

COURSE SYLLABUS - OLLI
Slow-Flow Yoga - the Philosophy and the Practice
8 Week Course, Mondays 11:30 – 1:00 pm
Spring 2024
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: The Eight Limbs of Yoga – Patanjali’s Sutras
- Meditation/*Pranayama* (Limb #3): Introduction to basic breathing practices.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas* (Limb #4): Introduction of *asanas* (yoga postures). Balancing anatomical principles of strength and flexibility within yogic concepts of *Sthira* (steadiness) and *Sukha* (ease).

Class #2 Perspectives – Pratyahara (Looking Inward)

- Historical/Philosophical Context:
- Meditation/*Pranayama* (Limb #3): Extending and feeling the breath.
- Introduction of *Pratyahara*/Limb #5 (Internal Focus). Listening to Body Cues. Physical Practice: Yield and Push, Reach and Pull.

Class #3 Energy *Pranayama* (Extended Breath)

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to the anatomy of breathing - *Pranayama*
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Diaphragmatic/belly breathing. Setting an intention for the practice.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Creating an energetic aura by moving breath.

Class #4 Flow

- Historical/Philosophical: Modern Yoga in the Western World.
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Building awareness of the breath as it moves into different areas of the lungs. Introduction of *Dharana*/Limb #6 (concentration).

- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Matching Movement and Breath to achieve flow. Introduction to the *surya namaskara* (sun salutation flow series) from *Ashtanga Yoga*.

Class #5 *Bandhas* (Energetic Locks – like the Panama canal)

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to the *Bandhas* –Moving prana (energy) through the body.
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Dharana (concentration) and *Chitti Vritti* (monkey Thoughts). Extending the breath practice.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Spinal alignment patterns.

Class #6 Harnessing the *Vayus* (winds)

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

Class #7 *Chakras* (Spinning Energy)

- Historical/Philosophical: Introduction to *Chakras*.
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Sounding and mantras
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Attending to simultaneous and sequential flow in the spine utilizing *chakras*.

Class #8 *Pancha Maya Koshas* (The Veils)

- Historical/philosophical: Review of past concepts and Introduction to the spiritual aspects of yoga/
- Meditation/*Pranayama*: Expansion through the breath.
- Physical Practice/*Asanas*: Establishing rituals of practice

Subject to change based on student needs.

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.