

Format revised 2025  
Syllabus revised 2025

Florence University of the Arts (FUA) is an academic institution for study abroad in Florence, Italy. FUA collaborates with The American University of Florence (AUF), an international university offering US-style undergraduate and graduate degrees, in a cooperation to offer study abroad programs with a diverse breadth and depth of academic curriculum.

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**SCHOOL OF SPORTS AND HEALTH SCIENCES****DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCES; RELIGIOUS STUDIES; HAPPINESS SCIENCES****COURSE TITLE: The Art of Yoga and Meditation****COURSE CODE: SHSSAY190; LARSAY190; GSHSAY190****3 semester credits****1. DESCRIPTION**

This course provides students with an introduction to the art of yoga and meditation to gain an understanding of the philosophical and spiritual contexts that the discipline is rooted in. The course investigation begins with the notion of awareness, and the acquisition of the term through an overview of the principal asanas and their correct practice. The spiritual aspects of yoga are experienced in the form of various meditation techniques from different philosophies as well as the study of pranayama breathing exercises. Topics also include an examination of yoga props as well as dietary and nutritional guidelines, studied through the lens of yoga philosophy gleaned from sacred texts. The course will cover yoga traditions from ancient times to more contemporary interpretations.

**2. OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- reap the benefits of yoga and be able to apply them to modern living, beyond the yoga practitioner's mat
- actively experience the four paths of yoga: Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Raja Yoga
- be encouraged, through correct and challenging practice of the discipline, to maximize the potential benefits, both physical and mental
- acquire active knowledge of different traditions
- master founding asanas (postures) and their features
- understand the effects that different breathing exercises can have on the human body, as they foster focused attention and increased self-awareness

**3. REQUIREMENTS**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

**4. METHOD**

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects, and interaction with the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, integrate relevant academic sources, may include multimedia references, propose creative problem-solving, and other appropriate forms of delivery as deemed appropriate to the course's purpose.

**5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES**

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

Patanjali, translated by Chip Hartranft, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation with Commentary*, Shambhala, 2003.

Feuerstein, Georg. *The yoga tradition: its history, literature, philosophy and practice*, Hohm Press, 2008.

The textbook is mandatory for course participation and completion. Where applicable additional materials may be provided by the instructor.

#### **FURTHER READINGS**

Iyengar, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja. *Light on Yoga: Yoga Dipika*, Schocken Books, 1979.

Walsh, Roger. *Essential Spirituality: Seven Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind*, Wiley, 2000.

Feuerstein, Georg. *The Path of Yoga: An Essential Guide to Its Principles and Practices*, Shambhala, 2011.

Sivanda Yoga Center, *The Sivananda Companion to Yoga: A Complete Guide to the Physical Postures, Breathing Exercises, Diet, Relaxation, and Meditation Techniques of Yoga*, Atria Books, 2000.

Singleton, Mark. *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Easwaran, Eknath. *Bhagavad Gita, The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation*, 2007. Pdf available online.

Rama, Swami. *Living with the Himalayan masters*, The Himalayan Institute Press, 2007.

#### **LIBRARY**

Course participants may access the campus library. Please consult the posted schedules for official opening times. Texts may be consulted on-site, and scanning/internet services available.

#### **6. COURSE MATERIALS**

No additional course materials are necessary.

#### **7. COURSE FEES**

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. If this course requires a fee, the exact amount is communicated prior to enrollment.

#### **8. GRADING AND EVALUATION & ATTENDANCE**

10% Attendance

10% Participation

20% Assignments

20% Written Journal

20% Midterm Assessment

20% Final Exam

The above grade breakdown percentages reflect the grading scale standards in the “Grading and Evaluation System” section of the catalog.

##### **Attendance**

Class participation is mandatory. Based on the hours defined in the Academic Catalog’s attendance policy, students may miss up to 2 class encounters delivered as lecture hours. A third absence constitutes a course failure.

Please note that absence hours may vary according to the learning methodology, as per the academic catalog policy on credit hours:

[https://catalog.fua.it/standard\\_regulation](https://catalog.fua.it/standard_regulation)

#### **9. EXAMS / PROJECTS / ASSIGNMENTS**

**Midterm Assessment:** Students are required to prepare a research (750 word minimum with at least 3 scholar sources) discussing the spiritual context of yoga by analyzing either Patanjali's Yoga Sutra or the Koshas concept, followed by a comparison of ancient Hatha Yoga versus contemporary styles, noting the shift in asana's purpose and the role of yoga props. The, students are required to discuss the correct practice of two asanas.

**Final Exam:** It consists in open answers questions and an essay question. For exam time and date consult the course website. **The time and date of the exam cannot be changed for any reason.** The final exam is cumulative.

**Written journal:** The written journal describes the personal growth and individual practice experienced during the course. The journal must be a 1000 words minimum texts and should include course notions taught during the course.

**Assignments:** This course requires at least 3 assignments as per the course outline in the syllabus. Further details are provided in the course portal.

