BA in Traditional Eastern Arts

The 36-credit Traditional Eastern Arts major is a unique opportunity to steep oneself in a traditional contemplative discipline both academically and experientially. Students pursue an in-depth study of one of three body-mind awareness disciplines: T’ai-chi Ch’uan, Aikido, or Yoga. The curriculum includes an in depth study of the history, philosophy, and praxis of the chosen discipline. In addition to the sequenced curriculum of practice, students take classes in meditation and anatomy, while choosing from a variety of complementary electives, such as Sanskrit, Ikebana, Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Tantra, Taoism, Raga Singing, Five Elements Theory, and Somatic Psychology. This major trains and encourages students to develop practice as a way of life, one that informs livelihood, health, creative expression, and service to community.

Declaration of Major

In accordance with university policy, students can declare their major at any time. Because of the nature of this program, it is important to meet with program faculty either before you declare or soon after. Please consult with your Academic Advisor to plan your schedule in the program. Students entering the university and the Traditional Eastern Arts major with 45 plus credits are required to declare a concentration at that time.

Areas of Concentration

T’ai-chi Ch’uan

“Swallow the Chi of Heaven, Tap the Strength of Earth, Cultivate Softness to Prolong Life.”
—Master Cheng Manching

T’ai-chi ch’uan (or taijiquan) is a traditional Chinese martial art and system for cultivating and harmonizing the body, mind, and spirit. The curriculum is rooted in the Yangstyle teaching of Master Cheng Manching and includes solo form work, the two-person interactive exercises of tui shou, or push hands, and form and fencing using the Chinese double-edged sword known as jian. T’ai-chi Ch’uan embodies the philosophy of aligning with the Tao and teaches students how to be actively engaged and responsive to what is happening in the moment using deep relaxation, attentiveness and presence, and nourishment of the intrinsic energy, or qi, that supports all life.

Aikido

“If your heart is large enough to envelop your adversaries, you can see right through them and avoid their attacks. And once you envelop them, you will be able to guide them along a path indicated to you by heaven and earth.”
—O Sensei, Morihei Ueshiba, aikido founder

The roots of aikido stand in the soil of the great warrior tradition of Budo, where the fighting arts were practiced for defense of society and as a personal path for awakening. Aikido wisdom and skills are developed through lively partner practice of empty hand and weapons techniques. On the mat, students engage with varied attacks and defenses in order to learn to become calm, centered, receptive, and responsive during intense encounters. Whole-body training takes place while watching, listening, doing, and feeling the movements of the practice. Reading and writing assignments deepen the classroom practice. Students may be invited to test for rank by the instructor.

Yoga Teacher Training

“The technique of a world-changing yoga has to be as uniform, sinuous, patient, all-including as the world itself. If it does not deal with all the difficulties or possibilities and carefully deal with each necessary element, does it have any chance of success?”
—Sri Aurobindo

Naropa University’s Yoga Studies program is dedicated to the education, preservation, and application of the vast teachings of yoga. The program offers a comprehensive study of yoga’s history, theory, and philosophy, as well as providing an in-depth immersion and training in its practice and methodologies. Balancing cognitive understanding with experiential learning, students study these ancient teachings for transformation while gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to safely and effectively teach yoga.

The curriculum systematically covers the rich and diverse history, literature, and philosophies of the yoga tradition, while immersing students in the methodologies of Hatha yoga, including asana, pranayama, and meditation. In addition, students study Sanskrit, Ayurveda, anatomy, yoga therapy, yoga psychology, Hinduism, Tantra, and Buddhism, all while engaging in an intensive Teacher Training curriculum.

Upon completion, students earn both a Bachelor’s Degree and a 1000 hour certificate in Yoga Teacher Training which meets and exceeds the 500-hour requirement of Yoga Alliance. All graduates are eligible to become Registered Yoga Teachers (RYT500) with Yoga Alliance.

