

COURSE SYLLABUS - OLLI
Slow-Flow Yoga - the Philosophy and the Practice
Saturdays, 10 – 11:30
Instructor: Jan Erkert

Description

This course is an introduction to yoga history, philosophy, and practice of the eight limbs of yoga, rooted in the ancient Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Participants will learn the postures (asanas), meditation practices, and breathing techniques (pranayama) as a springboard for playful explorations of stability and ease, breath and flow, and joy and limitations. These embodied activities build strength and flexibility as well as cultivate increased concentration, focus and mindfulness. Participants who prefer to practice on a mat, should bring a yoga mat. For those preferring not to practice on a mat, modifications on a chair will be provided.

Course Outline

Class #1 Yoga – Beginnings

- Historical/Philosophical Context: Introduction to the Eight Limbs of Yoga by Patanjali
- Meditation/*Pranayama* (Limb #3): Introduction to basic breathing practices.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas* (Limb #4): Introduction of yoga postures (asanas). Anatomical concepts for cultivating grounding: Yield and Push/Reach and Pull.

Class #2 Perspectives

- Historical/Philosophical Context: History and lineages of various styles of yoga (Ashtanga, Vinyasa/Flow, Iyengar, Hatha, Hot Yoga, etc.)
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Extending the breath. Introduction of Internal Focus (*Pratyahara*/Limb #5)
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Balancing anatomical principles of strength and flexibility within yogic concepts of steadiness (*Sthira*) and ease (*Sukha*).

Class #3 Energy

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to the moral/ethical restraints in yoga (restraints toward others *yamas*/Limb #1, and restraints toward self – *niyamas*/Limb #2)
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Diaphragmatic/belly breathing. Setting an intention for the practice.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Core strengthening utilizing energy centers (*bandhas*)

Class #4 Flow

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to non-violence (*yama -ahimsa*)
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Building awareness of the breath as it moves into different areas of the lungs. Introduction of concentration (*Dharana*/Limb #6)
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Matching Movement and Breath to achieve flow. Introduction to the Sun Salutation flow series (*surya namaskara*) from *Ashtanga Yoga*.

Class #5 Heart

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to non-judgmental observation (*dhyana*/Limb #7)
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Introduction to the warrior or ocean breath (*ujjayi*)
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Opening and expanding the heart space.

Class #6 Water

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to the channels of life force (Vayu) based on the elements of earth, air, fire, ether, water.
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: channeling the breath through directional intent.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Utilizing the water Vayu (vyana Vayu) – exploring the flow of movement and breath.

Class #7 Grounding

- Historical/Philosophical: Stories of the Gods/Goddesses of India who have influenced yoga.
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Exploring the pause at the top/bottom of inhale/exhalation.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Balancing lightness (prana Vayu/air) and grounding (Apana Vayu/earth) Celebrating stillness.

Class #8 Bliss

- Historical/philosophical: Introduction to the spiritual aspects of yoga - a state of bliss (*samadhi*/Limb #8) and the purpose of the soul (*dharma*).
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Expansion through the breath.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Balancing energies of expansion outward (*udana Vayu*) and drawing inward (*samana Vayu*)

Reading List for Students (If interested)

Desikachar, T.K.V. The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice. 1995. Inner Traditions International. Rochester, Vermont.

- Introduction, p.5 – 14. An overview of the meaning of yoga from a major guru and founder of Vinyasa Yoga.

Farhi, Donna. The Breathing Book, Good Health and Vitality Through essential Breath Work. 1996. St. Martin's Press. New York, NY.

- Chapter III, p 48-68, The Anatomy of Breathing. An overview of the anatomy of breathing.

Farhi, Donna. Yoga Mind, Body & Spirit, a Return to Wholeness. 2000. Henry Holt and Company, LLC. New York, NY.

- Chapter I, Living Principles, p. 4 – 20, An introduction to Yoga and the moral/ethical behaviors of yoga (*yamas and niyamas*).

Kraftsow, Gary. Yoga for Wellness, Healing with the Timeless Teachings of Viniyoga. 1999. The Penguin Group. New York, NY.

- Chapter I: Principles of Practice, p. 3-6/Introduction to Asana. An introduction to the physical practice of yoga (*asanas*)

Palkhivala, Aadil. Fire of Love, for Students of Life, for Teachers of Yoga. 2013. Innerworks Company. Bellevue, WA.

- Dharma, p. 15 – 36. A spiritual overview of *dharma* and historical context to the practice.

Abbreviated research bibliography

Desikachar, The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice. 1995. Inner Traditions International. Rochester, Vermont

Farhi, Donna. Yoga Mind, Body & Spirit, a Return to Wholeness. 2000. Henry Holt and Company, LLC. New York, NY.

Kraftsow, Gary. Yoga for Wellness, Healing with the Timeless Teachings of Viniyoga. 1999. The Penguin Group. New York, NY.

Long, Ray, MD, FRCSC. The Key Muscles of Yoga, Your Guide to Functional Anatomy in Yoga. 2005. Bandha Yoga Publications. China.

Satchidananda, Sri Swami. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. 1978. Integral Yoga @ Publications. Buckingham, VA.

Biography: Jan Erkert is an embodied practitioner, educator, author/writer, and choreographer. She is Professor Emerita and former Head of the Department of Dance at University of Illinois. As Artistic Director of Jan Erkert & Dancers she created over 70 works that garnered national and international awards. Throughout her career, she has researched and taught dance, vinyasa yoga, kinesiology, and somatic practices, receiving an Excellence in Teaching Award from Columbia College, and a Leadership Award from University of Illinois. Certified by Yoga Alliance (500 Hour RYT) her classes emphasize efficient movement practices, movement flow, and our collective capacity for joy.