listings (CNSC)

CNSC600

Opening Retreat (0.0)

An introduction to the fundamental principles of contemplative counseling psychology, this weekend intensive provides the opportunity for community building, an introduction to meditation, and the marking of the transition into the MA Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology concentration.

CNSC603

Buddhist Psychology I: Foundations of Practice (2.0)

Contemplative Counseling is based on the view of Brilliant Sanity or Buddha Nature, the idea that health is intrinsic and unconditional. This course presents teachings from Buddhist psychology on the mind in both sanity and confusion. In particular, we examine the mistaken notion of a solid, separate self as the foundation of suffering and misunderstanding. The importance of impermanence and transition is highlighted. We begin an exploration of how habitual patterns of mind may lead to addictive patterns of behavior. Meditation practice is introduced both as a method of self-care and of self-awareness and inquiry. Self-understanding

is emphasized as the basis for ethical and helpful counseling relationships.

CNSC609

Group Process I (0.5)

A cohort of students participates in a small group throughout their tenure in the program. Emphasis is on providing support for the students' journey, while providing the students the opportunity to study the many dimensions of small group dynamics as these develop in their respective groups.

CNSC610

Social and Multicultural Foundations (3.0)

In this class, students study theories of community; work with the skills and qualities necessary to understand and foster a cohesive, compassionate, and creative learning community; and establish the ground for studying oneself in relationship. Particular attention is paid to systems of privilege and oppression and multicultural competence. Advocacy and public policy in terms of their effect on access and equity are explored. The course also provides the theoretical and experiential ground for working skillfully with diverse identities such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, education, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability, including mental illness. Buddhist principles of non-duality and the coexistence of relative and absolute truth provide the conceptual basis from which students learn to bring a sense of maitri and nonaggression to their work.

CNSC620

Human Growth and Development: Contemplative View (3.0)

An exploration of human experience and psychological development throughout the trajectory of a lifespan. Topics include impact of key events, life stages, human nature, biopsychosocial needs, and the feminist views on relational development. Seminal theories of Western psychology are explored and critiqued through a multicultural lens and the contemplative view of human development is considered through Buddhist teachings on the development of ego and interdependence.

CNSC623

Buddhist Psychology II: Abhidharma and the Psychology of Confusion (2.0)

The abhidharma teachings on the five skandhas and the six "realms" provide precise understanding of the development of a false sense of self and how this mistaken view leads to a variety of styles of confusion and suffering. The study of karmic cause and effect leads to an understanding of how habitual patterns and addictive behaviors develop and may be interrupted. Pratiyasamutpada is studied as an approach to understanding interdependence and systems thinking. The early ethical teachings of the Buddha are studied, and the practice of mindfulness-awareness sitting meditation is explored further, both experientially and intellectually.

CNSC629

Group Process II (0.5)

This is a continuation of Group Process I.

CNSC631

Counseling & Helping Relationships: Skills Practice I (3.0)

Introduction to the professional practice of contemplative counseling, which emphasizes how the practice of mindfulness-awareness can inform skillful therapeutic presence that fosters healing relationships. Topics include current counseling theories and their applications, a culturally sensitive orientation to the fundamental health of the human mind, and contemplative self-care strategies for working with human suffering and cultivating wellness. The course utilizes experiential training and practice in clinical skills. Students are observed and given faculty and peer feedback.

CNSC638

Psychopathology I: Lineages of Understanding (3.0)

Intrinsic health is the ground of experience, yet one repeatedly loses touch with it. This course explores the sequence of events through which one can become absorbed in "storylines." The painful nature of this experience, which is a patchwork of events real and imagined, is explored. Emphasis is on recognizing the experience of sanity within pathology. Students experience the personal and painful nature of such psychopathology as it occurs in their own lives and in the lives of others. The recovery stages of health are introduced, along with an introduction to diagnosis and the use of testing in appraisal.

CNSC660

Maitri I (1.0)

A two-week residential intensive focusing on the practice of intensive sitting and walking meditation. Students refine their understanding of meditation practice. Self-understanding is emphasized as the basis for ethical and helpful counseling relationships. Additional fee for room and board.

CNSC665

Maitri II (1.0)

A two-week residential intensive focusing on the practice of intensive sitting and walking meditation. Maitri Space Awareness is directed toward becoming increasingly at home with oneself and with others. Students are introduced to the Five Buddha Families of Tibetan Buddhist teachings as a way of understanding how the seeds of clarity are often hidden within the manifestations of confusion and suffering. This residential class requires full participation in all aspects of the program. Additional fee for room and board.

