

Barre Center for Buddhist Studies

149 Lockwood Rd
Barre MA 01005



(978) 355-2347
www.dharma.org

About the **Integrated Study and Practice Program**

The Barre Center for Buddhist Studies is offering a one-year program that seeks to integrate meditation practice with the study of Buddhist thought. The program provides experienced dharma students with the opportunity to 1) delve more deeply into the meaning and significance of the Buddha's teachings by study of the textual tradition; 2) creatively explore the relationship of these teachings to meditation practice and daily life; 3) cultivate sangha and support friendships. In the broadest context, it is hoped the ISPP will help strengthen sangha in the West and ensure quality and continuity of the teachings.

Program Summary

- The four five-day study-retreats, beginning Friday evenings and ending Wednesday afternoons, are a combination of classroom time, small group discussion, formal meditation practice, and free time. Study-retreat dates are:

October 8–13, 2010
February 11–16, 2011
June 3–8, 2011
October 7–12, 2011

- Monthly mentoring from a qualified meditation teacher or experienced, senior meditator.
- A sourcebook containing readings and guidance.
- A study partner (buddy) for each quarter of the year.
- An online forum for discussion with other students.

The ISPP is limited to 30 participants and is by application only, due August 1, 2010.

Program Dates: October 2010–October 2011

CURRICULUM

BCBS Study-Retreats

There are four five-day study-retreats at the core of the ISPP. Beginning Friday evenings and ending Wednesday afternoons, the day is a combination of classroom time, small group discussion, formal meditation practice, and free time. Andrew Olendzki leads this classroom component, providing background and context for the study-retreat's theme, a close reading of primary texts from the Pali Canon, and the explication of this material for the contemporary, practice-oriented student. Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia holds and guides the meditation practice. The small-group discussion periods, facilitated by both Andrew and Taraniya, are an opportunity for students to talk openly and as equals about topics under investigation, about their practice experience, and about the relationship of both to their own growth in understanding. *Please see the Addendum document for more details.*

Personal Mentoring

Mentors draw upon the breadth and depth of their own practice and personal experience to discuss meditation and expressions of practice in the world, and to share in the exploration of the ISPP readings with students. Students will connect with their mentors, at a minimum, in monthly, half-hour phone interviews. If mentors wish, they may also meet with a small group of students if all live within a reasonable distance (Boston area, New York City area, for example).

Students are encouraged to ask a vipassana teacher they may already be working with to be their mentor (space given on application for name). If your teacher would like to know more about what is required of mentors, please have him or her contact the program administrator, Mu Soeng (contact information below). Non-ISPP teachers willing to be mentors are subject to approval by the ISPP faculty. Students who do not have a mentor will be paired with a mentor from the body of mentors affiliated with the ISPP.

This component of the ISPP operates on the dana system.

Study

Students will be given a source book, which not only will include primary readings but also guidance to the readings. Students will reflect on material in the sourcebook in three ways:

1. Self-study involving personal reflection and practice.
2. Discussion with a study partner (buddy) with whom one is expected to keep in close contact throughout each section of the program. (These pairings will change each quarter).
3. Phone interviews with the mentors (see mentoring section).

Optional:

4. Discussion in groups, if the student lives nearby a cluster of other students. These smaller groups may get together or communicate with one another from time to time during the program, but it will be up to students to self-organize this if it is useful and possible for them.
5. Participating in an online forum. This option may be especially helpful to those who do not live in proximity to a discussion group.

Students will therefore form a dharma relationship with their buddy, their small group, their individual mentor, and the teachers and students at the BCBS study-retreats. All will be working through the same curriculum at the same time, and a good deal of inter-communication will be taking place.

APPLICATION

Is the ISPP Right For You?

The ISPP is grounded primarily in early Buddhist and Theravadin thought and in vipassana meditation practice. Some Mahayana thought may be referenced, but the ISPP will not satisfy those seeking to gain grounding in Mahayana, Vajrayana and Zen. The mission of the ISPP is to provide experienced students with the opportunity to study, to apply practice to daily life in an examined way, and to strengthen peer support. It is not the intention of the program to cultivate community dharma leaders, dharma teachers or teaching skills. It *is* a program for personal and interpersonal development.

Eligibility

The ISPP is intended for those with considerable vipassana meditation experience. Applicants should have, cumulatively, a minimum of five years of vipassana practice and at least fifty days of silent, residential vipassana or metta retreat practice. It is not necessary for applicants to have done a significant amount of study, but it is important that students have an interest in the careful examination of and reflection upon the teachings of the Buddha. All readings are in English translation.

Those who do not have fifty or more days of vipassana retreat time but who have spent a significant amount of time in either the study of Buddhist thought or the practice of another Buddhist lineage are still encouraged to apply.

Admissions Standards

We will select the strongest thirty applicants from the larger pool to offer admission to the program. This means that the “strength” of your application will be relative to the strength of the others and, as a result, *there is no absolute standard by which one will be guaranteed admission*. All factors being equal, there will be a preference to admit those who:

- a. have had more meditation practice in vipassana, in particular
- b. have attended BCBS courses and/or IMS retreats
- c. are likely to contribute constructively to group discussions and collective learning
- d. do not have access to the DPP through Spirit Rock (although those living on the West Coast may apply if the ISPP offers something distinct for them)

Application

The ISPP is limited to 30 participants and is by application only, due August 1st, 2010. Please see application form for more details.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Program Cost

Please see the Addendum document for full details.

Email and Internet Access

The ISPP will communicate administrative details with applicants and students primarily by email. You will need an email address and internet access. Internet access need not be in-home: most public libraries offer access for free.

Commitment

Because of the unique nature of the ISPP, the cohesive community that develops over the course of the program and the limited number of spaces available, we ask that if you are accepted into the program, that you commit yourself fully to the ISPP for the duration and to all of its components (other than for health or family emergencies).

If you have further questions about the ISPP or the application, please contact the ISPP Administrator:

Mu Soeng
Program Director
musoeng@dharma.org or (978) 355-2347 x14

TEACHERS

Andrew Olendzki, Ph.D., was trained in Buddhist Studies at Lancaster University in England, as well as at Harvard and the University of Sri Lanka. The former executive director of IMS, he is currently the executive director and senior scholar of BCBS, and is editor of the *Insight Journal*. He has taught at various New England colleges, including Harvard and Brandeis.

Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia has been a Dhamma teacher since 1990. She is a student of the western forest sangha, the disciples of Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Chah, and is a Lay Buddhist Minister in association with Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery in California. She served as resident teacher of IMS in Barre, Massachusetts from 1996 through 1999.