This semester we will study the autobiographies of contemplatives. Many of these accounts will be by Buddhists, since that is the religious tradition I know best. Others will come from Christianity or Hinduism. A few are great classics; some have been written recently. We will also read a bit in the theory of religion.

This syllabus sets out our assignments for the first part of the semester, up to spring break. I have plenty of ideas for what we might do later (including writing a research paper), but I'd prefer to create that part of the course in collaboration with you, after we've gotten a feel for this material.

I'll ask you to write a short paper just about every week. Some will be informal, some much more focused. A number of these are already noted on the syllabus; others I will make up as we go. After we get used to each other, we will begin reading each other's written work. Your final research paper will be about ten pages long. We will approach it gradually, writing shorter versions, presenting materials to each other in class, and doing several drafts. The paper will give you a chance to explore any aspect you wish of contemplative life, such as art, the politics or ethics of mysticism, your experiences of contemplation in everyday life, a practicum, and so on--these are only some of the topics you could write about. The final version will be due the last day of classes.

The course grade will be based 60% on your short papers, 20% on your final paper, and 20% on class participation. Please complete the short papers on the day they are due, since we will be discussing the material in class that day. Late papers will incur a penalty. Because this is a seminar, it's important to come to every class meeting. If you do need to miss class, please see me and I'll generally ask you to write a one-page paper touching on some aspect of our day's topic. This is not as punishment, but as a way to include you as much as possible in our on-going work. More than two non-medical absences will adversely affect your grade.

Speaking of grades, I won't put any on your papers. But I will give you extensive comments. I will also do a grade-check with you just before spring break, to give you a sense of how you're doing in the class. If at any point you feel unsure about my reaction to one of your papers, just ask me and I can give you an indication of your grade on it. Please keep all your papers, because at the end of the semester I will ask you to hand them in along with your final paper.

The following books should be available for purchase in the bookstore annex:
Andrew Harvey, *Hidden Journey*
Maura O'Halloran, *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind*
Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*

My office is at 38 College Street. Office hours are Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00 to 10:30, and by appointment. My phone is -3524, and my e-mail address is <kidder>.