MA in Psychology: Contemplative Counseling Psychology

MA Contemplative Psychotherapy is a unique 63-credit clinical training program integrating Western psychotherapy with the contemplative tradition of Buddhism. A pioneer in the use of meditation as a foundation for the clinical training of counselors, for forty years MA Contemplative Psychotherapy has challenged students to recognize their own “Brilliant Sanity”, and to discover compassionate presence as a ground for their clinical work.

Contemplative Psychotherapy may be said to have two parents: the 2,500-year-old wisdom tradition of Buddhism and the clinical traditions of Western psychology, including the humanistic, contemporary psychoanalytic and existential schools. Like all offspring it has much in common with its parents and yet is uniquely itself at the same time. From Buddhism comes the practice of mindfulness-awareness meditation, together with a highly sophisticated understanding of the functioning of the mind in sanity and in confusion. From Western psychology comes the investigation of the stages of human development, a precise language for discussing mental disturbance, and the intimate method of working with others known as “psychotherapy” or “counseling.” Practitioners of Contemplative Psychotherapy become expert at recognizing sanity within even the most confused and distorted states of mind and are trained to nurture this sanity in themselves and in their clients.

Students in the Contemplative Psychotherapy program move through their studies as a cohort. They participate in small and large process groups throughout the program. This group aspect of the program takes mindfulness-awareness practice into relationship and allows students to offer each other support and to study their relational patterns in real time. Another important aspect of the MA Contemplative Psychotherapy program is the five maitri meditation retreats. Maitri is a Sanskrit term that means “unconditional friendliness,” and this teaching and practice become 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 program provides essential clinical experience. While in their internship, students participate in tutorials with clinical faculty, and practice applying 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 program is designed to guide students on a journey of practice and study that leads toward inner resilience and warmth, as well as giving them basic confidence in their capacity to help others.

Licensure

Learners are strongly encouraged to carefully research the educational requirements for the intended licensure or certification in the state(s) where they intend to seek licensure or certification. Please see the Licensure section of the Graduate School of Psychology page for further information about the curriculum of the various Graduate School of Psychology counseling programs and licensure/certification eligibility.

Student Success

Because of the professional nature of this training program, students are evaluated on an ongoing basis to assess their readiness for maitri retreats, internship, and continuing in the program altogether. The program may deny a student permission to continue in the program. Although grades are one indication of progress, other criteria for evaluation include how the students interact with each other and with faculty and administration, as well as how they handle obstacles that arise and how they work with feedback based on any of the above criteria. Please see the program handbook for details.

Degree Requirements

MA Psychology: Contemplative Psychotherapy

First year, fall

- PSYC600 Opening Retreat (noncredit)
- PSYC608 Introduction to Buddhist Psychology (2)
- PSYC609 Group Process I (0.5)
- PSYC618 Human Growth and Development: Contemplative View (3)
- PSYC650 Community, Interdependence & Multicultural Foundations (3)
- PSYC660 Maitri I (1)
- PSYC778 Transitions, Lifestyles, and Career Development (3)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Listings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSYC600</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opening Retreat (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>An introduction to fundamental principles of contemplative psychotherapy, this weekend intensive provides the opportunity for community building, an introduction to meditation and the marking of the transition into the MA Psychology: Contemplative Psychotherapy program. Additional fee for weekend supplies.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PSYC605</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Large Group Process (0.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students participate in a large group process. Key theoretical concepts, individuals' experience within the group, and the group's dynamics are examined.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PSYC608</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Buddhist Psychology (2)</td>
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<td>Contemplative psychotherapy is based on the view of &quot;brilliant sanity&quot; 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PSYC808</strong></td>
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<td>Field Placement I (1)</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PSYC818</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical Tutorial I (2)</td>
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<td>Human Growth and Development: Contemplative View (3)</td>
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| 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.

PSYC619
Group Process II (0.5)
This is a continuation of PSYC 609.

PSYC625
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.

PSYC629
Group Process III (0.5)
This course is a continuation of PSYC 619.