Degree Requirements

BA in Traditional Eastern Arts

Yoga Teacher Training Concentration

Required Courses

• TRA133 Yoga I: Foundations (3)
• TRA233 Yoga II: The Psychology of Yoga (3)
• TRA333 Yoga III: Integral Practice (3)
• TRA433 Yoga IV: Teacher Training (3)
• TRA449 Yoga V: Teacher Training (3)
• TRA453 Yoga History, Theory, and Philosophy (3)
• TRA463 Yoga Meditation Practicum (3)
• TRA489 Senior Colloquium (1)
• PAR101 Experiential Anatomy (3) or
• PSYB100 Anatomy (3)
• REL355 Sanskrit in the Sacred Traditions of India (3) or REL277 Sanskrit I (4)
SUBTOTAL 28
Choose a minimum of 8 credits (7 credits if REL277 is taken) from the following courses:
- PSYB304 Somatic Intelligence: The Neuroscience of Our Body-Mind Connection (3)
- REL210 Religion & Mystical Experience (3)
- REL330 Contemplative Hinduism (3)
- REL334 Hindu Yoga-Tantra (3)
- TRA100 Shambhala Meditation Practicum (3)
- TRA114 Indian Devotional and Raga Singing (3)
- TRA499 Independent Study (1-3)

SUBTOTAL 8
TOTAL CREDITS 36

Certificate Program in Traditional Eastern Arts with a Concentration in Yoga Teacher Training
Naropa University also offers a certificate program in Yoga Teacher Training for non degree seeking students. Learn more about the program.

T'ai-chi Ch'uan & Aikido Concentrations

Core Requirements
- PSYB100 Anatomy (3) or
- PAR101 Experiential Anatomy (3)
- REL345 Zen Buddhism (3)
- TRA252 Taoism (3)
- TRA489 Senior Colloquium (1)

SUBTOTAL 10

T'ai-chi Ch'uan Concentration

Choose 12 credits from the following courses:
- TRA105 T'ai-chi Ch'uan: Level I (3)
- TRA205 T'ai-chi Ch'uan: Level II (3)
- TRA305 T'ai-chi Ch'uan: Level III (2-3)
- TRA405 T'ai-chi Ch'uan Level IV: Push-Hands (1-3)
- TRA455 T'ai-chi Ch'uan Level V: Sword Form (1-3)
- TRA490 T'ai-chi Ch'uan Level VI (1-3)
- TRA493 T'ai-chi Ch'uan Level VII (1-3)
- TRA496 T'ai-chi Ch'uan Level VIII (1-3)

SUBTOTAL 22

Choose 11 credits from the following courses:
- ART181 Traditional Chinese Brushstroke I (3)
- PSYB303 The Psychology of the Five Elements I (3)
- PSYB304 Somatic Intelligence: The Neuroscience of Our Body-Mind Connection (3)
- REL210 Religion & Mystical Experience (3)
- TRA120 Ikebana/Kado I (3)
- TRA220 Ikebana/Kado II (3)
- TRA320 Ikebana/Kado III (3)
- TRA499 Independent Study (1-3)

SUBTOTAL 11

Choose 3 credits from the following courses:
- REL160 Meditation Practicum I: Freeing the Mind (3)
- REL258 Contemplative Practice Intensive (1.5-6)
- REL271 Centering Prayer as Christian Contemplation (3)
- PSYB314 Buddhist Psychology I: Mindfulness Meditation (3)
- TRA100 Shambhala Meditation Practicum (3)
- TRA260 Mudra Space Awareness (3)
- TRA463 Yoga Meditation Practicum (3)

SUBTOTAL 3
TOTAL CREDITS 36

Aikido Concentration

Core Requirements (10)

Choose 12 credits from the following courses:
- TRA110 Aikido I (3)
- TRA210 Aikido II (3)
- TRA310 Aikido III (3)
- TRA410 Aikido IV (2-3)
- TRA450 Aikido V (2-3)
- TRA487 Aikido VI (2-3)
- TRA491 Aikido VII (2-3)
- TRA494 Aikido VIII (2-3)

