

University of California, Santa Barbara  
INT94FW: Alchemy

Winter 2012  
W 12:00 – 1:00

Prof. David White  
HSSB 2201

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, located in the Ucen. 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
- 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 of 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 Ocean of Mercury," pp. 1-8

The following readings are on reserve in Davidson Library:

- Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *Alchemical Death & Resurrection: The Significance of Alchemy in the Age of Newton*, pp. 1-34
- Raphael Patai, *the Jewish Alchemists, A History and Source Book*, pp. pp. 60-80; 152-69; 218-33
- Gareth Roberts, *The Mirror of Alchemy: Alchemical Ideas and Images in Manuscripts and Books from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 13-26
- David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body*, pp. 203-206

## Schedule of Class Meetings and Assigned Readings

January 11                      Orientation, (Dis)orientation, (Re)orientation

January 18                      Fundamentals of Alchemy

Eliade, "The Myth of Alchemy," pp. 7-23

Levere, *Transforming Matter*, pp. 1-13

January 25                      NO CLASS

February 1                      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

February 8                      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

February 15                      Renaissance and Newtonian Alchemy

Dobbs, *Alchemical Death & Resurrection*, pp. 1-34

Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, pp. 6-36

February 22                      Jewish Alchemy

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

February 29                      Islamic Alchemy

Hill, "Literature of Arabic Alchemy," pp. 328-41

Holmyard, *Alchemy*, pp. 68-82

Ryding, "Islamic Alchemy," pp. 121-33

March 7                          Hindu Alchemy

White, *Alchemical Body*, pp. 203-206

White, "Indian Alchemy," pp. 241-4

White, "Ocean of Mercury," pp. 1-8

March 14                        Taoist Alchemy

Boehmer, "Taoist Alchemy," pp. 57-78

Seaman, "Only Half-Way to Godhead," pp. 1-18