PSYC639
Group Process IV (0.5)
This course is a continuation of PSYC629.

PSYC650
Community, Interdependence & Multicultural Foundations (3)
A learning community that offers a wealth of opportunities to learn about and experience oneself in relationship. In this class students explore 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 will be paid to the role of diversity and multicultural competence. This course will provide the theoretical and experiential ground for working skillfully with diverse identities including race, ethnicity, nationality, education, class, gender, sexual orientation, age and ability. Buddhist principles of nonduality 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.

PSYC658
Buddhist Psychology II: Abhidharma and the Psychology of Confusion (2)
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. Pratityasamutpada 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.

PSYC660
Maitri Program I (1)
A two-week residential intensive focusing on the practice of intensive sitting and walking meditation. Students refine their understanding of meditative 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.

PSYC668
Family Process (3)
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.

PSYC669
Buddhist Psychology III: Compassion and the Heart of Emptiness (2)
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.

PSYC675
Maitri II (1)
A two week residential intensive focusing on the practice of intensive sitting and walking meditation and 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.

PSYC678
Lineages of Understanding: Buddhist and Western Perspective on Well-Being and Disorder (3)
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 "story-
lines.” 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.

**PSYC699**  
Independent Study: MA Contemplative Psychology (0.5)  
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 coursework is decided upon by the student and faculty member.

**PSYC700**  
Research and Statistics (3)  
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.

**PSYC701W**  
Research and Psychological Testing (1)  
Designed to be as experiential as possible, this course covers psychological testing and assessment in the context of counseling psychology and psychological research. Course work seeks to be applicable and useful for both professional and personal growth and includes lecture, discussion and exercises.

**PSYC702**  
Assessment and Appraisal (2)  
This course provides students with a broad understanding of important topics in appraisal and its application to counseling. Included are group and individual psychometric theories and approaches to appraisal; data and information-gathering methods; validity and reliability; psychometric statistics; and factors influencing appraisals. Students also explore the possible implications of a contemplative counseling model in applying appraisal methods. Course fee.

**PSYC708**  
Buddhist Psychology IV: The Practice of Psychotherapy and the Path of the Bodhisattva (2)  
The Mahayana ideal of the bodhisattva, one who dedicated his or her 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 action, 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.

**PSYC709**  
Contemplative Psychotherapy Seminar: Mandala and Clinical Applications (3)  
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.

**PSYC719**  
Group Process V (0.5)  
This course is a continuation of PSYC639.

**PSYC728**  
Therapeutic Relationships I: Theory and Practice (3)  
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.

**PSYC729**  
Group Process VI (0.5)  
This course is a continuation of PSYC719.

**PSYC738**  
Psychopathology, Psychosis and Ordinary Mind (2.5)  
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.
PSYC739
The Art of Practicing Contemplative Psychotherapy (3)
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 psychotherapy. Written work is designed to further the conceptual and clinical acumen of the developing psychotherapist. Additional fee for one-on-one meditation instruction.

PSYC758
Therapeutic Relationships II: Professional Orientation (3)
Providing continuing training in clinical skills, this course emphasizes the study of professional roles and standards including ethics, legal issues and credentialing.

PSYC760
Maitri III: Retreat (1)
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.

PSYC775
Maitri IV (1)
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.

PSYC778
Transitions, Lifestyles & Career Development (3)
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 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.

PSYC798
Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy (3)
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.

PSYC808
Field Placement I (1)
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 psychotherapy to the practices of counseling, therapy, group work and patient care.

PSYC818
Clinical Tutorial I (2)
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 psychotherapy manifest in clinical work. Group members also practice clinical skills in these groups.

PSYC858
Field Placement II (3)
This course is a continuation of PSYC808.

PSYC860
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.
PSYC864
Contemplative Psychotherapy Practicum (2)
The Contemplative Psychotherapy Practicum is designed to provide a supportive and instructional forum for students' initial experiences 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. 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.

PSYC868
Clinical Tutorial II (2)
This course is a continuation of PSYC818.

PSYC874
Extended Clinical Tutorial (0.5)
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.