

“Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

2013 ACMHE Winter Newsletter



Save the Date!

Contemplative Retreat for Educators

Saturday, February 22, 2014
Amherst College, Amherst, MA

Summer Session on Contemplative Pedagogy

August 3-8, 2014
Smith College, Northampton, MA

New Member Directory

In response to your growing interest in finding fellow members in your geographic region, academic discipline, or professional role, we have upgraded the ACMHE Directory search functions.

Log in to your ACMHE Member Portal to update your profile and search for other members.

[Log in](#)

Dear ACMHE members,

With 2013 drawing to a close and a new year right around the corner, we would like to thank you, the members of the ACMHE community, for your ongoing participation in our events and programs, support of our work, and commitment to transforming higher education through contemplative methods.

May the new year bring you peace, deepened connections, and renewed energy for your life's work.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jennifer Palmer & Carrie Bergman'.

Jennifer Palmer & Carrie Bergman

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ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Heesoon Bai, **Laurie Anderson**, and Saskia Tait would like to announce a new Masters of Education (M.Ed.) program at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada, in Contemplative Inquiry and Approaches in Education. It is launching in the fall of 2014, and is designed to fill the growing hunger for contemplative perspectives and practices in our educational institutions, communities and world at large.



This graduate degree program is founded on a robust, broad, deep and coherent conceptual framework that builds on the knowledge, wisdom and understandings developed so far in the contemplative educational field. The core concern of this field is the cultivation of foundational humanity. Theoretical exploration of the key concepts and practices, such as mindful awareness, mind-body integration, well-being, ethical integrity and authenticity, and compassion are based in curriculum as “living inquiry.” For more information about the program, please visit <http://www.sfu.ca/education/graduate/degrees/diploma/masters/ci-cpa2014.html>.

The faculty sponsor for this program is Dr. Heesoon Bai, who can be reached at hbai@sfu.ca. Alternatively, you can contact Dr. Laurie Anderson for program information at lauriea@sfu.ca. There-

sa Mah is in charge of admissions and registration, and she can be reached at tkmah@sfu.ca or 778-782-5951.

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Robert Kaplan, Professor of Film, Dance and Theatre at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, launched a new BFA Dance program in 2009, from which the first class graduated in spring 2013. The curriculum’s focus on movement-based arts weaves a somatic approach to developing sustained awareness of breath and connection to intuitive, kinesthetic, and intellectual experiences. All contributing towards a humanistic and ethical philosophical core that runs through the program. <http://dance.asu.edu/about/>.

He is also developing a new course with a colleague in the Barrett Honors College, Mark Montessano. Living Musically: A Philosophy of Improvisation, will be an upper division integrative honors college course centered on improvisation as a way of life: looking at philosophies, spiritual traditions, creativity, and ethics that would inform a holistic philosophy of life (Fall 2014).

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Rabbi Myriam Klotz, Director, Spirituality Initiative at HUC-JIR New York, writes, “At the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion New York campus, the Spirituality Initiative is a project whose aim is to bring mindfulness and contemplative practices to the educational experience of those training to become rabbis, cantors and educators. Now



in its third year, the Initiative offers opportunities for students, faculty and staff on campus to participate in both curricular and extra-curricular programming that incorporates both experiential learning and critical thinking. Through the formal practice of mindfulness and an overall integration of mindful awareness in the campus community, the educational experience will be provide a strong container for growth in integrated personal and professional religious leadership skills such as self-awareness, compassion, and wisdom. Offerings of the Spirituality Initiative to date have included a year-long course about Jewish Mindfulness and Spiritual Practices; individual Spiritual Direction; and, monthly practice labs for Jewish mindfulness meditation and yoga. We will continue to expand the offerings of the Spirituality Initiative, including changes within the curricular offerings, to the formal training of Jewish Spiritual Directors, to further opportunities on and off campus to integrate intensive mindfulness practice experience in arenas such as social justice and environmental activism. For more information visit <http://huc.edu/news/article/2011/spirituality-initiative-new-york-school-made-possible-joyce-and-irving-goldman>.