SUBTOTAL 22

Choose 11 credits from the following courses:
- ART181 Traditional Chinese Brushstroke I (3)
- PSYB303 The Psychology of the Five Elements I (3)
- PSYB304 Somatic Intelligence: The Neuroscience of Our Body-Mind Connection (3)
- REL210 Religion & Mystical Experience (3)
- TRA120 Ikebana/Kado I (3)
- TRA220 Ikebana/Kado II (3)
- TRA320 Ikebana/Kado III (3)
- TRA437 Aikido Seminars - Mitsugi Saotome, Sensei, and Hiroshi Ikeda, Sensei (0.5 each)
- TRA447 Aikido Seminars - Mitsugi Saotome, Sensei, and Hiroshi Ikeda, Sensei (0.5 each)
- TRA499 Independent Study (1-3)

SUBTOTAL 11

Choose 3 credits from the following courses:
- REL160 Meditation Practicum I: Freeing the Mind (3)
- REL258 Contemplative Practice Intensive (1.5-6)
- REL271 Centering Prayer as Christian Contemplation (3)
- PSYB314 Buddhist Psychology I: Mindfulness Meditation (3)
• TRA100 Shambhala Meditation Practicum (3)
• TRA260 Mudra Space Awareness (3)
• TRA463 Yoga Meditation Practicum (3)

SUBTOTAL 3
TOTAL CREDITS 36

Course Listings

TRA100
Shambhala Meditation Practicum I (3)
The Shambhala tradition, taught by Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, is a secular path of spiritual training. Students learn sitting meditation and study the principles of Shambhala Warriorship, which involves developing personal courage and social responsibility. The class combines meditation, writing and a variety of exercises to give direct experience of mindfulness and our own senses. The connection between the arts and meditation is also explored and would be of interest to anyone exploring their own creative process. A slogan of the class is notice what you notice (a phrase Allen Ginsberg coined). Cross-listed as TRA500.

TRA105
T'ai-Chi Ch'uan I (3)
The first third of the form is introduced. The philosophy and theory of t'ai-chi ch'uan is discussed. The basic principles of relaxation, body-upright, movement initiated from the center or “tan tien,” separation of yin and yang and developing a soft and sensitive hand are emphasized. Cross-listed as TRA505.

TRA110
Aikido I (3)
We begin with centering ourselves and bringing that awareness to the situation of “conflict.” We simultaneously practice the kata of clean powerful attacks and harmonious defense responses, and ukemi, the art of falling. We emphasize extending energy and transforming the encounter to one of excitement and harmony. Bokken-aikido sword is introduced. We establish links to the aikido lineage and training communities. We support our embodied experience by reading and reporting on texts of aikido history, philosophy and technique. We study other contemporary sensei through video and visits to seminars. We journal our practice and write reflection papers. Cross-listed as TRA510.

TRA114
Indian Devotional and Raga Singing (3)
Singing, first of sixty-four traditional Indian arts, is an ancient system of yoga. Students learn to sing OM; chants that consist of naming and manifesting god; svaras-seven goddess tones, the notes from which all traditional scales are derived; ragas-crystals of pure sound. We study sonic transformation, or the means of transforming consciousness and awareness using sound, such as Shabda Brahma (word is god), Nada Brahma (sound is god) etc. All students play the tambura, a stringed drone instrument. Cross-listed as TRA514.

TRA120
Ikebana/Kado I (3)
Ikebana is the Japanese art of flower arranging, stemming from a love of nature and a delight in developing the elegance and creativity of being human. Ikebana is also called “Kado, the way of flowers” because it is a contemplative practice [a “dharma art”] as well as an art form. We study the classical and improvisational forms of the Sagetsu school. Ikebana teaches you that everyone has the gentleness and courage of artistic talent. Materials Fee. Cross-listed as TRA520.

TRA133
Yoga I (3)
An introduction to the vast tradition of yoga. Students gain both an understanding of yoga in its historical and philosophical context and an experience of its methods, which constitute an in-depth exploration of breath, movement and consciousness. Students engage with the practices of asana (postures designed to generate sensory awareness, alignment, strength and ease), pranayama (breath awareness and control) dharana and dhyana (meditation practices). Cross-listed as TRA515.

