

ITP 670, **Altered States of Consciousness**

Instructor: Charles T. Tart

Spring 2000, 2.0 units, Tuesdays 4:15-6:15pm

This is an example of the syllabus I use when teaching my Altered States of Consciousness course at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. It is posted here as an example of the kind of teaching carried out at the Institute and to illustrate some of the components of a scientific overview of the area of altered states of consciousness.

It is, of course, subject to change in the future.

Charles T. Tart

Conceptual Framework and Rationale:

This course is a didactic survey of the phenomena, nature, uses and implications of those radical changes in the functioning of the pattern of consciousness that we refer to as altered “states” of consciousness (ASCs), conditions like nocturnal dreaming, hypnosis, or drug intoxicated states. Altered states are far more common, especially in the form of emotional states, than is generally recognized, and can have strong effects on the way we see the world, our selves, and others, so an understanding of them is important to all psychologists.

Goals, Structure and Objectives of the Course:

The objectives of this survey course are, (1) on the academic level, to familiarize the student with the nature of the main altered states we have reasonable knowledge about, (2) on the professional level to sensitize the student to recognize the occurrence of altered states and their implications for treating the person experiencing them, and, (3) on the personal level to foster sensitivity to variations in the functioning of consciousness and so be able to discern appropriate styles of cognition and action for various states. These objectives are congruent with the general ITP learning objectives of mindfulness (what state is the person I'm interacting with in, e.g., and how does that influence their view of their world and their selves?), compassion (empathizing with the apparent absolute truthfulness of an emotional state, e.g., and so being able to communicate more effectively), appreciating differences (the assumption that we are all in the same "normal" state of consciousness and so see the world the same way, e.g., is quite misleading) and discernment (seeing how, e.g., each state gives a particular view of the world that seems true within that state, but that must be understood in a broader context to move closer toward real truth).

Behavioral Objectives:

- To intelligently discuss course material from lectures and readings in class
- To intelligently discuss course material from lectures and readings in assigned papers.

Teaching Methods:

The course will consist of various lectures and facilitated discussions by the instructor, who is internationally known for his research on ASCs, extensive readings in two textbooks (edited and authored by the instructor), and class discussions based on the readings, lectures, and students' knowledge and experience. Because of the large amount of material we need to survey, the course is almost exclusively didactic: there will be little, if any, experiential work in the classroom or assigned outside. The reading and paper assignments are given below. Multiple readings of student papers in a collegial way will increase the intensity of the learning experience.

Assessment:

Students will receive ongoing formative feedback from the instructor as part of class discussions. The summative assessment will be based primarily on successful completion of paper assignments, described below, as well as class discussion and attendance. The paper assignments also provide extensive formative feedback from both the instructor and from other students.

Writing Assignments: A 2-page, double-spaced, *typed* paper dealing with the reading materials for the day and/or the previous class discussion is due at each class, beginning with April 10th. **Four copies** of each paper should be brought to class, one for the instructor and three others to be distributed to fellow students. Thus three of your fellow students will write comments on your papers each week and you will write comments on three of your fellow students' papers. They will return them to you at the next class. This brings a broader range of knowledge to bear on the ideas expressed in each paper, as well as providing training for a future role as an instructor.

Attendance: Our class meetings are sequenced for optimal learning, and the experiences and discussions in class are an important part of that learning and integration process, so please attend all classes. Life does interfere at times, though, so if you should miss a class, please study and reflect on the assigned readings and keep up with the regular writing assignments. You can miss one class each quarter with no problem as long as all of your regular writing assignments are completed in a reasonably timely way, but if you miss more than one class, you should write an extra paper (as well as the one assigned for that class, or a double-length paper for each missed class), commenting on the readings assigned for that class, for each class you miss. Please indicate at the top of this paper that it's a makeup for (which one?) a particular class you missed. If more than two

classes are missed and not satisfactorily made up, ITP policy is that you cannot receive credit for the class.

Professor Tart's office hours will be Tuesday afternoons, 2:00-3:30p.m., by appointment. Making appointments *in advance* (sign up sheet on my office door) is important because some Tuesdays there may be other meetings that interfere with my office hours. Sometimes a brief office consultation can be done right after our class. Phone consultation is usually available on Wednesdays during the day at 510 526-2591, between 9-11:30 in the mornings, 1:30-4:00 in the afternoon. Please try to call just during these hours so my writing schedule won't be interrupted. Faxes can be sent to me at 630 604-3279. E-mail to me at charlestart@worldnet.att.net gets to me quickly, *even better than phone messages*, as I usually check email several times per day. Some materials relevant to class can be found on my web site: www.paradigm-sys.com/cttart/

Course Overview and Reading Assignments:

Text Abbreviations: ASC = Tart, *Altered States of Consciousness* book; SoC = Tart, *States of Consciousness* book. Texts can be purchased from the instructor on the first day of class (\$16.95 and \$12.95, respectively, plus tax), so bring your checkbooks.