Or contact Rabbi Klotz at mklotz@huc.edu

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Jena Leake, Assistant Professor & Program Coordinator, Expressive Arts Therapy Certificate at Appalachian State University, announces that that ASU is offering a Summer Institute in “Expressive Arts and Contemplative Practice,” May 12 - 16, 2014 at WildAcres Retreat Center in Little Switzerland, NC. During this expressive arts institute/retreat, we will engage in individual

and community art-making to explore mindful and artful approaches for self care, well-being and therapeutic work with others. Studio workshops integrating visual art-making, music, writing, movement, and awareness practices invite artistic inquiry and renewal. As we interweave expressive arts theories with contemplative practices, we will examine possibilities for cultivating presence, insight and compassion in our personal and professional work. This intensive institute is offered both as a graduate course in the Department of Human Development & Psychological Counseling



and as Continuing Education through the National Board of Certified Counselors (40 CEU’s available). Personal process hours for those seeking the Registered Expressive Arts Therapist (REAT) & Registered Expressive Arts Consultant Educator (REACE) credentials through the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association will be available. Anyone interested in the expressive arts and contemplative practice is welcome. For more information, please visit <http://expressivearts.appstate.edu/news/2014-summer-institute-expressive-arts-and-contemplative-practice>.

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Sarah Sherman would like to announce a new summer immersion program that is part of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute at Teachers College, Columbia University.

A Master's Degree in General Psychology
Spirituality and Contemplative Practices
Summer Intensive
Teachers College, Columbia University

The Spirituality and Contemplative Practices Summer Intensive is a transformative graduate program that is committed to uniting spirituality and psychology through a unique and diverse approach to research, theory, and practice. The program is capped by two intensive summer sessions with coursework in between, combining a blend of in-person experiential immersion and closely supervised distanced learning.

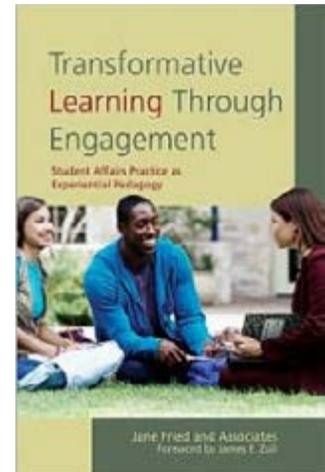
We invite leaders, activists, educators, psychologists, therapists, and adults interested in gaining understanding of themselves and others. The program will help participants develop tools to connect more deeply with family, friends, colleagues, clients—and mostly importantly —yourself.

For more information please visit www.spiritualitymindbody.com or contact Sarah Sherman at sherman@tc.columbia.edu.

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PUBLICATIONS

Jane Fried, Professor of Counselor Education and Family Therapy at Central Connecticut State University, recently published a book entitled [Transformative Learning Through Engagement: Student Affairs Practice as Experiential Pedagogy](#) with Stylus Publications. The book creates a vision of integrated learning for higher education, combining engagement and contemplation in order to support a transformative understanding of American culture.

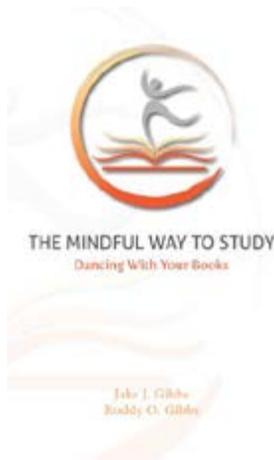


Jane also writes: “Several people who attended the ACMHE conference in Amherst last month are beginning to form a contemplative pedagogy network in Connecticut. CT also has a growing movement to create universities of compassion, based on the work of Karen Armstrong. CCSU sponsors an on-going group called the Contemplative Practices Forum. We are beginning to feel like very good energy is building in CT.”

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[The Mindful Way To Study: Dancing With Your Books](#) by **Jake J. Gibbs** and Roddy O. Gibbs was recently published by O'Connor Press. Jake Gibbs is an emeritus professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Roddy Gibbs is a certified mindfulness instructor. He teaches and consults on course development for teens in San Diego.

