Today, mindfulness is touted as a panacea, the secret to happiness and health, superb sex and unparalleled productivity. The hype is not entirely new, however. For decades, ostensibly Buddhist ideas have been tossed around in the West as recipes for success in just about any art or craft. But what hides behind this craze? Can Buddhist teachings offer us tools with which to achieve our goals, or are we corrupting Buddhism by using it in such a way? What have artists and practitioners thought of the use of meditative tools, and how have they integrated Buddhist terms like “bare awareness” and “emptiness” into their work?
In order to answer such questions, we will start the course with a reading of the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, the Buddha's instructions on mindfulness meditation. A close reading of the text in our first unit will give us a glimpse of the ancient Buddhist practice, its complexity and richness. In our second unit, we will read the text that gave the West the idea that Buddhism can allow us to “hit the mark” without trying to do so, Eugen Herrigel’s bestselling *Zen in the Art of Archery*. Using Edward Said’s classic work, *Orientalism*, we will ask if Herrigel was romanticizing Zen Buddhism, and if he was, what the consequences of such a romanticization have for Japan and the West. In our last unit, we will stage a series of class debates about "mcmindfulness," and use what scientists and Buddhist practitioners have said about the compatibility of Buddhism with its modern, secular appropriations to inform our arguments.

As we read these texts, we will also *practice mindfulness meditation*, as well as various other forms of Buddhist meditation. In doing so, we will think about these meditations both practically and critically, at the same time as we refine our analytical understanding of Buddhist ideas.

**Required Readings**


We will also be looking at a couple of *suttas*, discourses attributed to the Buddha. The most important one will be the *Satipatthana Sutta*, in which the Buddha gives instructions for mindfulness meditation.

We will also be meditating, in class and at home. I will lead most of these meditations, but you will have the option to do longer and more in-depth practice with Dharma teachers like Anushka Fernandopulle and Jack Kornfield.