Introduction
The aim here is to help students and teachers study this material in manageable chunks, meaningful enough for an evening’s discussion and contemplation, but not so much that the students feel that they are being pushed through the material. Individual situations will dictate what is too slow and what is too fast. Of course, people should feel free to modify this to fit their own circumstances, their own study and practice situations.

Since 5 or 6 sessions is reasonable for many students, the format suggested here is five 3-hour practice and study meetings and one all-day practice intensive (during which the tonglen practice could be presented). The assumption is that all students have not already received mindfulness meditation instruction, so that is one of the course activities. Audiotapes, CDs, and videos which may enrich each class are also suggested, though use of more than one or two of these may lengthen the class.

It is hoped that each class will allow time for practice, with the possible exception of the first class. The talks should not be so long that there is no time for discussion. To improve this syllabus in the future, students and teachers are invited to share discussion topics and study questions, whatever has been effective in promoting the contemplation of this material in group or individual study. My own abbreviated notes summarizing the topics addressed by the author in each chapter are available for anyone who would like to request them.

About the text, and how this course could fit in to study and practice of other teachings
Early in the book, the presentation of the four noble truths is simple, clear, and connected to practice. The last half of the book includes teachings on the refuge vow, the four reminders, and the importance of not getting caught up in spiritual shopping, spiritual materialism. This could serve as an introductory course for one who wanted to study tonglen and lojong or the four limitless qualities more thoroughly in a subsequent course. Since Pema Chödrön presents the faults of samsara and how to inspire the motivation to practice here, this could also serve as a preliminary to the study of one of Trungpa Rinpoche's classic books.

Class One: The View of Meditation
Reading: Chapters 1-3: Loving-Kindness, Satisfaction, and Finding Our Own True Nature
Class agenda: Since the students are unlikely to have read the first three chapters of a book before a first class, and some students may not have received mindfulness meditation instruction yet, I would suggest starting with a brief introduction by the teacher of the class about the view of meditation and the purpose of the class. Depending upon the sophistication of the class, and whether you would like to show a video or not, meditation instruction could be given in this first class or postponed until class #2.
Complementary audio or video: The teacher’s introductory talk could be supplemented by an audiotape or video of Pema Chödrön presenting the view of mindfulness meditation. *Mindfulness Meditation Instruction: “The Bearable Lightness of Being”*, (Item #60 audio CD) includes instruction by Pema Chödrön in the style presented in the
book. That approach may also be found in the Sound’s True Pure Meditation set. The first part of the first talk of the Knowing the Nature of Fear set (Item #71-1 available as audio CD or DVD) is also an example.

**Main points of the reading:** The attitude of loving-kindness; how meditation is not based on self-improvement but is a vehicle for making friends with oneself and opening one's heart; nonaggression and the view of meditation; the process or practice involves learning from mistakes and accepting ourselves as we are.

**Class Two: The Practice of Meditation: Mindfulness and Awareness**

**Reading:** Chapters 4-7: Precision, Gentleness, and Letting Go; The Wisdom of No Escape; Joy; Taking a Bigger Perspective

**Class agenda:** The main activity here is to present the practice of mindfulness meditation, and actual meditation instruction, and to review the view. If the teacher decides to present both the out- and in-breath as the object of meditation, the reason for this should be clarified, since this approach is not discussed in the text. In addition to meditation instruction and a basic kind, gentle approach to meditation, the topics of the first three chapters are taken further here, stressing an unconditional approach to pain and pleasure, heaven and hell, well-being and suffering.

**Complementary audio or video:** Precise Technique: Basic Mindfulness Meditation by Pema Chödrön (Item #144m - available as audio CD or DVD). The first talk of the Peaceful Abiding Meditation: When Things Fall Apart seminar: “First principle of meditation: recognizing what’s happening.” (Item #106-1 audio CDs) could be integrated into this or the next class. This talk begins with brief meditation instruction, “precise technique”, by a colleague of Pema Chödrön, Jane Kolleeny. The first talk of the seminar Losing Our Appetite For Aggression (Item #112-1, audio CD or DVD), may also be useful to this or next week’s class.

