

PE 147, Tai Chi Chuan

Spring 2015

Bryan Smith

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1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this course is for you to learn the 24 Posture (standardized/simplified) pattern of Tai Chi. This is the pattern almost all of the people are doing 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 and shoes to class.

1.1 Styles

The history of Tai Chi Chuan is as complex as you would expect of something that has developed over at least a thousand years (there is research claiming its beginnings go back some 2500 years). There are not only competing stories about its genesis but there have also been numerous fragmentations as students decide to put their marks on what they learned from their masters. At this time there are at least five major “styles” of Tai Chi: Chen, Yang, Wu(u), Sun, and Wu. Other important styles are Wudang, Dong, Fu, Tsao Bao, Li, and Heh.

Even though it is unclear how and when the martial precursor to Tai Chi and Qigong originated, it is agreed that the origins lie in the observations of animal movements and the fundamental conceptualization of Yin and Yang made by the ancient Chinese and passed along to us through Taoism. As for historical documentation associated with my lineage, Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan was recorded publicly 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 is mostly Yang style and was commissioned by the Chinese government in the 1950’s. Mostly based on the Yang style, it is called the “Simplified (or Standardized) 24-Posture” pattern and incorporates aspects of all five major styles. The postures of this pattern are common to all five but are presented in a fashion that is designed to preserve and enhance health as opposed to developing martial skill. Tai Chi is taught in at least three different ways: as a “dance” that focuses on flowing, meditative movements, for health – both internal and external, and as a martial art. My teacher primarily presented Tai Chi to us as something one can do for health along with illustrations of martial applications to aid us in remembering the correct movements. I also study with a different teacher who is a master of a different martial arts school but who is sharing how he sees Tai Chi in a martial setting.

1.2 My Yang Tai Chi Chuan Lineage

- Yang Lu Chan founded the Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan
- Yang Jian Hou was Yang Lu Chan’s son and the 2nd generation exponent
- Yang Chen Fu was Yang Lu Chan’s grandson and the 3rd generation exponent
- Li Ya Xuan was a fourth generation exponent
- Lin Mo Gen was a fifth generation exponent
- Qin LiLi (Lily) studied under and was declared a master by Lin Mo Gen
- Bryan Smith studied under Lily since 1998 and have studied with Grandmaster Lin Mo Gen during visits to China.

1.3 Basic Information

You can find information pertinent to my work at the university at the link below and, once there, information specific to this class by clicking on the PE 147 link at the top.

<http://mathcs.pugetsound.edu/~bryans/>

Location FH 228, 3:30-5:10pm Tue

1.3.1 Logistics

Professor Emeritus Bryan Smith	858- 5159	bryans[at]pugetsound.edu	"Office" TBA
Office Hours		Friday	10:30-11:30 AM

1.4 Grading

In order to pass the course you cannot miss more than three classes and, by the end of the semester, must be able to perform the entire 24 Posture pattern (which takes 5-10 minutes) from memory and with good posture and "footwork". We will finish our first pass through the pattern about 2/3 of the way through the semester. From then on, class time will be devoted to practicing, **and refining** the entire form, exploring "Extra Topics" like Push Hands, Bagua Zhang, Cha'an Tai Chi, seeing demonstrations, or having individuals verify their ability to perform the entire pattern.

Anyone who has not verified their knowledge of the pattern by the end of the semester will also have an opportunity to meet with me during Finals Week to do so. It will be up to them to make the appointment.

1.5 First Assignment

Please send an email to me at bryans(at)pugetsound.edu with the following information.

- Have PE 147 or Tai Chi in the "Subject:" line and your name as the first line of the email.
- Please tell me why you are taking this class and what you hope to gain from it.

2 Recommended 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. **Mastering Yang Style Taijiquan**, translated by Louis Swaim By Fu Zhongwen, Frog, Ltd./Blue Snake Books (2006)

An excellent book containing both simple and sophisticated insights into Tai Chi. This book uses the Yang family long form (108-postures) for the examples. Every posture you learn in this class is also in the long form making this book a nice addition to a Tai Chi library.

Additional Information

Please review university emergency preparedness and response procedures posted at <http://www.pugetsound.edu/emergency/>. There is a link on the university home page. Familiarize yourself with hall exit doors and the designated gathering area for your class and laboratory buildings.

If building evacuation becomes necessary (e.g. earthquake), meet your instructor at the designated gathering area so she/he can account for your presence. Then wait for further instructions. Do not return to the building or classroom until advised by a university emergency response representative.

If confronted by an act of violence, be prepared to make quick decisions to protect your safety. Flee the area by running away from the source of danger if you can safely do so. If this is not possible, shelter in place by securing classroom or lab doors and windows, closing blinds, and turning off room lights. Stay low, away from doors and windows, and as close to the interior hallway walls as possible. Wait for further instructions.

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Peggy Perno, Director of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, 105 Howarth, 253.879.3395. She will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.