



yoga philosophy  
instruction for  
YTT programs

with matthew remski

Since the publication of *Threads of Yoga*, my “remix” of Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras, I’ve been honored to teach yoga philosophy modules for YTT programs for studios in both North America and Europe. My aim is to provide students with an experience of yoga philosophy not only as their historical heritage, but also as a living art in which they can creatively participate.

I’ve crafted my material to fit into a weekend intensive format of 15 or 20 hours of interactive lecture, discussion, and group exercises. The content focuses upon three “core” texts of modern global yoga culture—the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Yoga Sūtras*, and the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*. My goal is to show how these old books tremble with the perennial questions:

- ❖ How should we live?
- ❖ Who am I?
- ❖ What are we capable of?

I contextualize each presentation within what I call “Best Practices for Yoga Philosophy Today”:

- ❖ To develop historical and cultural context for the work in question, in order to recognize the conditions—including our own—and evolutions of yogic thought.
- ❖ To be willing to hold contradictory views for the sake of comparison, and to realize that yoga evolves through dialectic.
- ❖ To understand the difference between exegesis (a reverence for received tradition) and hermeneutics (the willingness to interpret things anew).
- ❖ To actively seek analogies for yogic thought and practice within contemporary science, so that yoga and science might dialogue with, demystify, and sacralize each other.
- ❖ To develop the capacity for taking pleasure in uncertainty (a primary condition for learning anything new).



Spanning over two thousand years of yogic thought, these books, when considered in relationship to each other using the “Best Practices”, present the vibrant story of yoga’s evolution—a story that continues into our present day.

#### THE *GĪTĀ* INVESTIGATES:

- ❖ the existential issues of moral and social duty
- ❖ the paradoxical dialogue between action and inaction
- ❖ the feelings and meanings of surrender

#### THE *SŪTRAS* EXPLORE:

- ❖ the origin, nature, and goal of the conscious self
- ❖ spiritual and secular meditation techniques and the methods that support them
- ❖ the possibility of building habits of equanimity that can undo patterns of alienation and despair

#### THE *PRADĪPIKĀ* CELEBRATES:

- ❖ the capacity for embodiment practices to generate insight
- ❖ a growing awareness that flesh and thought are inseparable (a startling prediction of contemporary neuropsychology)
- ❖ sexuality as central to process of accessing energies repressed by psychosocial constraints



### timing:

In the context of a weekend intensive, it's best for the material to be shared over five sessions: one to introduce the scope and terms, one to cover each of the three texts, and a final session to integrate the work and share thoughts about the future of yoga philosophy. A 15-hour allotment works well for this, although a 20-hour allotment allows for more discussion, processing, and application of the ideas through meditation.

### method:

PowerPoint slides, interactive discussion, group work, meditation. Students may record the lecture presentation for personal use. In weekend intensive formats, it works best to break up the rhythm and contemplate the principles through either vinyasa practice (taught by the host) or with restorative yoga, which I can lead from an Ayurvedic perspective.

### costs:

My standard (but flexible) rate for YTT presentation work is \$120/hour + 13% Ontario HST. If sessions are open to the public, revenue sharing might be appropriate. Travel, room, and board must be provided by the host. I'm happy to be billeted. If scheduling allows, I am also happy to offer private Āyurveda consultations during the intensive period.

### praise for *threads of yoga*

*I'm awed by the fearless audacity with which you approach the Sūtra-s. And have been enjoying the dialogue you're creating between an articulate post-modern mind and a powerful traditional text.*

—SALLY KEMPTON

*I find your contribution a serious and worthwhile contribution to the unfolding of the history of yoga philosophy. It comes from "inside" the complex process of tradition and tells us that tradition now extends far beyond the original, the context of India, and into the modern world of western thinking.*

—PROFESSOR DOUGLAS BROOKS

*I am blown away by it. Being as familiar with the Sūtra-s as I am, it was an absolute delight to read your creative translation in reference to the dry old standards in my memory, and feel reinvigorated in the validity of my own interpretations. Your work renders the Sūtra-s relevant anew, and creates a link for me between the modern yoga of my intuition and the classical yoga of my learning.*

—SHY SAYAR, Yoga Therapist & Owner,  
Yoga One Petaluma, CA

*It actually does what the Yoga Sūtra is supposed to do: to serve as a string of seeds for meditation and self-reflection. I actually think this is the version of the YS all training programs should be reading.*

—RICHARD ROSEN, author of  
*Original Yoga: Rediscovering Traditional Practices of Haṭha Yoga*

*I believe it will change the way we think about Patañjali—and the yoga we all practice—for many years to come. Creative, original, and full of great heart.*

—PROFESSOR JODY GREENE, Feminist Studies,  
History of Consciousness, UC Santa Cruz

*Patañjali must be rolling in his grave, laughing and so happy.*

—AMBA STAPLETON, co-founder  
Nosara Yoga Institute

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