

New Student Information

About The St. Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association

The St. Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association is a not-for-profit organization, incorporated in 1981 and dedicated to teaching and practicing the Yang Style Short Form of T'ai Chi. Dues pay for rental of teaching space and help to defray the cost of special workshops led by internationally known teachers. The instructors and members of the board of directors are volunteers.

About T'ai Chi Ch'uan

T'ai Chi Ch'uan (often shortened to T'ai Chi) can be translated as "Supreme Ultimate Boxing". It is a system of exercise, a moving meditation, and a self-defense art. As an exercise, T'ai Chi Ch'uan is characterized by slow, continuous movement through a successive series of postures performed in a relaxed manner with a calm but concentrated mind.

Traditionally it was said that whoever practices T'ai Chi correctly and regularly will gain the pliability of a child, the health of a lumberjack, and the peace of mind of a sage.¹ While this may sound improbable, any long term practitioner will attest to its very real benefits, which have also been demonstrated in medical studies.

Slow relaxed movements and deepened respiration help to counteract stress and disperse accumulated tension. Rhythmic movement and the relaxed but demanding postures provide a massage for the internal organs and promote digestion and blood circulation. Correct posturing in T'ai Chi increases flexibility, tunes and refines the kinesthetic sense, and aids in the proper structural alignment of the body. T'ai Chi Ch'uan is considered an "internal" system, meaning that it emphasizes the mind-body connection rather than concentrating solely on physical strength or speed. A calm attentive mind directs intrinsic energy, known as ch'i, which in turn directs the movement of the body. This approach is a key factor in developing energy without tension and tranquility without lethargy.

Our association does not emphasize the martial aspect of T'ai Chi Ch'uan; however references to martial applications are made. The martial applications become increasingly relevant to students who continue their studies to include T'ui Shou, or "Push Hands", a two-person exercise. T'ai Chi Ch'uan as a defensive art relies on sensitivity, timing, and relaxation.

T'ai Chi requires no special equipment, facilities or clothing. It can be performed indoors or out and is accessible to almost anyone, regardless of age, sex, or initial level of fitness. The only prerequisites are a sincere desire to learn and a willingness to work hard. T'ai Chi does not produce quick results; it promotes the cultivation of patience and perseverance.



St. Louis
T'ai Chi Ch'uan
Association

¹ *T'ai Chi: The "Supreme Ultimate" Exercise for Health, Sport, and Self-Defense* By Cheng Man-ch'ing and Robert W. Smith

The History Of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and The Yang Style

The origins of T'ai Chi Ch'uan are obscured by legends and traditional secrecy, but it has certainly existed in some form for many hundreds of years. The style we practice began with Yang Lu-ch'an, who learned T'ai Chi from the Ch'en family in the early Nineteenth century. Yang Lu-ch'an modified the form he learned to create the Yang style, probably the most widely practiced today.

Yang passed the art to his sons and they to theirs. His grandsons included Yang Cheng-fu, a formidable martial artist who was known throughout China in the early years of the Twentieth century.

It was from Yang Cheng-fu that Cheng Man-ch'ing learned T'ai Chi Ch'uan during the 1920s. Professor Cheng overcame serious illness and went on to become one of the most widely respected practitioners of T'ai Chi in modern times. A person of extraordinary accomplishment, Professor Cheng exemplified the traditional Chinese gentleman in his mastery of the "Five Excellences": painting, poetry, calligraphy, Chinese medicine, and T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Finding the existing Yang form was too long for many of his students to learn and practice properly, Professor Cheng eliminated some of the repetitions and a few other postures to create a 37 posture form. This is the Yang Style Short Form which we teach and practice today. Professor Cheng passed away in 1975.

Among Professor Cheng's foremost students was Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo. Mr. Lo began his study of T'ai Chi Ch'uan in 1947 and came to the United States in the early 1970s. Mr. Lo devoted himself to preserving and spreading the authentic T'ai Chi Ch'uan he received from Professor Cheng, and he was especially known for his mastery of Push Hands. The founding members of the Association visited Mr. Lo regularly to learn the form, and Mr. Lo came to the St. Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association to give workshops once or twice a year for over 30 years. When Mr. Lo retired, the Association began bringing his senior students to St. Louis to conduct workshops. Mr. Lo passed away in 2018.

