Chapter 6- Daoism Teaching Tips

Approach to Teaching

This is a subject area in which the teacher might want to introduce a bit of experiential learning. The class could start off with a meditative exercise. Mediation is a central part of most religions, especially Eastern religions. There are many different forms of mediation. Among the more familiar might be Hatha Yogo- Exercise Yoga.

The following Daoist yoga meditation could be introduced without explaining to students what they are doing. The teacher might just want to say “we will start class a little different today. We will engage the body, the breath and the mind in this exercise.”

1. The first step is to adopt a comfortable posture for the body, balance your weight evenly, straighten the spine, and pay attention to physical sensations such as heat, cold, tingling, trembling, or whatever else arises. Have students close their eyes and identify the different sensations in the room.
2. When the body is comfortable and balanced, shift attention to the second level, which is breath and energy. You may focus on the breath itself as it flows in and out of the lungs through the nostrils, or on energy streaming in and out of a particular point in tune with the breath.
3. The third level is your spirit: when the breath is regulated and energy is flowing smoothly through the channels, you will focus your attention on thoughts and feelings forming and dissolving in your mind, awareness expanding and contracting with each breath, insights and inspirations arising spontaneously, visions and images appearing and disappearing. You may want to lead a bit at this point by calling out certain words such as; class, family, self, work, etc. Students will focus on these and identify the thoughts that come to mind as they think about these words.
4. At the end of this exercise have them spend five minutes writing down their thoughts. You could have them share one insight at this moment. If students don’t feel free to share they don’t have to share. You could even have them reflect on the experience itself in terms of what it means and how it made them feel.

At this point the teacher might introduce the why of the exercise. Daoism seeks to focus unity and balance of self with the universe around us. Longevity and health are key concerns of Daoism. Hence mediation is central.

Another helpful area to explore in Daoism is its link with such developments as vitamin supplements and the holistic medicine industry. Much of this emphasis is fueled by Daoist thoughts.

Both Confucianism and Daoism are often thought of as the Ying and Yang of Chinese society. In other words they are complementary opposites. The teacher could look at both religions together and develop a comparison and contrasting list of beliefs and emphases. For instance in Daoism
the Dao of concern is mostly in nature while the Dao of concern in Confucianism is mostly found in human relationships. Similarly, the western world often marvels about the structure of Chinese society; a communist system with a market economy. This reality can be examined from the perspective of both the influence of Confucianism and Daoism on the society. Confucianism has strong emphasis on an orderly and harmonious society and the development of excellent human beings. The organization of the great relationships would provide fertile ground for the development of communism. At the same time Daoism’s emphasis on relativity gives rise to the kind of individualism that would drive a market base economy.

Videos

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2173173691246135944

This video gives information on more than just Daoism. It addresses what is traditionally known as the three doctrines of Asia, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. It takes a comparative look at the religions in terms of history, doctrines and sacred rituals. These three religions constitute the roots of Chinese civilization.


This resource gives a selection of articles and videos on Daoism. The student will find information on areas such as the concept of Chi, the healing dimension of Daoism, an explanation of the Ying and the Yang and gender relationships.

Around the World in 80 Faiths (BBC)

This is a BBC documentary series highlighting the sacred rituals of religions across six continents. Segment two provides helpful information on Chinese religious practices in Daoism and even Confucianism.

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon

This film was produced by wuxia in the year 2000. The film was directed by Ang Lee and featured a cast of ethnic Chinese actors, including Chow Yun-Fat, Michelle Yeoh, Zhang Ziyi, and Chang Chen. The film was based on the fourth novel in a pentalogy, known in China as the Crane Iron Pentalogy, by wuxia novelist Wang Dulu. The film has many popular martial arts practices used in Daoism

Star Wars

This is a film that was directed by George Lucas. Its idea of the force is very reminiscent of the concept of the Dao in Daoism. The Jedi knights were guided by this force, which is very similar to the idea that the Dao, is the ground of everything and whatever mysterious reality that makes things the way things are.
Articles


Beliefnet is a website that gives valuable information about various religions. It is especially helpful on the subject of Daoism. On this site the student will find informative articles on key subjects in Daoism, such as the I Ching, Breath of Life, Knowing the Dao, Qigong among others. Helpful also are interviews with current daoist practitioners.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/taoism/

The Huffiington Post has a blog devoted to Daoism. On it are useful articles on various aspects of Daoism. The student will find educational writings from Daoist scholars such as William Horden on the subject of humanity and nature, Livia Kohn on the subject of the Tao of perfect happiness among others. One of the most refreshing aspects of this resource is the discussion or blogging feature. This provides fresh perspectives on an old religion. The student also becomes familiar with many featured scholars on Daoism.

http://virtualreligion.net/vri/china.html

This is a Chinese site with tremendous resources on Chinese culture and philosophy. The student will be enriched with a body of information from different Chinese scholars on Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism.