Contemplative Psychology Major (BA)

A Bachelor of Arts degree (120 credits) consists of Core Curriculum (30 credits) and at least one major (36–60 credits), as well as minors and/or elective courses of the student’s choosing.

The Contemplative Psychology major is 41 credit hours: 32 credits from the psychology core requirements and 9 credits from one of the concentrations. The core requirements consist of courses in psychology and meditation from the Buddhist and other contemplative traditions, as well as courses in Western psychology. Students pursue further study in one of five concentrations: Contemplative Neuroscience, Psychological Science, Psychology of Health and Healing, Somatic Psychology, or Transpersonal and Humanistic Psychology.

Other requirements include a contemplative community retreat offered every fall semester and a community-based field placement within the Boulder/Denver area.

Program Vision

The BA Contemplative Psychology program offers an innovative approach to the study and practice of psychology, guided by the principle that psychological health and well-being are innate. The Contemplative Psychology program creates and supports a learning environment that values personal experience and insight as essential to embodied achievement. Through various modes of inquiry, such as contemplative practice, empirical research, theoretical analysis, oral and written narrative, group dynamics, and community engagement, the field of contemplative psychology nourishes individual and collective transformation. The program develops the whole person through experiential learning that broadens and sharpens intellect, deepens intuition, nourishes compassion, and embodies confidence. Drawing from meditative wisdom traditions and contemporary practices of diversity, the curriculum provides fertile opportunity for understanding complexity, while fostering reciprocal learning across deeply valued difference.

Contemplative Psychology Major Requirements

Required Courses

Gateway

- PSYB101 Introduction to Psychology (3)
- PSYB314 Buddhist Psychology: Mindfulness Meditation (3)

Take twice for 2 credits

- PSYB343W Contemplative Community Retreat (1)

Milestone

- PSYB325 Awakening Compassion: Working with Others (3)

300-Level Western Psychology

Choose 6 Credits

- PSYB301 Research Methods and Statistics (3)
- PSYB345 Developmental Psychology (3)
- PSYB357 Cognitive Science (3)
- PSYB371 Personality Theories (3)
- PSYB368 Psychology and Neuroscience of Emotion (3)
- PSYB373 Social Psychology (3)

400-Level Western Psychology

Choose 3 Credits

- PSYB420 Abnormal Psychology (3)
- PSYB462 Contemplative Neuroscience (3)
- PSYB490 Special Topics in Psychology (3)
- PSYB495 Advanced Practicum in Psychological Research (3)

Concentrations

Choose one of the following concentrations (9 Credits)

Contemplative Neuroscience

This concentration provides a foundation for integrating neuroscientific approaches into the study of contemplative mind. Students’ development in this area joins training in cognitive neuroscience with meditative experience. Topics include important findings from functional brain imaging studies on embodiment, perception, emotion, consciousness, mind wandering, and contemplative experience beyond mindfulness. Students use contemplative practice as laboratory for investigating their own mind and brain while employing a variety of complementary psychological research methods, including phenomenology, experimentation, task performance, and experience sampling.

Required Courses

- PSYB301 Research Methods and Statistics (3)
- PSYB462 Contemplative Neuroscience (3)

Choose 3 Credits

- PSYB357 Cognitive Science (3)
- PSYB368 Psychology and Neuroscience of Emotion (3)

Concentration Total: 9 Credits

Psychological Science

The Psychological Science concentration emphasizes the study of human experience and activity through systematic observation. Topics include development from infancy through adulthood, individual differences, embodiment, perception, emotion, consciousness, thinking, social influence, self, and other aspects of mental life. In addition to theoretical study, methods of obtaining and evaluating empirical evidence are explored, ranging from behavior assessment to contemplative phenomenology.

Required Course
• PSYB301 Research Methods and Statistics (3)

Choose 6 Credits

• PSYB234 Perception (3)
• PSYB345 Developmental Psychology (3)
• PSYB371 Personality Theories (3)
• PSYB373 Social Psychology (3)
• PSYB420 Abnormal Psychology (3)

Concentration Total: 9 Credits

Psychology of Health and Healing

The Psychology of Health and Healing concentration emphasizes body-mind synchronization as the key to inner harmony and well-being. Students explore a diversity of ancient and modern healing methodologies and learn experiential techniques for balancing the spiritual and somatic aspects of health.