CNSC699

Independent Study: Contemplative Psychotherapy - Buddhist Psychology (0.5-4.0)

This course offering is an opportunity for students to engage in in-depth, concentrated study with a particular faculty member for a semester. The design of study and course work is decided upon by the student and faculty member. Independent Studies will

count for a standard 3 credits. If a variable credit (0.5 - 4 credits) Independent Study is desired, a student must receive additional approval. See the Independent Study Application for further details.

CNSC700

Assessment (3.0)

An overview of approaches to clinical assessment and evaluation with application through the lens of contemplative counseling. Topics include standardized and non-standardized testing and interpretation, psychometric statistics, factors related to diverse populations, case conceptualization, and diagnosis. Ethical and legal considerations are integrated throughout the course. The course also provides an understanding of basic classifications, indications, and contraindications of commonly prescribed psychopharmacological medications for referrals and identification of side effects.

CNSC703

Buddhist Psychology III: Compassion and the Heart of Emptiness (2.0)

An introduction to the Mahayana teachings with their emphasis on skillfully helping others, the teachings on bodhicitta, awakened mind, and the four brahmaviharas as methods for cultivating compassion. The Buddhist teachings on sunyata (emptiness) are explored with respect to their implications for clinical work. Students apply these teachings both to their own personal experience and to clinical work.

CNSC709

Group Process III (0.5)

This course is a continuation of CNSC629.

CNSC710

Research and Statistics (3.0)

A survey of research methods and statistics as they apply to clinical mental health counseling. Topics include types of psychological research, descriptive and inferential statistics, experimental and correlational methods, qualitative methods, test construction, needs assessments, program evaluation, research ethics, and literature review. The course includes lectures, discussion, and practice exercises.

CNSC711

Career Development: Work, Transition, and Path (3.0)

Major life transitions are explored, including lifestyle choices, career selection, identity shifts, relational transitions, and transitions between life and death. Beginning with an exploration of transitional space, paradox, and play, students are encouraged to integrate impermanence, interdependence, and groundlessness. A significant focus of the class is on major career theories and the foundations and practice of career counseling. Students are also encouraged to apply the class material to their own major life transitions, including the changes involved in beginning their graduate study.

CNSC723

Buddhist Psychology IV: The Practice of Counseling and the Path of the Bodhisattva (2.0)

The Mahayana ideal of the bodhisattva, one who dedicated their life to the welfare of others, can be an inspiration for the counselor. This course focuses on the example of the bodhisattva and the practice of the six paramitas, or transcendent actions, as they apply both to the students' own development and to working with therapy clients. Understanding compassion as the basis for ethical behavior and the appropriate setting of boundaries in the clinical relationship is stressed. Classical texts, contemporary commentaries, and clinical writings are also studied.

CNSC728

Large Group Process (0.5)

A cohort of students participates in a large group process that includes their entire class. Emphasis is on providing support for the students' journey, while providing the students the opportunity to study the many dimensions of large group dynamics as these develop in their group. The class focuses on issues of inclusiveness/exclusiveness, finding one's voice in a large group or community, and how to lead large groups.

CNSC729

Group Process IV (0.5)

This course is a continuation of CNSC709.

CNSC738

Psychopathology II: Psychosis and Ordinary Mind (3.0)

This course examines psychosis through clinical material and a discussion of Buddhist and other understandings of mind. Strategies for facilitating optimum development and wellness over the life span are discussed. Assessment and diagnosis of psychotic disorders are included. The class emphasizes selected approaches to treatments that provide the advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients.

CNSC751

Group Counseling: Theory and Practice (3.0)

A comprehensive introduction to the theoretical and practical aspects of effective group leadership. Theories of group therapy are studied. Other issues include factors that affect group dynamics, such as size, composition, and types. Group leadership is discussed in the context of the contract, group resistance, transference and countertransference, cohesion, aggression and hostility, and acting out. Students have the opportunity to play the group leader and receive feedback from the instructor and teaching assistants.

CNSC760

Maitri III (1.0)

A two-week residential intensive focusing on the relationship between individual contemplative practice and working with others, both in the maitri community and in clinical practice. Intensive sitting meditation, walking meditation, and community living provide opportunities for increased self-understanding, self-acceptance,

and openness to differences. These learnings continue to form the ground upon which ethical and healing relationships may be cultivated. The academic portion of the program focuses on the Lojong teachings of the Buddhist Mahayana tradition and their application to clinical work. Additional fee for room and board.

