

## *Embodied Liturgy Course Syllabus*

### Liturgical Body

Proposed by Frank C. Senn

I envision this course being taught as a religion department offering in a college or university, although it could also be a seminary or divinity school elective. In a college or university setting the course could be open to all students as a religion requirement or elective. It might be of particular interest to students in the departments of religion or theology, performing arts (music, dance, theater), cultural anthropology, health or physical education.

The principal teacher should have expertise in liturgy/worship as well as some interest in yoga. The course would require a certified yoga instructor as a co-teacher if the principal teacher does not have the expertise or skills to lead a yoga practice. The yoga teacher might be on the staff of the physical education department of the college or university or would be brought into the course as an adjunct faculty member. The yoga taught in the course should be basic Hatha, and the yoga teacher should be sensitive to the connections that will be made between the practice of yoga and the use of the body in Christian rituals. The yoga instructor should also be available on days when readings from Richard Freeman are scheduled to assist with discussion.

The course requirements will be determined by the principal teacher, according to the standards of the institution offering the course. I suggest a field trip to a church other than the student's to report on what kind of liturgical style they found and how their body was engaged in worship.

A classroom is required that enables students to spread out on the floor for yoga exercises. Students should be advised to wear attire to class that will enable them to participate in yoga practices on days when yoga is scheduled. Yoga is a practice accessible to all ages and genders. A certified yoga instructor will have the training and skill to involve all levels of students according to their abilities. The purpose of the yoga employed in this course is to enable students to get into their own bodies as they study and reflect upon the use of the body on Christian liturgy and worship.

### Course Statement of Purpose

This course is an introduction to ritual repertoire of Christian liturgy from the perspective of the body engaged in liturgical rites and paraliturgical devotions. Yoga practices will be used in the course as a way of helping students to explore their own bodies and body-mind connections as they become engaged in embodied liturgy.

### Required Course Reading

Freeman, Richard. *The Mirror of Yoga: Awakening the Intelligence of Body and Mind*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 2012.

Schemmann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973.

Senn, Frank C. *Embodied Liturgy: Lessons in Christian Ritual*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine, 1969, 1995.

If this course is taught in a seminary add:

White, James F. *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

Assigned readings should be done before class sessions.

### Course Syllabus

This syllabus provides 28 sessions. They could be divided into the number of sessions and hours per week needed according to the length of your academic term.

Session 1. Introduction to the course. The principal teacher gives an overview of the course and its requirements. The yoga instructor gives an introduction to basic yoga concepts. Readings: Senn, Introduction; Freeman, Introduction; [White, Preface].

Session 2. From Mind-Body Dualism to Embodied Mind Theory. Senn, chapter 1A; Freeman, chapter 1. Yoga: body scan and discussion of the experience.

Session 3. Use of the Body in Worship: Senses and Postures. Reading: Freeman, chapter 2. Yoga: a brief pranayama, asana, meditation practice.

Session 4. What Liturgy Is. What Worship Means. Reading: Senn, chapter 1B; Schemann, Appendix 1; [White, chapter 1]. Yoga: conclude session with the half sun salutation in Senn, pp. 27-28.

Session 5. Days and Seasons. Reading: Senn, chapter 2A; Schmemmann, chapter 3; [White, pp. 110-25, chapter 2]. Yoga: sequence in Senn, pp. 43-44.

Session 6. Sacraments and Sacramentals. Senn, chapter 2B; Schmemmann, "Appendix 2; [White, chapter 5].

Session 7. Naked Before the Lord. Liminality and Communitas. Reading: Senn, chapter 3A; Turner, chapter 3.

Session 8. Exploring the Subtle Body. Reading: Freeman, chapter 3. Yoga: chakra sequence in Senn, pp. 76-78 followed by discussion.

Session 9. Clothed By the Lord. Reading: Senn, chapter 3B; Freeman, chapter 8 (*Yoga Sutras*). Yoga: introduction to meditation; meditation in Senn, pp. 88-89.

Session 10. Ritualizing Before the Lord. Reading: Senn, chapter 4A; Turner, chapter 4. Yoga: conclude session with full sun salutation.

Session 11. Playing Before the Lord. Reading: Senn, chapter 4B. The instructor might encourage the students to read Romano Guardini's classical 1918 essay, "The Spirit of the Liturgy."

Session 12. Sacrifices and Meals. Reading: Senn, chapter 5A. Yoga: meditation on bread and wine in Senn, pp. 146-147.

Session 13. Word and Eucharistic Meal. Reading: Senn, chapter 5B; Schmemmann, chapter 2; [White, pp. 112-44, chapter 7].

Session 14. Fasting and Feasting. Reading: Senn, chapter 6A; Schmemmann, chapter 1. Yoga: sequence in Senn, pp. 161-62.

Session 15. Penance and Festival. Reading: Senn, chapter 6B; Freeman, chapter 6 (*Bhagavad Gita*). Discussion of the role of extravagant devotion (*bhakti*) in religion as expressions of love of God. View YouTube videos of a Philippine flagellant procession and a Mardi Gras parade.

Session 16. Initiations of Youth. Reading: Senn, chapter 7A; Schmemmann, chapter 4; [White, chapter 6].

Session 17. Healing Ministries. Reading: Senn, chapter 7B; [White, pp. 256-63].

Session 18. Marriage. Reading: Senn, chapter 8A; Schmemmann, chapter 5; [White, pp. 238-49].

Session 19. Tantra and Sexuality. Reading: Freeman, chapter 7. Yoga: partner practice as in Senn, pp. 240-41, or whatever yoga asanas the instructor devises.

Session 20. Death and Burial. Reading: Senn, chapter 8B; Schmemmann, chapter 6; [White, pp. 263-71].

Session 21. Inculturation. Reading: Senn, chapter 9A. Study the Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture.

Session 22. Architecture and Art. Reading: Senn, chapter 9B; [White, pp. 76-97, 104-09].

Session 23. Spirit and Breath. Reading: Senn, chapter 10A. Yoga: sequence in Senn, pp. 292-93, meditation in Senn, p. 303.

Session 23. Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. Reading: Senn, chapter 10B; [White, pp. 97-104]. Invite a colleague from the music faculty to provide examples of liturgical music.

Session 24. Processions and Dance. Reading: Senn, chapter 11A. Invite a liturgical dancer to the class to engage the students in a processional dance.

Session 25. Liturgical Dramas and Plays. Reading: Senn, chapter 11B. View a YouTube video of the Oberammergau passion play.

Session 26. Liturgical Performance Styles. Reading: Senn, chapter 12A

Session 27. Fit Bodies. Reading: Senn, pp. 365-72. Have the yoga instructor speak about Ayurveda and its seasonal diets.

Session 28. Theological Bodies. Tantra and Christianity: comparison of incarnational spiritualities. Reading: Senn, pp. 372-77. Discuss: was having yoga practices helpful to you in getting into your own body? Has there been carry-over into the use of your body in worship?

Session 29. Report on worship visitations. Students should give the name and denomination of the church, discuss which liturgical performance style the liturgy they attended best fit, and

describe how the body was engaged in worship and what interactions there were with other bodies in the congregation.

Session 30. The Body Engaged in Worship, the Mind Transformed. Reading: Senn, pp. 377-81; Schmemmann, chapter 7.