Required Course

• PSYB329 Approaches to Healing (3)

Choose 6 Credits

• PSYB208 Embodying Process and the Individual (3)
• PSYB209 Herbal Medicine (3)
• PSYB239 Nutrition (3)
• PSYB303 The Psychology of the Five Elements I (3)
• PSYB323 The Psychology of the Five Elements II (3)
• PSYB333 Hakomi Somatics (3)
• PSYB359 Learning from Trauma: Understanding Its Effects and Building Personal Resources (3)

Concentration Total: 9 Credits

Somatic Psychology

The Somatic Psychology concentration emphasizes the practice of making meaningful connections between emotional process and the body’s expressions, sensations, and symptoms. Course work includes three learning domains: 1) the historical and developing theory of body psychology; 2) the research and science regarding body psychology; and 3) the increase of body/self-awareness developed through experiential and movement-oriented classes.

Required Course

• PSYB304 Somatic Intelligence: The Neuroscience of Our Body-Mind Connection (3)

Choose 6 Credits

• PSYB208 Embodying Process and the Individual (3)
• PSYB255 Body-Mind Centering (3)
• PSYB303 The Psychology of the Five Elements I (3)
• PSYB328 Gestalt: Presence (3)
• PSYB333 Hakomi Somatics (3)
• PSYB359 Learning from Trauma: Understanding Its Effects and Building Personal Resources (3)

Concentration Total: 9 Credits

Capstone

• PSYB415 Maitri: Working with Emotions (3)
• COL450 Internship (3)
• PSYB482 Senior Seminar I: Transformational Psychology: The Group Experience (3)
• PSYB483 Senior Seminar II: Transformational Psychology: The Threshold Experience (3)

Total Credits: 41

Contemplative Psychology Course Listings (PSYB)

PSYB101 Introduction to Psychology (3.0)

This survey course explores psychology, especially as it has developed in the Western world. Students learn to better understand mental life and behavior by studying diverse approaches that range from laboratory science to the intuitive clinical work involving clients and therapist. Topics covered include brain function, consciousness, perception, learning, thought, maturation, emotion, personality, mental illness, and therapy. Understanding of these topics is deepened by critically evaluating theoretical frameworks with respect to each student’s experience.
PSYB208
Embodying Process and the Individual (3.0)
The body is the vessel of emotions, the vehicle for actions, and the tool of perceptions. Culturally, we have been trained to ignore bodily processes. This class examines the role of bodily experience. By studying sensation, energy, emotion, perception, movement, breath, speech, and touch, students cultivate an ongoing individual practice of embodiment.

PSYB209
Herbal Medicine (3.0)
This course offers an introduction to the use of food, herbs, and other natural remedies to experience vital health. Students learn to make a few simple herbal preparations, and discuss herb safety and proper dosages. Topics include herbal history, food as medicine, reproductive health, emotional health, children’s health, addictions, psychoactive plants, aromatherapy, color therapy, Feng shui, and careers in natural medicine. The class has an East-West approach and enables students to use plants and other natural therapies for their own health as well as for helping others.

PSYB225
Family Systems (3.0)
An investigation of the family as a system that has a structure and organization of its own. Interactions between family members are seen from a systematic perspective, thereby deepening the student’s understanding of their family of origin and the families of others. The course provides an introduction to the history of family therapy and to the major theorists in the field. A variety of family structures are explored from different therapeutic models. The course combines readings, lectures, discussions, and experiential exercises. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

PSYB234
Perception (3.0)
The senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, and bodily sensations) give our minds access to the world. Students practice contemplative sensory awareness by attending to nuances and details of their own experience. Reflections are documented in student journals. Introspection (direct observation of conscious experience) joins scientific understanding of perceptual processes in laboratory exercises, lectures, and discussion. Findings from modern research on perception and attention provide a more complete understanding of the embodied nature of subjective experience.