Learning The Form

It takes about 10 months to learn the basic postures of the T'ai Chi form. Serious students continue to take classes to refine their practice.

The Association has two 5-month sessions: the Fall Session (September through January) and the Spring Session (February through June). There is a Summer Session during July & August.

Form instruction takes place during the Fall and Spring Sessions. During the Summer Session, the classes continue to practice the form but each week different teachers explore various topics in depth. T'ai Chi is a journey, and many students choose to repeat the Beginning class while taking the Intermediate or Ongoing class both to improve their practice and to receive the benefits of added exercise.

Your dues pay for the day, so when you have completed the First Circle, you may take both the Beginning and the Intermediate / Ongoing classes for the same fee, space permitting.

Classes

Location

The Monday Club, #37 S. Maple, Webster Groves, MO 63119

Schedule

Sunday

- 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM - **Beginning Class**

This class introduces students to the principles of T'ai Chi and provides instruction in the first 18 postures of the form (referred to as the First Circle).

- 11:15 AM - 12:15 PM - **Intermediate/Ongoing Class**

This class provides instruction in the remaining postures of the form (the Second Circle) or if all students have completed the form works to deepen their understanding and practice of T'ai Chi.

Fees

- \$50 per month, due prior to the first class of the month.
- Fees cover the whole day.
- Fees do not cover special workshops.

Website

Our website may be found at <http://taichistlouis.org> . It contains useful links to such things as our Facebook page, a video demonstration of the form, and a list of our classes, as well as further information about T'ai Chi Ch'uan in general and our style and lineage in particular.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather may cause classes to be canceled. Members will receive an email notification if classes are canceled. Updates will also be posted on our Facebook page. The decision to cancel class will hopefully be made by 9:00 AM.

The Saint Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association Board

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| President..... | Mr. Brian Gilstrap |
| Vice President..... | Ms. Dean Brake |
| Treasurer | Ms. Patti Gabriel |
| Secretary..... | Mr. Paul Bowser |
| Board Member | Ms. Shelley Shray |
| Board Member | Ms. Anne Gricevich |
| Board Member | Mr. Louis Laudel |

Suggested Reading

T'ai Chi Ch'uan: A Simplified Method of Calisthenics for Health & Self Defense

By Cheng Man-ch'ing

Blue Snake Books 1993; ISBN 9780913028858

Cheng Tzu's Thirteen Treatises on T'ai Chi Ch'uan

By Cheng Man-ch'ing Translated by Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo, Martin Inn

Blue Snake Books 1993; ISBN 9780938190455

The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition

Translated and Edited By Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo, Martin Inn, Robert Amacker, & Susan Foe

Blue Snake Books 1993; ISBN 9780615227771 (newer annotated edition) or 9780913028636

T'ai Chi: The "Supreme Ultimate" Exercise for Health, Sport, and Self-Defense

By Cheng Man-ch'ing and Robert W. Smith

Tuttle Publishing 2004; ISBN 9780804805605

T'ai Chi Ch'uan Ta Wen: Questions and Answers on T'ai Chi Ch'uan

By Chen Wei-ming, Translated by Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo and Robert W. Smith

Blue Snake Books 1993; ISBN 9780938190677

“Conservator of the T'ai Chi Classics: An interview with Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo”

Article Included in *Cheng Man-ch'ing and T'ai Chi: Echoes in the Hall of Happiness*
Via Media Publishing Company 2015; ISBN 9781893765061 (also available as an e-book)

Videos

“Simplified T'ai Chi Ch'uan”

by Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo; speak to your instructor

“The Professor, Tai Chi's Journey West”

by Barry Strugatz; available online

“Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo: Enduring Legacy of Professor Cheng Man Ch'ing”

by Inner Research Institute; https://iritaichi.org/iri_store.html

“Tai Chi: Exercise for Lifelong Health and Well Being”

by Tricia Yu; <https://www.taichihealth.com/> Product Code D50

YouTube video of Tricia Yu demonstrating our form:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvjiTuAUe6I>