

Choiceless Awareness

Online Course at the Krishnamurti Educational Center

Syllabus

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:

This course is an in-depth study of educator and philosopher J. Krishnamurti's book, "Choiceless Awareness," in which participants will reflect on the roles our consciousness and relationship to thought has in perpetuating social, political and economic crises. The main questions posed throughout this course are the following:

- What is our relationship to consciousness?
- How does inner conflict generate external conflict?
- In what way can choiceless awareness heal the division between the observer and the observed?

REQUIREMENTS:

Participants are required to read one chapter of "Choiceless Awareness" per week throughout the 13-week course, in addition to responding to specific questions regarding the particular weekly topics. Participants are required to engage each other within the online discussion forum in addition to writing one journal entry per week. Additionally, participants are required to:

- Read/watch/listen to supplied core and supplemental readings.
- Participate in online discussion forum, posting at least once, but no more than 5 times per week. (See rules for online discussion.)
- Create one journal entry each week.
- Comment on at least two other people's journals each week.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Question authority, from the authority of religious and psychological beliefs to political authority and the authority of peers, and ultimately of their own thoughts and beliefs.
- Identify the external ways in which they are not free (the law, society, other people's expectations) and connect it to the internal ways (their own thought processes, self-imposed standards and expectations, etc) in which they are not free.
- Reflect on how their culture, environment, family background, and belief systems serve to condition them.
- Identify the differences between fact, perception, and assumption, and how the three are often presented as one and the same when we talk about how we experience a situation.

- Contemplate whether it is possible to be, and what it would mean to be, psychological free.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

This course includes individual and group assignments and sustained critical reflection on the work of others in your small group.

Course activities include:

Weekly reading and/or videos.

Online discussion forums for the group

Creation of an online journal

Small groups will be asked to facilitate and lead the discussions for the last three classes.

ASSIGNMENTS:

The assignments for this course are developmental and are constructed to inquire and explore the topic of *Choiceless Awareness*. Students will be asked to read the sample or watch the video and participate in the group discussion, then write a journal entry each week.

CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION OF THE COURSE

Substantive and timely participation in online classroom including feedback to others as well as contribution to lesson facilitation.

WHAT CONSTITUTES PARTICIPATION?

Online, peer-based adult learning is predicated on the collective responsibility of all participants to contribute to the class. Each of you is vital to the whole community. The only way to demonstrate your full presence is through your regular and substantive presence online. Timely and substantive participation in weekly activities is required. This course is a “learning by doing” experience. Discussion and feedback (giving and receiving) are essential in each lesson.

APPROPRIATE POSTINGS

Discussion points in group discussion forum should be substantive (about 150-200 words).

Encourage the expression of other perspectives and opinions by posing open-ended questions to the group. Be concise, the longer your post is, the less likely it is that others will fully read it. Ask for clarification before opposing a statement. Quoting Krishnamurti does not constitute understanding or supporting an argument. Stay on topic. Watch the reaction that arises within you when you disagree with someone, and understand the reaction before responding. Responding honestly without merely reacting is not common in today’s society.

Honesty is dangerous, so be aware of the tendency of topics that are uncomfortable to be avoided or ignored.

Students are required to develop an initial post on their journal page of about 300 words responding to the weekly assignment. Additionally, students are expected to respond with substantive posts (150 – 200 words) to at least two peers during the posting period. When commenting on other's journals, remember that this is their page and not yours. Encourage questioning and going further, but do not accuse or judge. For example, rather than saying "I agree with you" when responding to another's point of view, go on to substantiate how you arrive at that agreement, citing related sources, personal experience, etc.

GROUPS

At the end of the class, participants will work in groups with three or more to facilitate a lesson. The expectation is that each group member will read the lesson beforehand, come up with applicable questions to further and facilitate the lesson, and come up with relevant materials (video, song, poetry, etc to explore the lesson further)

EXPECTATIONS FOR FACILITATOR AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

- Maintain regular presence online.
- Response to specific questions within 5 days, unless otherwise stated.
- Feedback from facilitator on specific assignments within two weeks.

READINGS:

As you begin your reading, keep the following questions in mind:

- What is striking to you in the readings?
- How does what is striking to you relate to your own experience?
- What are some key questions and reflections you are taking from the readings? Are there ideas that bring up immediate reactions or resistance?
- Are there thoughts that repeat as you are reading through this? Watch the way your thought and memories work throughout the assignments and discussions

"Consider: Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day."