PSYB239
Nutrition (3.0)
Students learn basic human physical nutritional requirements from four perspectives: the field of nutritional anthropology; the scientific discoveries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; direct experience; and intuition. Students acquire information and tools to determine a diet that currently suits them, as well as how to alter that diet as personal health requirements change. We study the dietary changes in the twentieth century that underlie the most common causes of chronic disease and death. Nutritional strategies are studied to prevent those diseases.

PSYB255
Body-Mind Centering (3.0)
This class focuses on the relationship between the body and mind through basic patterns of movement. Students experience their patterns through guided development and transform movement patterns in both themselves and others. The basis of the work is Body-Mind Centering, movement re-education, and analysis developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. This class includes a study of living anatomy that brings awareness to the different body systems and developmental movements, and supports alignment and integration. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

PSYB301
Research Methods and Statistics (3.0)
This course introduces statistical analysis and research methods used to test theories within psychological science. Students learn the most common techniques for describing data and making inferences in psychological research. Students learn to develop research questions; design rigorous and ethically sound experiments; and collect, analyze, and interpret data. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

PSYB303
Psychology of the Five Elements I (3.0)
An exploration of the Law of the Five Elements and the classical medicine System of Kings, which originated in China more than five thousand years ago. The ancient Chinese viewed our body, mind, and spirit as inseparable from the world of nature around us and believed that if we observed nature closely enough, we could find the cause of any affliction of body, mind, or spirit. Through lecture and discussions, meditations, visualizations, and hands-on exercises, we work directly with our sense perceptions and the techniques of identifying color, sound, odor, and emotion as tools to perceive elemental balance or imbalance. We work directly with our current state of physical, mental, and spiritual health.

PSYB304
Somatic Intelligence: The Neuroscience of Our Body-Mind Connection (3.0)
An introduction to somatic psychology, this course presents a theoretical study of the body-mind continuum. The importance of emotions, movement, perception, and the nature of illness and healing is illustrated by recent scientific theories and findings. By studying how our bodies and psyches weave together, we become aware of their interdependence and can construct more effective therapeutic experiences, both for ourselves and for others. Students learn the fundamental principles of the somatic psychology field and explore, in depth, their relationship with advanced developmental psychology theories. Prerequisite: PSYB101 and any 300-level PSYB course. PSYB332: Human Anatomy is strongly recommended.

PSYB314
Buddhist Psychology: Mindfulness Meditation (3.0)
An introduction to the psychological principles and sitting practice of mindfulness-awareness meditation. The meditation is drawn
from the Tibetan and Zen Buddhist traditions, as well as teachings of sacred warriorship. By exploring the many ways ego fixation creates suffering and confusion in our lives, students are trained to develop inner tranquility, insight, and loving-kindness. This develops an essential ground for working effectively with personal life challenges and those of others. Co-requisite: PSYB101. Open to Contemplative Psychology, Art Therapy, and Interdisciplinary Studies students with 45+ credits only. Others by permission of instructor.

**PSYB323**
Psychology of the Five Elements II (3.0)
Psychology of the Five Elements II is a continuation of the work in PSYB303. Students work more deeply with Five Element theory through practicing pulse reading and identifying color, sound, odor, and emotion as ways to uncover elemental imbalances. We study the classical Daoist system of the Five Spirits and learn how to cultivate and maintain their presence in our lives. In addition, we study various local plants and trees to access their wisdom and healing powers. Prerequisite: PSYB303 or permission of instructor.

**PSYB325**
Awakening Compassion: Working with Others (3.0)
An in-depth examination of the principles of compassionate action as taught in the bodhisattva path of Mahayana Buddhism and Contemplative Psychology. Students learn and practice relational, social, and psychological skills, including embodied presence, deep listening, empathic attendance, compassionate inquiry, and metta and tonglen meditation. Students are required to engage in an attending relationship in order to apply learned skills. This course explores compassion in various cultural contexts. Prerequisite: PSYB314 or meditation experience with permission of instructor.