TRA205
T'ai-Chi Ch'uan II (3)
The first third of the form is corrected. The second third of the form is taught. While continuing to work on the basic principles, the concepts of becoming more relaxed, soft and open in the body and mind are emphasized. Cross-listed as TRA525. Prerequisite: TRA105.

TRA210
Aikido II (3)
This class continues to build directly on the basic aikido teachings and philosophy to create greater centered and calm response to conflict in a martial encounter or in our everyday personal lives. Relaxed, nonaggressive learning is emphasized. Greater stamina of body and attention is developed. We support our embodied experience by reading and reporting on texts of aikido history, philosophy and technique. We study the practice and ideas of other contemporary sensei on video and visits to seminars. We write papers and journals to enhance our mental reflection and insight on the complexity of our training experience.Cross-listed as TRA530. Prerequisite: TRA110.

TRA220
Ikebana/Kado II (3)
This class offers further exploration and in-depth study of ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging. Prerequisite: TRA 120. Materials fee. Cross-listed as TRA540.

TRA233
Yoga II: Psychology of the Chakras (3)
Students begin exploring the psychology of the self through the lens of the “subtle body,” namely the chakra system. Drawing from both classical and contemporary yoga, students engage in both an academic and experiential study, utilizing asana, pranayama,
meditation, and a variety of psychological approaches. This class continues the study of yoga’s rich literature and philosophy. Cross-listed as TRA535. Prerequisite TRA133.

TRA252
Taoism (3)
Taoism is a philosophy, religion, and set of transformational practices based on acting in harmony with the Tao, or “way” of nature. It can be traced back to at least the late 4th century BCE and has evolved along with ancient Chinese folk religions to provide the underpinnings of modern religious sects and esoteric practices as well as faiths and many martial arts. This course provides an overview of the historical, cultural, and philosophical context of Taoism, introduces transformational and alchemical practices, includes regular practice of qigong and Taoist meditation, and relates Taoism specifically to the study of T'ai-Chi Ch'uan and other martial arts. Open to students with 30+ earned credits only. Cross-listed as TRA552.

TRA260
Mudra Space Awareness (3)
Space can seem hostile, benevolent, seductive or enriching. Our perceptions are colored by neurosis and are heightened by openness, depending on whether we struggle against or work creatively with obstacles. Students learn acting exercises designed by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, the maitri practice of the buddha families and experiments with space and form by selected Western directors. Class exercises help students develop an appreciation of themselves and others in the context of alive, ever-changing space. A studio class, some outside rehearsal, attendance and willingness are the primary course requirements. Materials fee. Cross-listed as TRA560.

TRA305
T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Level III (3)
In Level III, the choreography is taught for the completion of the form from the Low Punch to the end. The entire form is reviewed and refined, with special attention to using the principles to inform correct shapes and movements. Partner work and practice drills are introduced. Cross-listed as TRA545. Prerequisite: TRA 205.

TRA310
Aikido III (3)
Calm confidence and grace emerge naturally with the continued and consistent study of aikido movement. Bodies and concentration strengthen. One becomes more comfortable with the “confusion,” the unknowing that precedes knowing. Becoming more relaxed under pressure, speed, complexity, simplicity and open heartedness begin to enter the martial engagements. One begins to understand how practice might become a lifetime commitment. Bokken and tanto kata are added to intensify the empty hand practice. Readings, reflective writing, attending seminars all are required to further the students’ development. Cross-listed as TRA550. Prerequisite: TRA210.

TRA320
Ikebana/Kado III (3)
This class offers further exploration and in-depth study of ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging. Prerequisite: TRA 220. Materials fee. Cross-listed as TRA564.

TRA333
Yoga III: Integral Practice (3)
This class integrates the breadth of yoga practice. In addition to deepening the practice of asana, students learn advanced breathing practices (pranayama), bandhas and mudras (gestures that direct the current of life-force), concentration practices (dharana), yogic methods of physical purification, meditation (dhyana), internal and vocal sound (mantra) and more of yoga’s rich literature and philosophy. A regular home practice is required. Cross-listed as TRA555. Prerequisite: TRA2335.

