



International Women's Partnership
for Peace and Justice

BEST Program Overview

The [Buddhist Education for Social Transformation \(BEST\)](#) course is an innovative year-long certificated course focused on transformation of individuals, communities, the environment, and the world. The program is open to anyone seeking a Buddhist perspective in their approach to personal development, social justice and social change work. The program is organized by [International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice \(IWP\)](#), based in Chiang Mai, Thailand and builds on our experience working with social change agents from the grassroots to the government levels over the past 15 years.

The course is founded on the pillars of non-violent activism, spiritual practice, and anti-oppression feminism. The course is intended to support participants' integration of spiritual practice and social action, grounded in structural analysis and an understanding of the interdependence of personal transformation and structural change.

The course spans one year, with two intensive residential periods at the IWP center outside Chiang Mai, Thailand - three weeks from July 1-21, 2016 and ten days in June 2017. The interim time (August 2016 – June 2017) is designed to include participant self study, small group study, and an independent project which will be presented during the second residential period. The intention is to form a strong community/sangha among participants as they journey through the year long program together.

The course is open to people of all identities, welcoming of all gender and sexual identities, spiritual/faith traditions and beliefs, ages, ethnicities, education level, profession, etc. First priority will be given to activists living and working in the Asian region.

The BEST course was developed by IWP in collaboration with [Upaya Zen Center](#) and modeled on their Buddhist Chaplaincy Program, based in New Mexico, USA. The course draws on the resources, knowledge, and wisdom of both centers (IWP and Upaya) in order to increase alliances between Asian and Western socially engaged Buddhists.

The course aims to:

- Develop leaders who are grounded and engaged in their own transformation.
- Support social change movements in Asia grounded in spiritual practices and feminist and nonviolent principles.
- Help Asian leaders connect with each other and with activists globally to affect change from the grassroots to the global level.
- Create space for mutual respect and understanding, and learning from each other.

Specific topics covered in the course include:

- **Understanding Society**
 - Exploration of direct and structural violence and oppression
 - Analysis of power and uses of power
 - Introduction to systems and complexity theory.
 - Analysis and application of theories of social service and social change
 - Reflection on interfaith models of peacebuilding
- **Understanding Self**
 - Exploration of the intersections of our multiple identities (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, etc)
 - The impacts of socialization and internalization
 - working with privilege and marginalization
- **Self Awareness**
 - Meditation and mindfulness practices as a base of personal growth and social activism
 - The creation of networks and communities of practice
 - Practices for self care and well-being, including identifying the signs of stress and burnout
- **Engaged Buddhism**
 - Introduction to the theories and principles of engaged Buddhism
 - Study of the Buddhist precepts/mindfulness trainings for ethical action
 - Analysis of Buddhist teachings as tools for personal and social analysis
 - Buddhist psychology of social and environmental responsibility
 - Buddhist perspectives on the relevance of interdependence, causality, and impermanence in terms of social service
- **Skills building**
 - Empowerment counseling
 - Council training
 - Compassionate communication
 - Deep listening
 - Feminist writing

Program requirements

In order to fulfill the requirements of the year long training program, participants will be expected to complete the following:

- Participate in a total of 30 residential learning days at IWP.
- For 2016, the core training dates are:

July 1-21, 2016
Early June (10 days), 2017

- Participate in online learning community with other students
- Participate in peer mentoring circle (conference calls/emails throughout the year)
- An independent learning project. This is an applied/research project that results in both a written document and a formal presentation.
- Completion of readings and written assignments
- Completion of a final portfolio, which includes all relevant documentation and the Final Project.

Teaching Methodology

Buddhism emphasizes experience as a basis for learning and transformation. Different forms of daily mindfulness practices and meditation are designed to help participants form the foundation for their peace and justice work. The teaching methodology combines learning through experiential learning activities, discussion, skills building and spiritual practices. Experiential learning activities help participants move beyond the intellectual and informational levels to a more holistic model, in which participants use head, heart, hands, and spirit (intellectual, emotional, kinesthetic, and spiritual modalities) in the learning process. Learning methods include small group discussion, role-plays, group challenges, audio-video and visual aids, exposure trips to witness from real situations, and daily meditation, mindfulness practices and yoga.

Teaching Faculty

Faculty for the program include international teachers and activists with years of experience in engaged Buddhism and their specific fields. Ouyporn Khuankaew and Ginger Norwood, co-founders of IWP, will be guiding instructors for the course. Invited faculty include: Dr. Kathryn Norsworthy, Phra Paisal Visalo, Dhammananda Bhikkuni, Maia Duerr, Jeyanthi Siva, and Anchalee Karutach. Click on each name for a short biography and/or link to her/his work.

Program cost

The investment for the yearlong BEST course is \$850 USD. This cost covers all tuition, food, lodging (in shared rooms), and program costs (e.g. student handbook and relevant reading materials) for the required 30 residential days, as well as mentoring and conference calls.

We have made every effort to keep tuition as affordable as possible, given the costs we need to cover to offer this program. Please consider ways to fundraise within your organization and community and contact us for suggestions.

International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP)

International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP) is a spiritual based feminist organization working to support grassroots activism in South and Southeast Asia. IWP leads workshops, retreats and training courses which share in common the integration of feminism, social action and spirituality for sustainability and transformation at the personal, community and society levels. Our goal is to work systematically and strategically with grassroots groups over a sustained period of time, practicing a partnership culture that has spirituality as a core foundation of social activism. This is our effort to offer alternatives to the hierarchical systems that dominate mainstream institutions and even progressive social movements.

For more information about the work of IWP, visit our website at www.womenforpeaceandjustice.org

Please find the application on the next page or [click here](#).

With questions regarding the BEST course, contact Ginger Norwood, course coordinator, at: ginger@womenforpeaceandjustice.org



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If you are interested to attend the BEST course, please fill out the following application and return it to IWP before April 1, 2016.

Please send by email if possible: ginger@womenforpeaceandjustice.org

or by mail: PO Box 3, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai 50180 Thailand

Name:

Nationality or ethnicity:

Age:

Contact Information (the easiest way for us to contact you: email, phone, mail, etc):

Organization contact information (if applicable):

How did you find out about this course?

What is your current work/study (area of focus)?

What are your expectations from this course?

How do you foresee the BEST course will support your work/study/lifestyle now and your vision for the future?

Do you currently have a spiritual practice? If so, please describe.

What links do you see between spiritual practice and your activism/social change work?

What are 3 personal strengths you have that you will contribute to this course and community?

What are 3 skills/areas that you would like to develop in this course and community?

Anything else you'd like us to know about you?