**PSYB328**
Gestalt: Presence (3.0)
Gestalt, a way of being, is a powerful and provocative method to understand one’s body, speech, and mind. By focusing on the details of moment-to-moment experience and on the interplay between the individual and the environment, Gestalt seeks to develop self-knowledge, satisfaction, self-support, and clear boundaries. The course includes readings, lectures, discussions, and experiential exercises on “the nature of being” and ego. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB329**
Approaches to Healing (3.0)
A basic overview of the theory, practice, and use of various natural approaches to health and healing. Emphasis is placed upon understanding and appreciating these modalities and discerning when and for what they are appropriate. Students research and articulate the paradigms of holistic medicine, clarifying their personal interest for future work in this field. Open to upper-division students with 60+ credits only.

**PSYB330**
Jungian Psychology (3.0)
A general introduction to the psychology of C.G. Jung, this course covers Jung’s major contributions to dynamic psychology, including topics such as ego consciousness, complexes, libido theory, archetypes and the collective unconscious, persona and shadow, anima and animus, the self, individuation, synchronicity, active imagination, and dream analysis. Students are required to explore their own inner world and confront unconscious processes by maintaining a journal, sharing dreams, and working toward developing a “life myth.” Each class combines lecture, discussion, and process, in order to bring meaning and reality to Jung’s concepts. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB332**
Human Anatomy (3.0)
A traditional approach to the study of normal human anatomy, rooted in the conventional science of anatomy, studying the structure and subsequent function of the major body systems: skeletal; muscular; nervous; endocrine; immune; digestive; blood; cardiovascular; respiratory; urinary; and reproductive systems. Some practical understanding of these major systems is given from a naturopathic physician/acupuncturist’s perspective. One class briefly introduces energetic systems of anatomy (e.g. meridians, chakras).

**PSYB333**
Hakomi Somatics (3.0)
Mind and body jointly express and reflect deeply held, often unconscious beliefs about oneself and others. Hakomi Somatics helps bring these beliefs to conscious awareness. The body, with its various patterns, is used to access an intelligence that underlies habitual, limiting patterns which can be recognized and understood. This process allows learning and transformation to occur with the support of mindfulness exercises. Topics include the Hakomi principles, character strategies, boundaries, resources, and somatic psychological skill building, which can be applied to daily life. Prerequisite: PSYB325 or PSYB359 or PSYB255 or PSYB208 or PSYB304.

**PSYB343W**
Contemplative Community Retreat (1.0)
This two-day retreat takes place every other fall semester. The practices of sitting and walking meditation, tonglen, Maitri Space Awareness, and contemplative play bring students, faculty, and staff together in community with a sense of purpose and friendship. Open to Contemplative Psychology students only. A required retreat orientation occurs in advance of the retreat and serves to prepare students for success in the PSYB343W retreat environment. Co-requisite: PSYB314. Special fee for room and board.

**PSYB345**
Developmental Psychology (3.0)
A study of theory in human development from birth through the span of life. Students are introduced to major theorists and discuss the philosophical and practical relationships of ethics to psychology,
including cross-cultural issues. Students clarify, formulate, and develop their own beliefs and approaches to human development in relation to these major schools of thought and explore the relationship of these traditional approaches to the contemplative and transpersonal perspectives. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB350**
**Humanistic Psychology (3.0)**
An exploration of the basic principles of humanistic and existential psychology and psychotherapy. This is the so-called third force in the modern Western tradition of psychology, which emerged after World War II as an expansion of and alternative to the psychoanalytic and behavioral schools that preceded it. Humanistic psychology emphasizes the authenticity of the therapist as the key factor in promoting the client’s potential for growth and healing. Focus is on the work of Adler, Rogers, and Maslow among the humanists, and the work of Yalom, May, Frankl, Perls, and Bugental among the existentialists. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB354**
**Transpersonal Psychology (3.0)**
An exploration of the basic principles of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy. This is the so-called fourth force in the modern Western tradition of psychology, which emerged in the 1960s as an expansion and alternative to the psychoanalytic, behavioral, and humanistic schools that preceded it. Transpersonal, meaning "beyond the persona or mask," studies human transcendence, wholeness, and transformation. Focus is on the work of Jung, Assagioli, Grof, Wilber, Walsh, Vaughan, and others to introduce students to transpersonal theory and practice. Students also explore their personal journey through a transpersonal lens. Co-requisite: COR130.