The Mindful Way to Study is a simple guide. The book isn't a text. It has broader relevance and a

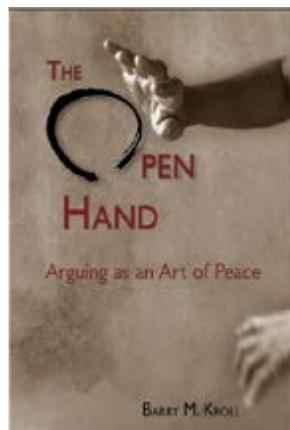


much more relaxed and genial tone. It offers the mindful approach as an alternative to the traditional way of viewing learning. The book is aimed at college students who are unfamiliar with mindfulness or new to it.

The book is available on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle formats. You can learn more about the book as well as connect with Amazon through <http://mindfulwaytostudy.com>.

Any ACMHE member can request a complimentary PDF version of the book by contacting John (Jake) Gibbs at jgibbs@auxmail.iup.edu or jakegibbs47@gmail.com.

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Barry Kroll, Professor of English at Lehigh University, announces the recent release of his book, [The Open Hand: Arguing as an Art of Peace](#), which was published in fall 2013 by University Press of Colorado and Utah State University Press. The book examines a freshman seminar that Kroll has been teaching at Lehigh University, a course that invites first-year college students to explore how

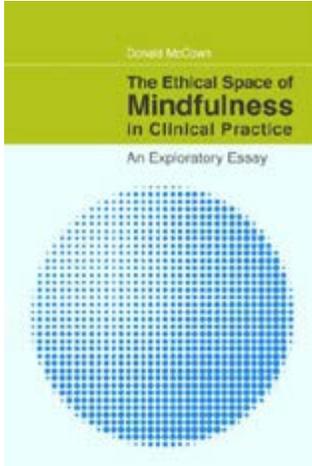


arguing—often construed as a fight between adversaries—can be understood differently, as a way to resolve conflicts and reach agreements without resorting to adversarial tactics. Thus students learned to approach arguing as an art of the “open hand” rather than the “closed fist,” applying this new approach not only to resolving interpersonal disputes but also to writing arguments about controversial public issues. The book draws material from six iterations of the course and contains numerous excerpts from students’ responses and papers.

In addition to regular class sessions, students participated in a weekly “lab” where they explored a variety of contemplative practices and learned some movement sequences based on two-person tai chi and aikido. The contemplative activities introduced students to habits of mind that serve arguers well in conflicts, especially equanimity, focused attention, and insight. This component of the course was informed by seminars at the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (Summer 2007) and the Contemplative Pedagogy program at Naropa University (Summer 2008). Through the martial arts exercises, students encountered physical expressions of attentive listening, reframing, and mediating—kinesthetic representations that anchored rhetorical strategies in bodily movement. The book is addressed to college teachers, primarily, and tries to foster interest in both alternative modes of arguing and multiple modalities of learning: teaching that engages the head, the hand, and the heart.

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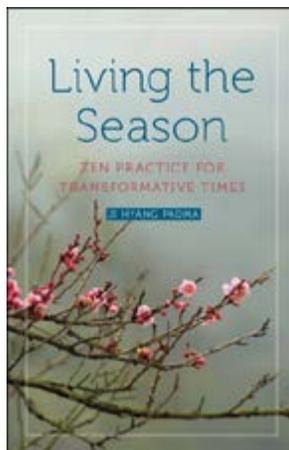
Donald McCown, Assistant Professor of Health at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, writes, “My recently published book, [The Ethical Space of Mindfulness in Clinical Practice](#) (2013, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London), may be of interest



to ACMHE members for the areas beyond clinical ethics into which the discussion ranges. It offers a critique of the individualist conceptions of contemplative practice and attempts to redefine practice in relational terms. Also,

it provides ways of thinking about who is “qualified” to teach contemplative practices, and how that loaded question might be considered given a relational definition of practice.

