

Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Concentration

MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

MA Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology is a unique, 63-credit clinical training program integrating traditions from clinical psychology with the contemplative wisdom of Buddhism. A pioneer in the use of meditation as a foundation for the clinical training of counselors, MA Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology has challenged and supported students for forty years to recognize their own “brilliant sanity and to discover compassionate presence as a ground for their clinical work.

Students in the Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology program move through their studies as a cohort. They 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 MA Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology program is the five maitri meditation retreats. Maitri is a Sanskrit term that means “unconditional friendliness,” and this teaching and practice becomes the ground for the total of nine weeks that students spend on retreat. 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 MA Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology program prepares students for a counseling career. The semester-long practicum and the supervised internship provide essential clinical experience. While in their internship, students participate in tutorials with clinical faculty, and practice applying a contemplative view 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 MA Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology program 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 [Introduction to Buddhist Psychology](#) (2)
- CNSC609 [Group Process I](#) (0.5)
- CNSC610 [Social and Multicultural Foundations](#) (3)
- CNSC650 [Social and Multicultural Foundations: Community and Interdependence](#) (3)
- CNSC660 [Maitri I](#) (1)

- CNSC711 [Career Development: Work, Transition, and Path](#) (3)

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 [Lineages of Understanding: Buddhist and Western Perspectives on Well-being and Disorder](#) (3)
- CNSC665 [Maitri II](#) (1)
- CNSC710 [Research and Statistics](#) (3)
- CNSC728 [Large Group Process](#) (0.5)

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: Retreat](#) (1)
- CNSC770 [Family Systems](#) (3)
- CNSC790 [Counseling Practicum](#) (3)

Second year, spring

- CNSC700 [Assessment](#) (3)
- CNSC723 [Buddhist Psychology IV: The Practice of Psychotherapy and the Path of the Bodhisattva](#) (2)
- CNSC729 [Group Process IV](#) (0.5)
- CNSC738 [Psychopathology, 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)

Third year, fall

- CNSC803 [Contemplative Psychology Seminar](#) (3)
- CNSC809 [Group Process V](#) (1)
- CNSC871 [Internship I: Placement & Contemplative Supervision](#) (2)

Third year, spring

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

Total Credits 63

Course Listings

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 Counseling Psychology program. Additional fee for weekend supplies.

CNSC603

Introduction to Buddhist Psychology (2.0)

Contemplative counseling psychology 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. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

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 lifetime. Key events, life passages, human nature, needs, and development will be explored. Seminal theories of Western psychology, together with key concepts and practices of Buddhism, provide a context within which we will consider an integrative view of human development. Understanding of these subjects will be deepened through self-reflection, meditation, observation, and a consideration of what supports health and development. A major goal of the class is to arouse interest in human experience and development.

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. Pratyasamutpada 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. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

CNSC629

Group Process II (0.5)

This is a continuation of Group Process I.

CNSC631

Counseling & Helping Relationships: Skills Practice I (3.0)

Introductory exploration of the professional practice of psychotherapy, which is seen as the joining of the personal discipline of mindfulness-awareness practice that cultivates self-understanding with the interpersonal discipline of cultivating healing relationships. The course includes both experiential and intellectual components, and emphasizes 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 and on-the-spot feedback.

CNSC638

Lineages of Understanding: Buddhist & Western Perspectives on Well-being and Disorder (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 Program 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 one-on-one meditation instruction. Additional fee for room and board: \$1536.29

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 one-on-one meditation instruction. 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 individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation, as these have developed historically from a traditional educational and psychological perspective, through a more focused counseling perspective, with suggested applications appropriate for transpersonal and contemplative practitioners. The course covers basic topics of standardized and non-standardized testing and other assessment techniques including inventories, observations, and computer managed methods. Topics include psychometric statistics, factors related to the assessment and evaluation of individuals, groups, and special populations, case conceptualization, assessment, and diagnosis. Ethical and legal considerations are integrated throughout the course. Issues of diversity related to development of and selection of assessment instruments are also explored. The course also provides an understanding of basic classifications, indications, and contraindications of commonly prescribed psychopharmacological

medications for referrals and identification of side effects. Course fee.