TRA405
T'ai-Chi Ch'uan IV: Push Hands (1)
Level IV introduces push-hands, or tui shou, the two-person t'ai-chi ch'uan practice. The basic push-hands pattern is taught and the solo form is corrected, with special attention to how push-hands and the solo practice inform each other. Partner work provides the basis for learning how to interact with others using t'ai-chi principles. By practicing these skills in a push-hands setting, the student learns how to bring them to everyday interactions. Cross-listed as TRA 565. Prerequisite: TRA305.

TRA410
Aikido IV (2)
Further progress in aikido study is pursued at the nationally reputed Boulder Aikikai under the tutorship of Naropa’s aikido faculty. Students deepen their understanding, skill and strength in ukemi, execution of basic and advanced techniques, participate in bokken, jo, tanto training and randori practice. Readings, discussions and reflective writing are required during weekly off-mat meetings. Students are also required to keep a daily practice journal. Cross-listed as TRA410.

TRA433
Yoga IV: (3)
This course continues the study of an integral yoga practice, which combines asana, pranayama, concentration and meditation. In addition, this class serves as an introduction to Yoga Teacher Training, intended to complement and conjoin Yoga V. Students continue their study of anatomy, yoga therapy, alignment, yoga philosophy as well as the fundamentals of designing a yoga practice according to an individual’s physical and psychological constitution. Cross-listed as TRA561. Prerequisite:TRA333.

TRA437
Aikido Seminar - Ikeda Sensei (0.5)
Each weekend seminar provides students with teachings and trainings with world class teachers and opportunities to train with advanced students from around the country. Topics and faculty vary from year to year. Cross-listed as TRA537.
TRA447
Aikido Seminar - Saotome Sensei (0.5)
Each weekend seminar provides students with teachings and trainings with world class teachers and opportunities to train with advanced students from around the country. Topics and faculty vary from year to year. Cross-listed as TRA547.

TRA449
Yoga V: Teacher Training (3)
Yoga V, in conjunction with Yoga IV, is designed to provide the foundation and training needed for students who aspire to teach yoga. This class examines the various topics essential to being a skilled yoga teacher, including yoga therapy, how to safely and effectively teach asana and pranayama; the principles of effective speech; ethics; alignment; how to make adjustments; the sequencing of postures; knowledge of the yoga tradition and philosophy; and the cultivation of one’s authentic self-expression. Students also gain regular practice and experience in teaching yoga. Cross-listed as TRA574. Yoga IV: TRA443 must be taken simultaneously. Prerequisite: TRA333.

TRA450
Aikido V (2)
Further progress in aikido study is pursued at the nationally reputed Boulder Aikikai under the tutorship of Naropa’s aikido faculty. Students deepen their understanding, skill and strength in ukemi, execution of basic and advanced techniques, participate in bokken, jo, tanto training and randori practice. Readings, discussions and reflective writing are required during weekly off-mat meetings. Students are also required to keep a daily practice journal. Cross-listed as TRA573. Prerequisite: TRA410.

TRA453
Yoga History, Theory and Philosophy (3)
Yoga is one of the six classical “outlooks on the nature of being” (Shat Darshana) of Hinduism. Yoga has a five-thousand-year history, its teachings passed from one generation to the next through a written and oral tradition. All yoga traditions, though varied and diverse, share a fundamental aspiration: Self realization. This class surveys the fascinating history of yoga and explores the theories and philosophies underlying it’s practices, from asana [poses] to dhyana [meditation], from taps [discipline] to santosha [contentment]. This class examines the main schools of yogic philosophy, reviews its main epochs of development and delves into some of its most influential texts, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the Bhagavad Gita, and select texts from the Tantras. Open to second, third and fourth year students only.

TRA455
T’ai-Chi Ch’uan V: Sword Form (1)
Level V introduces the choreography of the t’ai-chi sword (jian) form as a basis for developing a deeper understanding of the mechanics of tai chi movement. This deeper understanding then reflects back to the solo form and push-hands practices. The solo form continues to be refined. Cross-listed as TRA585. Prerequisite: TRA305.