Wk	Date	Turn In	Topic	Chapters to Read
1	Apr 4		Nature of "states" of consciousness	
2	Apr 11	1 st paper	Special: Live telephone conference call from <i>Toward A Science of Consciousness</i> conference, Tucson MEET IN LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM	ASC: 15(GR), 16(3D), 18(Krippner), 19(Mutual H) SoC: 1(Systems approach)
3	April 18	2 nd paper	Hypnosis	ASC: 1(ASCs), 2(Deautomatization) SoC: 2(Components)
4	April 25	3 rd paper	Structure/function; Bio-Psycho Virtual Reality	ASC: 3(Huxley) SoC: 4(Ordinary consciousness)
5	May 2	4 th paper	Development of "normal" consensus consciousness	SoC: 5(Discrete), 6(Stabilization)
	May 9		Spring Break	No classes this week
6	May	5 th	Sleep	ASC: 4(Sleep onset), 6(Theories)

	16	paper		SoC: 7(Induction)
7	May 23	6 th paper	Dreaming	ASC: 7(control of dreaming) SoC: 3(Conservative & radical), 8(Subsystems)
8	May 30	7 th paper	Lucid Dreaming	ASC: 8(van Eeden), 9(Senoi), 10(High dream)
9	June 6	8 th paper	Meditation	ASC: 11(Maupin), 12(Zen), 13(Deikman), 14(Therapy) SoC: 9(Individual differences), 11(Observation), 12(Identity)
10	June 13	9 th paper	Psychedelics	ASC: 27(Mysticism), 28(Downing), 30(Creativity), 31(Psychosis) SoC: 10(Drugs)

Readings in the ASC book include the relevant section introductions.

Further Note on Objectives and Methods: What ITP 670 Is and Isn't

In a school with a recognition that learning and growth involves emotional, bodily and spiritual, as well as intellectual, creative and community processes, there is sometimes confusion over what is expected and appropriate in a particular course. This note is to clarify this matter for my course on Altered States, in the hope of maximizing learning and minimizing misunderstandings and inappropriate expectations.

Altered States is a course that is almost exclusively intellectual in terms of readings and classroom lecture and discussion, although most students bring their own personal previous experiences of altered states to bear on their understanding of the material. Students are not required to experience any new altered states as part of the course work, and any suggestions about what might be interesting in this regard should be evaluated by you in terms of your personal needs, understanding, and boundaries.

The course work contains many exciting ideas for personal growth, but the course is not intended to be or represented as a form of therapy, spiritual growth, or emotional process work, although I certainly hope that the intellectual content of the course may sometimes contribute to your personal growth. I state these limitations here because, among other things, I am an educator, not a psychotherapist nor a spiritual teacher.

I do not intend to denigrate nor disregard individual experiential, emotional or spiritual knowledge, resources, growth challenges or problems. I respect and honor your personal process! Indeed when your individual knowledge of this sort is relevant to expanding or clarifying the conceptual or experiential material we discuss, it is welcome and enriching, both in class discussions and papers.

I also ask you to consider and honor the following points, adapted from standards of personal responsibility used by Professor Jill Mellick in her classes at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. While they are phrased for courses deliberately involving fairly powerful emotional and growth work, they are relevant in the context of all ITP courses.

♠ *Be aware of the context in which you are experiencing your own growth, both personal and intellectual.* This is a class; while I hope it will be beneficial to you personally as well as academically, the class is not individual or group therapy.

♠ *Please set clear protective boundaries for yourself.* Some of the topics or exercises in this class may evoke personal issues with which you need/want to deal. You are welcome to clarify these issues in your papers or class discussion if they are relevant to the class, and you might reach new understandings through doing so. *But remember that the class is not an appropriate context in which to actually work through your personal issues.* Such issues are best worked through with a qualified psychotherapist or spiritual teacher.

♠ *Please respect your own material and the limitations of your peers.* In class discussions and experiential exercises you are often including your personal history, implicitly if not explicitly. In the case of conflictual, emotional, unresolved material, respect yourself by sharing only material which is reasonably well resolved or which you are comfortable *not* having resolved. A statement that an area under discussion is very difficult for you may be a useful contribution, but don't bring it up if it's too difficult for you to handle in the intellectual context of the class.

♠ *Please respect your own privacy and the overall purpose of the class.* Share only material you are willing to have become part of current and later class discussions. Note too that in spite of the following point, privacy of your discussion contributions cannot be guaranteed.

♠ *Please respect your peers' privacy.* If a classmate shares important personal material, please do not talk about it to anyone outside the class unless (a) it is intellectually or compassionately useful to do so AND (b) you can disguise the identity of the person sufficiently so that they cannot be recognized. If in doubt about your ability to adequately disguise the identity of the person from others who may know them, don't mention the material. To put it another way, avoid gossip or story telling that may hurt someone else. Of course if you think a classmate is at serious risk and is not receiving professional help outside the classroom (such as being in therapy), do notify appropriate administrative authorities who may be able to help.

♠ *Please recognize and respect your own and others' capacities.* If a certain part of the discussion or an experiential exercise looks as if it will be too difficult for you emotionally, please inform me (no explanation is needed) that you don't want to take part in that part of the discussion or participate in that exercise. If much of the class causes this

kind of problem, of course, we should discuss whether you should be in the course.

This note is meant to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, not the final word on human life, so please take it in that spirit. Class discussion of these considerations is appropriate.

file: c:\itp\ASC course\ASC spring 2000\sylbs ASCs spring 2000.doc