

University of California, Santa Barbara
INT94FW: Alchemy

Fall 2010
W 5:00 – 5:50

Prof. David White
BSIF 1217

Class Organization: Students are required to prepare for lectures by fulfilling reading assignments prior to attendance. Each week, two to three students will lead discussion on the readings for that meeting. Each week's team will send an email to everyone in the class, *by no later than the Sunday before class*, containing the following elements:

- 1) a short (1-2 page) analysis of the readings (including, where possible, discussion of images)
- 2) a list of at least 5 questions about the readings, which will serve as the basis for our in-class seminar discussion.
- 3) a list of 5 words you found in the readings together with their definitions from the on-line Oxford English Dictionary: <http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/>

Readings: During the first week of class, all students must purchase a Course Reader from The Alternative, 6556 Pardall Road, Isla Vista. The contents of the reader are as follows:

- Thomas Boehmer, "Taoist Alchemy: A Sympathetic Approach through Symbols," in Michael Saso and David W. Chapell, eds., *Buddhist and Taoist Studies*, pp. 57-78
- William H. Brock, *The Norton History of Chemistry*, pp. 8-19
- Titus Burckhart, *Alchemy, Science of the Cosmos Science of the Soul*, pp. 196-201
- Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *Alchemical Death & Resurrection: The Significance of Alchemy in the Age of Newton*, pp. 1-34
- Mircea Eliade, "The Myth of Alchemy," *Parabola* 3:3 (1978), pp. 7-23
- Donald R. Hill, "The Literature of Arabic Alchemy," in M. J. L. Young, ed., *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, pp. 328-41
- Eric Holmyard, *Alchemy*, pp. 68-82
- Trevor H. Levere, *Transforming Matter: A History of Chemistry from Alchemy to the Buckyball*, pp. 1-13
- David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1450*, pp. 35-58
- Stanton J. Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks: Alchemy in English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration*, pp. 6-36
- Barbara Obrist, ed., *Constantine of Pisa, The Book of the Secrets of Alchemy*, pp. 3-5; 227-33; 246-53; 266-71
- Raphael Patai, *the Jewish Alchemists, A History and Source Book*, pp. pp. 60-80; 152-69; 218-33
- John Read, *From Alchemy to Chemistry*, pp. 41-57
- Gareth Roberts, *The Mirror of Alchemy: Alchemical Ideas and Images in Manuscripts and Books from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 13-26
- Karin C. Ryding, "Islamic Alchemy According to Al-Khwarizmi," *Ambix* 41:3 (1994), pp. 121-32
- Gary Seaman, "Only Half-Way to Godhead: The Chinese Geomancer as Alchemist and Cosmic Pivot," *Asian Folklore Studies* 45 (1986), pp. 1-18
- David Gordon White, "Indian Alchemy," *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2005), vol.1, pp. 241-44
- _____, *The Alchemical Body*, pp. 203-206
- _____, "The Ocean of Mercury," pp. 1-8

Schedule of Class Meetings and Assigned Readings

September 29 Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation

October 6 Fundamentals of Alchemy

Eliade, "The Myth of Alchemy," pp. 7-23
Levere, *Transforming Matter*, pp. 1-13

October 13 Greek Philosophy and Hellenistic Alchemy

Brock, *Chemistry*, pp. 8-19
Burckhart, *Alchemy*, pp. 196-201
Lindberg, *Beginnings*, pp. 35-58
Roberts, *Mirror of Alchemy*, pp. 13-26

October 20 Medieval Alchemy

Read, *From Alchemy to Chemistry*, pp. 41-57
Obrist, *Constantine of Pisa*, pp. 3-5; 227-33; 246-53; 266-71
Roberts, *Mirror of Alchemy*, pp. 45-63

October 27 Renaissance and Newtonian Alchemy

Dobbs, *Alchemical Death & Resurrection*, pp. 1-34
Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, pp. 6-36

November 3 Jewish Alchemy

Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, pp. 60-80; 152-69; 218-33

November 10 Islamic Alchemy

Hill, "Literature of Arabic Alchemy," pp. 328-41
Holmyard, *Alchemy*, pp. 68-82
Ryding, "Islamic Alchemy," pp. 121-33

November 17 Hindu Alchemy

White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 203-206
White, "Indian Alchemy," pp. 241-4
White, "Ocean of Mercury," pp. 1-8

November 24 Taoist Alchemy

Boehmer, "Taoist Alchemy," pp. 57-78
Seaman, "Only Half-Way to Godhead," pp. 1-18

December 1 Conclusions