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Ji Hyang Padma, Director of Spirituality and Education Programs at Wellesley College, has just published her first book, [Living the Season: Zen Practice for Transformative Times](#). For a description of the book, please see the press release from Wellesley College: <http://www.wellesley.edu/news/2013/11/node/40407best-wishes-jihyang>.



Sally K. Severino, MD has published a new book entitled [Behold Our Moral Body: Psychiatry, Duns](#)



[Scotus and Neuroscience](#) (Versita: Emerging Science Publishers, 2013). This book reveals both a deeply pondered and a deeply “felt” approach to topics both challenging and important in our day. Visit her

website at www.neurospirit.net

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Amy Winans, Associate Professor of English at Susquehanna University, recently published an article, [“Cultivating Critical Emotional Literacy: Cognitive and Contemplative Approaches to Engaging Difference”](#) in the journal *College English* (75, November 2012: 150-70.)

EVENTS

[Creating a Mindful Campus:](#)

[Adjusting Our Default Settings](#)

Two Days of Practice and Conversation

March 21 – 22, 2014

UNC Asheville

With Resident Scholar-Practitioner David Levy

This year's Creating a Mindful Campus retreat/conference will invite us to direct our attentions to our "default settings" (habits of mind—beliefs, assumptions—and body) as they relate to our university lives and our lives beyond the campus. By seeing clearly our "default settings," we may find that we have a choice to continue to act on or change those default settings and in so doing become more intentional, aware educators, students, administrators.

This year's retreat/conference will feature several presentations by David Levy, Professor of Information at the University of Washington, whose areas of expertise include Contemplative Practices, Ethics of Information and Technology, and Information and the Quality of Life. Professor Levy has done extensive research on students' attitudes toward and use of Information Technology. Professor Levy will lead two sessions during Creating a Mindful Campus: "No Time to Think: Balance, Technology and Academic Life" and "Mindful Tech: Learning to use Our Digital Tools More Attentively and with Less Stress." Everyone is also invited to attend two sessions he'll offer before the retreat/conference officially begins: "Shabbat, Digital Culture, and the Politics of Rest," Thursday, March 20, 2014, 7:30 p.m. and "Undergraduate

Attitudes Toward Information Technology: A Conversation with David Levy," Friday, March 21, 2014, 12:45 p.m.

This year's retreat/conference will also include sharing by faculty and students of exercises and activities they have used in their courses and student organizations as well as extended periods of contemplative practice, including sitting meditation and yoga.

A detailed schedule along with registration information and more will be available after January 15, 2014. You will find that information and more here: <http://mindfulcampus.wordpress.com/>.

Creating a Mindful Campus: Adjusting Our Default Settings is open to university faculty, students, staff, and administrators as well as all educators and those interested in the use of contemplative practices in education.

For more information, please contact **Dr. Richard Chess** at rchess@unca.edu.

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Jon Brammer, Humanities Instructor at Three Rivers Community College, writes, "Three Rivers Community College will be hosting a mindful music workshop with shakuhachi master Perry Yung on Friday, February 28th from 10am to 2pm. Mr. Yung is a flute player and maker of traditional Japanese flutes; his work can be seen here: <http://www.yungflutes.com/>. Participants will make their own flutes in the workshop that they will keep, and Mr. Yung will provide beginning lessons in how to play the shakuhachi, which is often associated with contemplative monastic practices. The program fee is \$100 to cover materials and tools. For more in-



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Margaret Benefiel of Andover Newton Theological School recently presented “Turning the Lens on Ourselves: Epistemological Foundations for Contemplative Higher Education” at the American Academy of Religion annual conference. This paper will be part of an upcoming, collaborative book about contemplative higher education which she is currently co-editing.



formation and to register for the program, contact Professor William O’Hare via e-mail at WOHare@trcc.commnet.edu or by phone at 860-576-1227.”