Rainer Maria Rilke/Letters to a Young Poet/1929

"May I repeat again what we said the other day about 'question' ? The word derived from Latin which means to seek. Not find an answer but to seek; to seek the answer in the question itself, not away from it. And in answering these questions we are seeking or exploring together. The speaker may explain, but together we are entering into these questions, together we are seeking to find out the truth in the question, not away from it. So we are sharing the question together and trying to find a true, correct answer."

J. Krishnamurti - 3rd question and answer session, Saanen July 1980

WEEKLY SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Intensive, (date)

Introduction to the Course, facilitated discussion.

Creation of small groups as learning communities

Intensive/Week 1: Overview

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to:

- **What is distance within ourselves?**

- Krishnamurti uses the phrase "problem of change", why is change a problem?

- What would cause a deep change vs. surface change in your life?

Week 2: The Nature of Choiceless Awareness

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to:

- Are we aware of the movement of thought, in which we choose, compare, condemn, identify and judge? Are there particular times in which this movement is easier to see? Why or why not?

- Identify the specific conditionings that shape who you are (beliefs, ideologies, identifications, environment, etc).

- What role do these conditionings play in who we are and how we experience our lives?

Week 3: Division between observer and observed

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to:

- Krishnamurti defines communing as observing another without all our conditioning (see question from last section) and then says it is dangerous and frightening to be with another without condemning, comparing, etc. Do you experience this? Explain.

- What does it mean to be free to inquire?

- **How is the observed the past? How does our unconscious play into this? The observer?**

- How is thinking an escape from awareness, and why do we escape from it?

Week 4: A Different Kind of Learning

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: writing assignment. Relax for 10 minutes. Focus on breathing or stretching, or simply sit quietly. Then get a piece of paper, and for 5 to 7 minutes, simply record every thought that comes to your mind when you read this statement: "There can obviously be no end to misery in the world as long as the mind does not understand itself"

Questions to respond to:

This chapter is a lot about forgetting or losing the "me" or the self.

1. What does that look like?
2. What resistances are there to looking at this?
3. What motivations creep in?
4. Where are we judging, becoming, comparing, etc?
5. Which thoughts are not from the "me"?

Week 5: The Self & Its Activity

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to: TBD

1. What do we do in our search for experience through sensation?
2. What do we think we know about ourselves? How does this affect consciousness?
3. What is it to be self-centered? When are you conscious of being the "me"?
4. Being aware of the me, what is the mind to do?
5. What prevents us from looking deeper at the motivations in our thoughts?

Week 6: The Field of Consciousness

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to:

- What is a fact? What do we mean by "consciousness"?
- Is it possible to fundamentally change the totality of our consciousness? What does that mean?
- What informs our impulse to "solve" problems? What are we moving away from; what are we moving toward?

- What is behind our assumption that thought can solve problems, such as sorrow, conflict, etc?
- What do we understand “love” to be?
- What is behind our assumption that time can bring about any radical revolution?
- Why do we identify with anything at all?
- Is it possible for us to live without identifying ourselves with any position whatsoever (personal, religious, political, etc)
- What is attention?

Week 7: Thought and Memory & The Ideal and the Actual

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to:

- Can thought ever dissolve our problems? Can thought come to an end?
- What do we mean by awareness?
- What role does memory play in thought?
- Can there be thinking without memory?.
- ***** ACTIVITY.**
- What is love?
- **The ideal as separate and hindering our understanding of the actual.**
- What stops us from perceiving the actual?

Week 8: Awareness and Time & Awareness and Transformation & Energy

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to

- **The assumption that time is a necessary factor in overcoming conflict.**
- Do we depend on time as means of overcoming anything?
- **The demand for more as an escape from the actual..**
- What would our lives look like if we were not in constant pursuit of results?
- **As long as a problem is thought about, the problems will continue.**
- What does it mean to see a problem?
- The assumption that any meaningful change only comes about through a gradual process.
- **Energy without motive.**

Week 9: The Mirror of Relationship

Online supplied reading.

Supplementary Materials: TBD

Questions to respond to

- Relationship as a means of really seeing each other.
- Our conflict lies in relationship, to understand one we must understand the other.
- Is it possible to live without images? Relationship occurs when there are no images.
- Is it possible to observe without thought, without judgment?

Weeks 10-13 Participant-Led Discussions