## 10. COURSE OUTLINE

Lesson 1	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Presentation of the course: Introduction to the class syllabus. Intro to yoga and Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. Proper approach to practice by learning to move slowly and with control. "What is intention?" Discussion will center on health benefits of yoga, including stress reduction and improved posture. Approach to proper practice by gently controlling breathing.
Objectives	Understand the potential benefits of yoga; learn technique for proper breathing
Readings/Assignments	The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali, Introduction p. ix -xviii Light on Yoga, p. 19 – 53 Practice for a total of at least one hour at home the breathing techniques learned in class Assignment #1 assigned, due by next class meet: The instructor will assign the students a task, which involves analyzing the assigned reading material and the topics of the lesson.

Lesson 2	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Focus on terms. Deepen the study of The Yoga Sutras by analyzing the first 4 Sutras. "What is Hatha Yoga?" What do we need to practice, for how long and how often. Props available for practitioners. Psychology of yoga and writing about self. Start your diary, to observe and transform thoughts that hurt.
Objectives	Understand the principles of "Hatha Yoga" and be able to describe them; become familiar with tools available for practicing yoga; demonstrate active self-reflection
Readings/Assignments	The Yoga Tradition (in University Library), Chapter 2 The Wheel of Yoga p. 27-31 Begin your course journal according to the instructions provided in class and on the course website

Lesson 3	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Anatomy and physiology of Yoga. A balanced life style. Begin learning movements which soften the articulations and the glands.
Objectives	Distinguish the physical benefits of yoga on the human body
Readings/Assignments	The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali, Chapter 1 Integration p. 1 - 19 Assignment #2 assigned, due by next class meet: The instructor will assign the students a task, which involves analyzing the assigned reading material and the topics of the lesson.

Lesson 4	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Intro to the four paths of yoga: Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Raja yoga. Different yogic approaches suiting different temperaments, which all lead ultimately to the same destination. Begin learning basic sitting postures.
Objectives	Be able to describe the four paths of yoga, similarities and differences; Practice and gain confidence in basic sitting postures.
Readings/ Assignments	The Yoga Tradition (in University Library), Chapter 2 The Wheel of Yoga p. 31 – 58 Continue your course journal according to the instructions provided in class and on the course website Light on Yoga, p. 117 – 179 (sitting postures, specific postures to study in-depth will be indicated in class by instructor) FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW.

Lesson 5	
Meet	In class
Lecture	The importance of a vegetarian diet in yoga, preferring natural food over processed foods in favor of a dynamic and healthy body and a calm mind. Begin learning basic postures laying on the back.
Objectives	Understand how an individual's diet can influence the body and mind; Find connections between principles of yoga and principles of vegetarian diet; Understand how to adapt these principles to your own needs and preferences; Practice basic postures on back
Readings/ Assignments	Light on Yoga, p. 205 – 233 (postures laying on back, specific postures to study in-depth will be indicated in class by instructor) MIDTERM ASSESSMENT ASSIGNED, due prior to next class meet.

Lesson 6	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Cortisol and its effects related to stress. What is Pranayama? Practice positive thinking to open the door to meditation, for spiritual integration. Basic standing postures.
Objectives	Be able to define Pranayama; Demonstrate how positive thinking correlates to an overall successful practice of yoga; Practice basic standing postures
Readings/ Assignments	Light on Yoga, p. 61 – 74 (standing postures, specific postures to study in-depth will be indicated in class by instructor) Light on Yoga, p.431 – 448 (Pranayama)

Lesson 7	
Meet	In class
Lecture	What is Meditation? Bring awareness into your practice through an overview of different meditations belonging to different traditions.
Objectives	Determine the importance of meditation in practicing yoga; Categorize different styles and techniques for yogic meditation; Employ techniques for successful, focused meditation
Readings/ Assignments	The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali, Chapter 2 Path to Realization p. 21-45 The instructor will provide further readings on Meditation via the course website Assignment #3 assigned, due by next lesson: The instructor will assign the students a task, which involves analyzing the assigned reading material and the topics of the lesson.

Lesson 8	
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<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Diversity in contemporary yoga: different yogic traditions. Differences in yoga practiced in the Western and Eastern world, for an integrated and comprehensive view of the discipline.
<b>Objectives</b>	Examine the way yoga has evolved in various parts of the world and discuss what “yoga” means today, locally and universally
<b>Readings/Assignments</b>	The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali, Chapter 3 The Extraordinary Powers p.45-60 AND Afterword: The Yoga-Sutra Today p. 75-96

<b>Lesson 9</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Visit a yoga studio in Florence, practice and insight on the specific experience and lineage of the yoga instructor.
<b>Objectives</b>	Analyze the real-world application of the art of yoga in a contemporary studio setting; Compare how yoga is taught in that particular studio to individual past or current experiences; Identify personal preference for setting and style in learning and practicing yoga
<b>Readings/Assignments</b>	The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali, Chapter 4 Freedom 61- 73 FINAL PROJECT DUE

<b>Lesson 10</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	The importance of recovery through Savasana. Different techniques to reach the necessary concentration to relax body and mind after the practice.
<b>Objectives</b>	Recognize the importance of Savasana in the entirety of yoga; Learn techniques to relax mind and body
<b>Readings/Assignments</b>	Light on Yoga, p. 422-424 (Savasana)

<b>Lesson 11 Final Exam</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	FINAL EXAM