CNSC765

Maitri IV (1.0)

A two-week residential intensive focusing on the relationship between individual contemplative practice and working with others, both in the maitri community and in clinical practice. Intensive sitting meditation, walking meditation, Maitri Space Awareness practice, and community living provide opportunities for increased self-understanding, self-acceptance, and openness to differences. These learnings continue to form the ground upon which ethical and healing relationships may be cultivated. The academic portion of the program focuses on the Lojong teachings of the Buddhist Mahayana tradition and their application to clinical work. Additional fee for room and board.

CNSC770

Family Systems (3.0)

An introduction to family process and family systems. The purpose of the course is to assist students in experiencing the shift in perception that comes from seeing a family as a system with its own organization and life, beyond that of the individual. In addition, students explore their families of origin as a ground for working with others. The course consists of lectures, student presentations, class discussions, and experiential exercises.

CNSC790

Counseling Practicum (3.0)

Counseling Practicum is designed to provide a supportive and instructional forum for students' initial experiences in clinical placement through the introduction of counseling skills, consultation, and group and triadic supervision. On-site supervision is supplemented in this class with a contemplative model of case presentation, Body, Speech, and Mind. Topics include theoretical orientation, case conceptualization and planning, clinical interventions, as well as dynamics of the student-supervisory relationship, organizational issues at the site, and self-care. The course also provides a systemic overview of mental health service delivery, policy, and access to community resources.

CNSC801

Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice: Skills Practice II (3.0)

Providing continuing training in clinical skills, this course emphasizes the study of professional roles and standards, including ethics, legal issues, and credentialing.

CNSC803

Buddhist Psychology V: The Way of the Contemplative Counselor (3.0)

In this course, students review the Buddhist psychological teachings and practices that they have studied in Buddhist Psychology I

through IV, and they also study further Buddhist teachings drawn from the Vajrayana tradition of Tibet. The emphasis is on deepening students' understanding of all of these teachings and practices as potent resources for counselors engaged in clinical work. Some counseling approaches that have an affinity with a contemplative approach are also introduced, e.g., Focusing, Gestalt Therapy, and Feeding Your Demons. The format of the class includes mindfulness, awareness, and compassion meditations; lecture; discussion; and counseling skills practice.

CNSC809

Group Process V (0.5)

This course is a continuation of CNSC729.

CNSC823

The Art of Contemplative Clinical Mental Health Counseling (3.0)

An opportunity for students to review and integrate the Buddhist teachings while engaging in their internship experience. Students present clinical issues arising with clients and examine ways to integrate Buddhist, clinical, social justice, and other contemporary approaches to the art of practicing contemplative clinical mental health counseling. The course culminates in a Master's Paper and Presentation designed to further the conceptual and clinical acumen of the developing counselor.

CNSC828

Large Group Process II (0.5)

This course is a continuation of CNSC728.

CNSC829

Group Process VI (0.5)

This course is a continuation of CNSC809.

CNSC860

Maitri V (0.5)

A weeklong retreat held during spring break, the third-year Maitri program brings attention to endings: the ending of the three-year program for the students and the termination process in therapy. Students are encouraged to bring mindfulness and awareness to the experiences that arise during termination. The traditional teachings on death and dying found in the Tibetan Book of the Dead provide surprisingly relevant guidance for the contemporary therapist in dealing with endings of all kinds. Additional fee for room and board.

CNSC871

Internship I: Placement and Contemplative Supervision (2.0)

Internship I provides a supportive and instructional forum for students' continued experiences in clinical placement. Students engage in weekly Contemplative Supervision groups in order to present client cases from their internship site. This style of presentation is a phenomenological approach to clinical supervision directed toward a deeper understanding and integration of the complexities arising within the therapeutic relationship.

CNSC877

Extended Clinical Tutorial (0.5-2.0)

Students who have not completed Internship may be required to register for Extended Clinical Tutorial. See Special Student Status in the Academic Information section. May be repeated.

CNSC890

Special Topics: Trauma-Informed Care (0.5)

A Special Topics course is an advanced examination of a topic from the field of counseling. Assignments may include readings, papers, oral presentations, warrior exams, and literature searches. Topics vary by semester and section. Prerequisites include CNSC723, CNSC738 and CNSC700 or permission of instructor. Fall 2019 Supplemental Course Description:

Trauma Informed Care: Trauma-informed care and the differences between shock trauma, vicarious trauma/secondary trauma, cultural trauma, and developmental trauma. This course will include theory, experiential exercises, applied counseling skills, and ethics of counseling to heal trauma. The utilization of contemplative and social justice practices will be incorporated as a way to develop and maintain an open and non-dualistic perspective of trauma and health.

CNSC891

Internship II: Placement & Contemplative Supervision (2.0)

This course is a continuation of CNSC871.