CNSC703

Buddhist Psychology III (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. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

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 counseling psychology and psychotherapy. Topics include philosophical issues, rigor, types of psychological research, descriptive and inferential statistics, experimental and correlational methods, qualitative methods, test construction, needs assessments, program evaluation, research ethics, the structure of research reports, and strategies for literature searches. The course seeks to be applicable and useful for both professional and personal growth and includes lectures, discussion, and practice exercises.

CNSC711

Career Development (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 Psychotherapy 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 psychotherapist. 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. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

CNSC728

Large Group Process (0.5)

Students participate in a large group process. Key theoretical concepts, individuals' experience within the group, and the group's dynamics are examined.

CNSC729

Group Process IV (0.5)

This course is a continuation of CNSC709.

CNSC738

Psychopathology, 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 (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 one-on-one meditation instruction. Additional fee for room and board: \$1536.29

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 one-on-one meditation instruction. 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)

The Counseling Practicum is designed to provide a supportive and instructional forum for students' initial experiences with counseling clients in clinical settings. The practicum provides for the continued development of counseling and therapeutic skills with consultation and supervision, utilizing both group and triadic models. A significant portion of each class meeting is devoted to case consultation and secondary supervision, in addition to the primary supervisory responsibilities of the on-site supervisor. Students discuss professional and personal issues as they relate to their development as beginning counselors. Topics include understanding client issues for a specific theoretical orientation, including a contemplative therapeutic approach, case planning, clinical decision making, client transference and therapist countertransference, as well as dynamics of the student-supervisory relationship, organizational issues at the site, and balancing personal and professional responsibilities including self-care. The course also provides a systemic overview of mental health service delivery, policy, and issues of advocacy, and access to community resources. It includes the study of public mental health policy, financing, and regulatory processes to improve service delivery opportunities in clinical mental health counseling, as well as models, methods, and principles of program development and service delivery.

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

Contemplative Psychology Seminar (3.0)

Teachings on the mandala principle are introduced as they apply to clinical work, including advanced study of the five Buddha Families as potent resources available to therapy clients. Taken during the internship year, the class has a format that includes group meditation and exploration of clinical topics in light of Buddhist

teachings from previous course work. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

CNSC808

Field Placement I (1.0)

During this nine-month internship, students work twenty to thirty hours per week (minimum of 700 hours required) in a psychological fieldwork setting. While studying and working alongside mental health professionals, students bring the principles of contemplative counseling psychology to the practices of counseling, therapy, group work, and patient care.

CNSC809

Group Process V (1.0)

This course is a continuation of CNSC729.

CNSC823

The Art of Contemplative Counseling Psychology (3.0)

An opportunity for students to review and integrate the Buddhist teachings while engaging in their internship experiences. The format of the class includes group meditation and individual presentations of clinical interests, together with group discussion aimed at integrating Buddhist, clinical, and other contemporary approaches to the art of practicing contemplative counseling psychology. Written work is designed to further the conceptual and clinical acumen of the developing psychotherapist. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

CNSC828

Large Group Process II (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.

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 (2.0)

During the internship year, students meet weekly in small groups with members of the clinical faculty and use a contemplative approach to case presentation. These presentations are directed toward a deeper understanding of how the principles of contemplative counseling psychology manifest in clinical work. Group members also practice clinical skills in these groups.

CNSC874

Summer Internship (0.5)

During the Summer Internship class, students work ten to twenty hours per week (a minimum of 700 hours is required for the totality of internship, which spans the entire year) in a psychological fieldwork setting. While studying and working alongside mental health professionals, students bring the principles of contemplative counseling psychology to the practices of counseling, therapy, group work, and patient care. Prerequisite: CNSC790.

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.

CNSC891

Internship II: Placement & Contemplative Supervision (2.0)

This course is a continuation of CNSC871.