

PE 147, Tai Chi Chuan Spring 2007

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January 10, 2007

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1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this course is for you to learn the 24 Posture pattern of Tai Chi. This is the pattern almost all of the people are doing when you see them in TV commercials or movies that include scenes of the parks in China. I will not assume that you have any previous experience with Tai Chi but, for those of you who do, note that the majority of this pattern is based on the Yang style.

Please wear loose and comfortable clothes to class.

1.1 Styles

The history of Tai Chi is as complex as you would expect of something that has developed over a thousand years. There are not only competing stories about its genesis but there have also been numerous fragmentations as students decide to change what they have learned from their masters. At this time there are at least five major “styles” of Tai Chi: Chen, Yang, Wu, Sun, and Wu. Other important styles are Tsao Bao, Li, and Heh.

Even though it is unclear how and when the precursor to Tai Chi originated, it is agreed that Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan was the first to be recorded in formal documents in the mid 1600's. Fourteen generations later, Yang Lu Chan developed Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan from Chen Style. The pattern we are learning was commissioned by the Chinese government in the 1950's. It is based on the Yang style and is called by some “Standardized Tai Chi” because the postures are common to all the major styles.

I will give you a handout with a brief summary of the historical development of Tai Chi.

1.2 Lineage of Yang Style

- Yang Lu Chan founded the Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan
- Yang Jian Hou was Yang Lu Chan's son and the 2nd generation master
- Yang Chen Fu was Yang Lu Chan's grandson and the 3rd generation master
- Li Ya Xuan was the fourth generation master
- Lin Mo Gen was the fifth generation master
- Qin Lili studied under Lin Mo Gen
- I have been studying with Qin Lili since 1998.

2 Course Information

2.1 Textbook

There is no required textbook for this course. However, for those of you who, like me, are steeped in the intellectual approach here is a list of some books you might find interesting or useful. I do have one caveat: my personal experience is that reading too much about Tai Chi at any one time is detrimental to my understanding. It is too easy to get lost in intellectualizing **about** Tai Chi rather than immersing oneself in **doing** it. Personally, I prefer the latter.

At the end of this document is an annotated list of the books. I include a link to them at Amazon.com for your convenience.

2.2 Basic Information

You can find information pertinent to all of my classes (office hours, office location, etc.) at the link below and, once there, information specific to this class by clicking on the PE 147 link.

<http://math.ups.edu/~bryans/>

2.2.1 Logistics

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Professor Bryan Smith | (Temp) Temp. Bldg E, Room 2 | 879-3562 | bryans[at]ups.edu |
| Office Hours | | Monday | 2:00 - 2:50 P.M |
| | | Tuesday | 9:30 - 10:30 A.M. |
| | | Wednesday | 2:30 - 3:20 P.M. |
| | | Friday | 10:00 - 10:50 A.M. |
| Classroom / time | Fieldhouse 228 | Wed | 3:30 - 5:10 P.M. |

2.3 Day to Day Structure

I am considering setting up a practice time as a “Tai Chi Office Hour”. Please send me your suggestions for good times for such a practice.

2.4 Examinations

There will be no written examinations. Since this is a Pass/Fail activity course I will base your grade on the activity. In order to pass the course you must, by the end of the semester, be able to perform the entire 24 Posture pattern (which takes 5-10 minutes) from memory. This should occur for most of you about 1/2 to 2/3 of the way through the semester.

2.5 Final Examination: Wednesday May 9 at 4:00 P.M.

I would prefer to use the final examination period as a time for you to alleviate stress by playing Tai Chi midway through finals week.

3 books

1. **Tai Chi Chuan, 24 & 48 Postures with Martial Applications**, Liang and Wu, YMAA Publications, © 1996.

One of the best books I’ve found for the 24 Posture pattern. There is an associated DVD as well. The book is under \$15.00 at Amazon.

2. **T’ai Chi Classics**, Waysun Liao, Shambhala Classics, © 1990

An excellent translation of a number of foundational writings of Tai Chi. If you are interested in this sort of thing, Waysun Liao has other books worth reading. This book is also under \$15.00.

3. **The Dao of Taijiquan, Way to Rejuvenation**, Jou, Tai Chi Foundation, © 1998.

A very interesting presentation of one of stories of the development of Tai Chi. Also includes translations of some of the classical writings on the subject. This one is also under \$15.00 at Amazon.

4. **Tao Te Ching**, various translations

Written by the founder of Taoism, this book is not about Tai Chi so much as it is the foundational book of the philosophical underpinnings of Taoism from which Tai Chi developed.