**PSYB355**
**Dynamics of Intimate Relationships (3.0)**
This course investigates intimate relationships using the lenses of transdisciplinary science, particularly a psychological perspective. It explores phenomena such as attraction, attachment, social cognition, communication, interdependency, love, sexuality, and relationship as spiritual path. It interrogates gendering and heteronormativizing by incorporating feminist and queer modes of inquiry. Critical thinking and contemplative introspection and reflection invite students to apply their learning to their own experiences of intimate relationships. This course occasionally contains readings/films that include sexually explicit material. Prerequisites: Any 300-level PSYB course. Strongly recommended: INTD210.

**PSYB357**
**Cognitive Science (3.0)**
This course concerns the study of thought, conscious experience, and associated mental functions from a variety of scientific perspectives. This multidisciplinary exploration focuses on the high-level mental processes and related brain activity involved in conscious mental life and unconscious information processing. Specific topics include attention, language, intelligences, imagery, emotion, conceptual knowledge, memory, problem solving, expertise, reasoning, and decision making. This course emphasizes the perspectives of information processing, systems neuroscience, and contemplative psychology. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB359**
**Learning from Trauma: Understanding Its Effects and Building Personal Resources (3.0)**
Unresolved trauma affects our psychological and physical well-being. This class educates students about the after-effects of trauma, such as the inability to modulate physiological arousal, dissociation, emotional problems, and negative beliefs that often follow traumatic experiences. An experiential class, we explore somatic resources for dealing with trauma and work with the effects of trauma in a group setting. The primary focus is on accessing the body and developing somatic resources to help a person cope with and resolve the symptoms of trauma. This encourages mastery over helpless and overwhelming feelings. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB368**
**Psychology and Neuroscience of Emotion (3.0)**
This course explores diverse approaches to studying emotional experience and its regulation. It discusses the evolutionary origins and biological bases of emotions and emotional expressions; the universal and culturally variable aspects of emotion; emotional development in infants, children, and adults; the role of emotion in attachment relationships and social interactions; emotion-cognition relations; and applications of emotion research in clinical psychology, the health professions, education, and the business world. This course also provides an introduction to the structure and function of the human brain. Students gain firsthand experience with research findings and methods through classroom demonstrations, experience sampling, and team projects. Prerequisite: PSYB101 or by permission of the instructor.

**PSYB371**
**Personality Theories (3.0)**
Students explore the development of human personality by studying the theories of major traditional systems of psychology, including psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, behavioral, humanistic, systemic, feminist, and existential models. Students clarify, formulate, and develop their own thoughts and approaches to the psychology of personality in relation to these major theories and explore the relationship of these approaches to the contemplative and transpersonal perspectives. Prerequisite: PSYB101.

**PSYB373**
**Social Psychology (3.0)**
How do attitudes form and change? How do group dynamics influence decision making? What factors influence altruistic behavior? This course examines concepts and research evidence from areas of social psychology, such as the social self, social influence, cultural variation, attraction, and humanitarian behavior, among others. The underlying variables of mindfulness and arousal are examined as a bridge to the contemplative perspective. Prerequisite: PSYB101.
PSYB415
Maitri: Working with Emotions (3.0)
This course introduces the Vajrayana approach to the Five Buddha Family principles through Maitri Space Awareness practice and study. Students practice particular postures in specially designed rooms, inviting a personal exploration of psychological states of mind and emotions such as pride, passion, paranoia, ignorance, and aggressions. Approaching these emotions with curiosity and openness, there is the possibility of discovering one’s inherent wisdom, compassion, and insight. The course includes weekly lectures, practice in the maitri rooms, and participation in a smaller group to process material more personally. Prerequisite: PSYB325.

PSYB420
Abnormal Psychology (3.0)
Students investigate the merits and liabilities of Western assessment and treatment approaches to psychological problems. We consider the sociocultural contexts in which assessment and treatment approaches are variably formulated and applied. We investigate both transcultural understandings of psychological problems and the wisdom of cultural relativity. Students acquire a solid foundation in traditional Western clinical approaches to mental health as articulated and codified in the DSM-V. Prerequisite: PSYB345, PSYB357, or PSYB371.