TRA463
Yoga Meditation Practicum (3)
Meditation, though often neglected in modern-day yoga, has long been the central practice in yoga traditions. Asana, pranayama, and concentration are stepping stones, which provide a foundation from which meditation can effortlessly emerge. We embark on a journey into the meditative traditions and practices of yoga, drawn from both classical yoga and tantra. This includes the study and practice of concentration techniques (dharana), formless meditation (dhyana), self-inquiry (atma vichara), dream and sleep yoga (yoga nidra), and the philosophical premises behind these practices. Cross-listed as TRA512. Open to juniors and seniors.

TRA487
Aikido VI (2)
Further progress in aikido study is pursued at the nationally reputed Boulder Aikikai under the tutorship of Naropa’s aikido faculty. Students deepen their understanding, skill and strength in ukemi, execution of basic and advanced techniques, participate in bokken, jo, tanto training and randori practice. Readings, discussions and reflective writing are required during weekly off-mat meetings. Students are also required to keep a daily practice journal. Cross-listed as TRA587. Prerequisite: TRA450.

TRA489
Senior Colloquium (1)
This required course is a process class and includes writing a journal that addresses how the student connects practice of discipline to experience in life and how the student is learning to embody the contemplative way of life. The main focus is the preparation and the presentation of the senior project. Traditional Eastern Arts students only.

TRA490
T’ai-Chi Ch’uan Level VI (1)
In Level VI, students refine their understanding and practice of t’ai-chi ch’uan. Students focus on one or more of the major components (empty-handed solo form, sword form, and push-hands) of the t’ai-chi curriculum. For those components, students advance and deepen their practice from the introductory approach of Levels I through V, which focus on choreography and overview, to the next level, which is characterized by a focus on roundness, balance, and harmonization. Cross-listed as TRA585. Prerequisites: TRA405 and TRA455.

TRA491
Aikido VII (2)
Further progress in aikido study is pursued at the nationally reputed Boulder Aikikai under the tutorship of Naropa’s aikido faculty. Students deepen their understanding, skill and strength in ukemi, execution of basic and advanced techniques, participate in bokken, jo, tanto training and randori practice. Readings, discussions and reflective writing are required during weekly off-mat meetings. Students are also required to keep a daily practice journal. Prerequisite: TRA487.
TRA493
T’ai-Chi Ch’uan Level VII (1)
In Level VII, students continue to refine their understanding and practice of t’ai-chi ch’uan. Students deepen and broaden their focus to additional major components (empty-handed solo form, sword form, and push-hands) of the t’ai-chi curriculum; they can choose to further refine their work from Level VI, or they can choose to focus on new practice components they did not cover in Level VI. For the areas of focus in Level VII, students advance and deepen their practice from the introductory approach of Levels I through V, which focus on choreography and overview, to the next level, which is characterized by a focus on roundness, balance, and harmonization. Prerequisite: TRA490.

TRA494
Aikido VIII (2)
Further progress in aikido study is pursued at the nationally reputed Boulder Aikikai under the tutorship of Naropa’s aikido faculty. Students deepen their understanding, skill and strength in ukemi, execution of basic and advanced techniques, participate in bokken, jo, tanto training and randori practice. Readings, discussions and reflective writing are required during weekly off-mat meetings. Students are also required to keep a daily practice journal. Prerequisite: TRA491.

TRA496
T’ai-Chi Ch’uan Level VIII (1)
Level VIII is a capstone course for students completing their Naropa t’ai-chi ch’uan education. At the completion of Level VIII, students will have explored all the major practice components in sufficient depth to achieve the level of roundness, balance, and harmonization. Students who complete Level VIII are prepared to begin more advanced internal studies and to enter on a senior student/assistant track for lineage-based certification. Prerequisite: TRA493.

TRA499
Independent Study: Traditional Eastern Arts (0.5)
Taught by the instructor of the core awareness discipline, this class focuses on the history, culture and philosophy of the major awareness discipline. The student and teacher meet in the beginning, middle and end of the semester. Traditional Eastern Arts students only.