FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Basic Intro Trilogy (BIT) e-Course

1. What is the main approach for this online learning modality?

The approach we are taking is not to be confused with the old "long distance education" where participants individually tackle the course materials on their own within a prolonged (and sometimes indefinite duration of time). The course is class-based and is completed in either four or six straight weeks. Engagement—with the course materials, with the online instructor, and with the other participants—is the driving force of the course. The main vehicle for this engagement is the threaded discussion/interaction where the instructor functions not as "a sage on the stage but as a guide on the side" facilitating the learning process for the participants.

2. Do I need to be present in Moodle (online platform) at designated days/times?

Except for certain agreed-upon meetings online (involving small groups and/or the entire class), the class primarily operates "asynchronously" (that is, not "live" and in real time). Therefore, participants check in online according to their own time and availability but within certain parameters and time frame (including specified deadlines) as set forth on the course schedule.

3. How often are the "synchronous" sessions scheduled within a four or six-week period?

Depending upon the nature and type of the course, it can be once a week, twice or at the very least, once during the duration of the entire course. If it's once a week, it's usually with a small group. If it's twice during the course, it's usually a combination of one small group meeting and one involving the entire class. At the very minimum, there is at least one synchronous meeting with the whole class. For these synchronous sessions, we use video conferencing tools like Group *Skype* or Google *Hangouts* (for small groups) and something like *Zoom* or *Adobe Connect* for meetings involving the entire class at once. Because of the challenge of differing time zones, scheduling of these synchronous meetings are by general consensus of everyone involved.

4. What does a typical week look like?

Mondays are designated preparation time (reading texts, viewing videos, listening to audios, etc.). Typically, participants post their response to a discussion "prompt" on or before Tuesday midnight and no later than Wednesday noontime (or as specified by the instructor). If there are two

discussion prompts during a particular week, the other one usually is due by Thursday. Posting is considered late beyond the specified deadline. Of course people can post in advance too if they so desire especially if they anticipate a tight schedule for them during the week and they wish to pace themselves accordingly. Threaded interactions occur between Tuesday to Friday according to the participants' own time. At the end of each week (mostly on Friday evening or Saturday noon), there is usually a required submission of a short post either in the form of a reflection paper, blog, journal, or integration essay. In addition, there are expected weekly offline "praxis" done privately or with others within flexible times during the week, involving certain specified spiritual practices or exercises corresponding to the course topic of the week. Unless there is a short paper or small project due on Saturday noon, usually Saturdays are flexible times for doing some catch-up work, advance study preparation or personal integration time. Sunday is a rest day and no one is expected to go online. All of these activities are clearly charted on the Weekly Course Schedule which the participants can easily follow as a guide.

5. **What are some basic expectations from a participant?**

Since there are only four or six weeks in a course, participants are expected to maximize their engagement with the class by checking in online, at the very minimum, thrice each week for at least 45 minutes to an hour (reading and responding to posts thoughtfully). Ideally, it's a good practice to go online at least half an hour each day from Tuesday to Friday. To not show up for regular interaction is to cheat and deprive one another of a potentially rich learning experience as a community. As already mentioned earlier, participants are expected to attend to the prescribed spiritual practices for the course and submit required papers that are generally short but reflective in nature, designed to synthesize and integrate the learning process.

6. **How is personal progress in a course determined and assessed?**

Since our e-Courses are not designed for formal accreditation within an academic institution, we do not employ a grading system although instructors may resort to utilizing a point system if only to indicate the weight of certain activity participation as a helpful guide and reference. Instructors offer periodic comments to posts as well as to the participants' submitted papers. Aside from consciously engaging in regular self-assessment process, participants also profit from the assessment of their peers (via small groups). Suffice it to say, one's personal progress is largely commensurate to whatever level of investment a participant is willing to commit in terms of time, focused energy, and effort toward maximizing the entire learning experience in a course.