PSYB425
Field Placement (3.0)
Students engage in an approved community-based volunteer project. Lectures, dialog, guest speakers, and experiential activities support students in developing their own vision of socially relevant community-based learning that is culturally sensitive and nurtured by contemplative practice. Students hone previously learned skills in diversity and contemplative practice and apply these to real-world settings. Co-requisite: PSYB415.

PSYB430
Exploring Dream Psychology (3.0)
This course works with dreams in a highly experiential manner and context, using an eclectic variety of perspectives, with an emphasis on Jungian and Gestalt approaches. Students’ dreams are explored in and out of the classroom individually, in small and large group contexts, and with art media. An ongoing dream practice is required, including the creation and maintenance of a dream journal. Students are asked to relate their dream work to their waking psychological life in assignments. Prerequisite: PSYB330 or PSYB354.

PSYB435
Authentic Movement: Movement/Body Awareness Practice (3.0)
Authentic Movement is a self-directed movement process employing the wisdom of the body as a pathway to awareness. It offers an opportunity to experience the individual and collective body as a vessel for healing and transformation and creative process. This course explores the ground form of Authentic Movement: the mover; the witness; and the relationship between them. Students explore their own process while experiencing this therapeutic movement form. Through learning how to increase the authenticity of presence, students explore the ground of healing relationships. Authentic Movement provides a model for life lived in authentic relationship to self, others, and community. Prerequisite: Any of the following: PSYB208, PSYB255, PSYB304, PSYB333, or PSYB359.

PSYB462
Contemplative Neuroscience (3.0)
This course provides training in the cognitive neuroscience of mindfulness, as well as contemplative experience beyond mindfulness. Students learn practical knowledge about research design, quantification of brain activity, scientific writing, and techniques used by contemplative neuroscientists in laboratory research. This includes training in combining neuroscientific approaches with a variety of complementary psychological research methods, including phenomenology, experimentation, task performance, and experience sampling. Students visit one or more neuroscience laboratories for demonstration of brain electrophysiological methods and data collection. For their final project, students design a contemplative neuroscience study to investigate a contemplative practice or experience, including practices or experiences not yet well-represented in scientific literature. Prerequisite: PSYB357 or PSYB368.

PSYB482
Senior Seminar I: Transformational Psychology: The Group Experience (3.0)
Senior Seminar I is the initiatory phase in a two-semester multisensory, multifaceted process, whereby students explore the nature of creativity and its fundamental relationship to psychology in the context of the classroom community. Through readings, writings, class discussions, and exercises, students uncover their relationship to creativity and learn what exposing oneself to the larger world means. By engaging their curiosity and liveliness, and developing awareness around habitual patterns and resistances, students cultivate trust in themselves and their inherent qualities of wakefulness, wisdom, and compassion. Prerequisite: PSYB325.

PSYB483
Senior Seminar II: Transformational Psychology: The Threshold Experience (3.0)
Senior Seminar II is the culminating phase in a two-semester multisensory, multifaceted process, that introduces and explores the topic of transition. Students utilize the lessons learned and relationships formed within the first semester as inspiration for developing their final integrative papers. Students research topics that provoke deep inquiry and challenge both their intellect and intuition. This course culminates in an event held during an extended class period on the last day of the course. Prerequisite: PSYB482.

PSYB490
Special Topics in Psychology (3.0)
An advanced examination of a topic drawn from psychology. Assignments may include reading, labs, papers, oral presentations, quizzes/exams, literature searches, and manuscript preparation.
This course culminates in a public oral presentation. Topics vary by semester and section. Prerequisites include PSYB101 and any PSYB 300-level course. May be repeated.

**PSYB495**
Advanced Practicum in Psychological Research (3.0)
An advanced examination using research methods that discover new knowledge about a topic drawn from psychology. Assignments may include literature search, study design, data collection, data entry, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. This course culminates in a public oral presentation. Topics vary by semester and section. Prerequisites: PSYB101 and any one of the following courses: PSYB301, PSYB345, PSYB357, PSYB371, PSYB373; or by permission of the instructor.

**PSYB499**
Independent Study: BA 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 are 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.