**Class Three: Labeling Thoughts and Balance in Meditation. Seeing Samsara and Developing Renunciation**

**Readings:** Chapters 8-11: No Such Thing as a True Story; Weather and the Four Noble Truths; Not Too Tight, Not Too Loose; Renunciation.

**Class agenda:** The teacher could present mindfulness technique and approaches as a further refinement to the introductory instruction presented in the previous class. Chapter 10 is based on Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation of the 9 ways of resting the mind in the 1979 seminary transcripts, and it would be good to study those and incorporate those into one’s own presentation. That, the 4 noble truths, and how insight that comes out of practice leads to renunciation (which cannot be discovered by just reading a book) are main subjects discussed by Pema Chödrön, and could provoke an interesting talk and discussion.

**Complementary audio or video:** The third talk of the set Learning To Stay, (Item #94-3, Shenpa and Shenluk, Karma/Habituation and Renunciation, audio CDs or DVD), may be interesting in this context. From talk 3 of the set Meditation in Action, The Four Noble Truths and the Path of Meditation (Item #67-3, audio CD or DVD): how to bring the path of awakening into everyday life, may also be enriching in this context.

**Class Four: All Day Practice Intensive**

**Morning:** Shamatha intensive. Brief talk: Refuge and the Three Jewels

**Afternoon:** Shamatha and tonglen. View of tonglen, as well as practice (optional)

**Readings:** Chapters 12 & 13, Sending and Taking, and Taking Refuge.
Class Agenda: This is a practice day. The morning could feature shamatha practice, with tonglen practice introduced in the afternoon. There should also be some time for discussion.

If this is a relatively introductory class, students should be made aware that they do not have to continue with the tonglen practice at this time if they do not feel ready. Alternatively, if the teacher feels the students are not ready, tonglen practice could be reserved for some other time, and only the view presented in this class, with some discussion.

Complementary audio or video: A brief talk and discussion on the refuge vow and 3 jewels could be included in the morning session, with audio CD of Pema Chödrön’s Taking Refuge (Item #141).

There are several good CDs and DVDs of Pema Chödrön giving guided tonglen instruction, which could be incorporated into an actual second tonglen practice session this week, or in a future class. Item #78-4 The View of Tonglen and Guided Tonglen Instruction is a good audio CD or DVD of guided tonglen with a short talk. Item #35 Making a Relationship with Pain and Joy is another audio CD.

Class Five: Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism; Overcoming Obstacles to Genuine Path
Readings: Chapters 15-17: The dharma that is taught and the dharma that is experienced; Sticking to one boat; Inconvenience.
Class agenda: This section of the book is a particularly eloquent presentation of some of Trungpa Rinpoche's most fundamental themes: encouraging inquisitiveness and finding the truth of dharma through cynicism and examining one's own experience, overcoming materialism, the power of sticking with a consistent approach instead of spiritual shopping. So, the talk and discussion should include those themes. If the notion of “taking refuge” was not discussed in the previous class, it should be included here.

Complementary audio: The Three Lords of Materialism (Item #59CD) may be an interesting complementary audio for this week’s readings.

Class Six: The Four Reminders: Overcoming Depression and Clarifying Motivation
Readings: Chapter 18: The Four Reminders
Class agenda: Presentation of and guided practice of the four reminders. An excellent opportunity to present contemplative practice, and to explore the relationship between contemplative practice, clarifying motivation, and inspiration.
Complementary audio: From Leaving Home: Talks on Meditation and Life, talks 2 and 3 -- The Four Reminders Part One: Appreciating Precious Human Birth and the Reality of Death. and The Four Reminders Part Two: The Inevitability of Karma and the Relentlessness of Samsara. (Item #200, audio CDs)