



University of  
Massachusetts  
Dartmouth

285 Old Westport Rd.  
Dartmouth, MA  
02747-2300

UMass Dartmouth  
Center for  
Indic Studies

508.910.6630  
508.999.8588  
[www.umassd.edu/indic](http://www.umassd.edu/indic)

## Center for Indic Studies

P r e s e n t s

### PATANJALI LECTURE SERIES

## *"Yoga and Meditation in America before 1900"*

**Eugene Taylor, PhD**

Saybrook Institute & Harvard Medical School

**Date:** Thursday, April 29, 2010

**Place:** Library Browsing

**Time:** 7-9pm, Refreshments: 6:45pm



**Abstract:** Knowledge of the far East first came to America through the sea traders of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, who took their goods into China, South Asia, and India and brought back silks, exotic spices, commodities, and even religious objects, this last of which landed on the pianos and shelves of the rich merchants of New England for their offspring to contemplate. It was not until the Transcendentalist era of the 1830s and 40s, however, that Confucian philosophy and Hindu yoga graced the pages of *The Dial*, edited by Margaret Fuller, Thoreau had announced he was a Yogi after reading the Gita, and Emerson had written on the Oversoul. Overlapping that, spiritualism and mental healing began to absorb Asian ideas with the advent of the Theosophical Society in the 1870s, while the first Swamis came to American shores to teach meditation and yoga in the wake of the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. Yoga and meditation were even topics of discourse at Harvard in the philosophies of Josiah Royce and William James in the 1890s, James even declaring at one point that meditation might be the psychology of the future. After that, Asian religions, while never quite getting a foothold as a religion; nonetheless succeeded admirably through figures such as Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts after World War Two as an experiential folk-psychology geared toward spiritual self-realization.

**Eugene Taylor** holds the BA and the MA in experimental psychology and Asian studies from Southern Methodist University, and the PhD in the history and philosophy of psychology, which he earned through the University Professors Program at Boston University under the late philosopher of science and psychologist, Sigmund Koch. He has written numerous books on the life and work of William James and authored most recently *The Mystery of Personality: A history of psychodynamic theories* (Springer, 2009). Currently, he is Professor of Psychology at Saybrook University; Lecturer on Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and Senior Psychologist on the Psychiatry Service at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

For further information, contact: [jsolfvin@umassd.edu](mailto:jsolfvin@umassd.edu)



University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Indic Studies • Knowledge Augurs Humility