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Holly Rogers, Psychiatrist at Duke University Counseling & Psychological Services announces a workshop: “Teaching Mindfulness to College Students and other Emerging Adults.” The Koru



Center for Mindfulness is offering a day-long workshop in Durham, NC on Saturday, January 11, 2014. This workshop will introduce the art and

skill of teaching mindfulness to college students and other emerging adults. In addition, participants will be trained in how to teach Koru, the developmentally targeted, empirically tested, four-week course developed at Duke University for teaching mindfulness to emerging adults. .6 CE credits will be available for attendees.

For more information and to register visit <https://www.korumindfulness.org/event-info/>

Starting on February 7, 2014, Dr. Benefiel and Rev. Susie Allen will be co-leading a 10-week program about contemplative leadership, “The Soul of Leadership ‘Mini’: Transforming the Organization’s Soul.” Taking place in the greater Boston area, this program will combine insights from the field of spirituality and spiritual formation with insights from management and organizational studies to examine how spiritual health and growth can be facilitated in an organization. More information can be found at <http://www.executivesoul.com/soul-of-leadership>.

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Kathleen Bishop, Health Sciences at Kaplan University, writes, “Saturday, December 7, 2013 I (Shokai) was ordained a Buddhist priest through the Southern Palm Zen Group in Boca Raton, FL. It is a great honor to be invited to become a priest and I wear the title with joy and humility.

If you would like to see more or hear more about Buddhism and our wonderful group please go to my blog, www.unlockthedoortolearning.com or my website www.unlockthedoortolearning.org or to the SPZG website at www.floridazen.com. In Gassho, Shokai.”

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Joseph Croskey, Academic Counselor for Upward Bound at Clarion University of Pennsylvania, offers some updates and reflections on his work this year: “I was selected to participate in the [Search Inside Yourself Teacher Training Certification Program](#). Mirabai Bush provided significant input/consultation in developing the practices used by the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (SIYLI) program. I am very grateful that during the [Sum-](#)



[mer Session](#), Mirabai encouraged me to participate in a weekend SIY training. In associated news, I presented at National Association of Academic Advisors ([NACADA](#)) a session entitled ‘Mindful, Authentic Advising: Will it help you and your students be more successful?’ The presentation was well received and incorporated practices from the Summer Session and the SIYLI training.”

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Oren Ergas, School of Education, Hebrew University, writes, “As promised in the previous newsletter, the [Tali Spirituality website](#) of which I am responsible for the “research and theory” section, is now up and running in English. In the research and theory section you will find extensive summaries of about 100 peer-reviewed journal papers and books revolving around contemplative education, contemplative pedagogy, and spirituality, sorted into different fields. This is a very useful resource for your review sections when writing journal papers and books, and I add more material to it whenever I find spare time (rather rarely recently). Some of you may find your work included, so if you find any errors please write to me at oren.ergas@mail.huji.ac.il and I will be sure to correct.

I would like to recommend a book that is just out – “[Re-envisioning Higher Education: Embodied pathways to wisdom and social transformation](#)” edited by Jing Lin, Rebecca Oxford and Edward Brentmeier. I contributed a chapter to this book describing how I teach a simple yogic posture as a contemplative pedagogy that fosters moral integrity in a contemplative education higher-education course. I ground this in classical yoga tradition and in theory of moral education. The book offers many other chapters covering other contemplative practices as they can be applied towards wisdom and social transformation.

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Bart Everson, Media Artist, Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Xavier University of Louisiana , writes, “In December, CAT was pleased to present a second installment in our continuing series on ‘[Contemplative Practices in Diverse Traditions](#).’ In this introductory session, faculty

learned the basics of how to practice sitting meditation in the Zen tradition and some of the essential principles of Buddhism relating to working with the mind. This session was led by Rev. Michaela O'Connor Bono, a Zen priest who has been practicing Zen Buddhism since 2003. After



evacuating New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, Rev. Bono lived and trained at both Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and Green Gulch Farm Zen Center. Rev. Bono was ordained as a Soto Zen priest in September 2010. She is a co-founding board member of the US chapter of Sakyadhita, the internationally renowned association of Buddhist women. She is also on the board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, an organization of Buddhists dedicated to radical social change. This event was supported in part by a grant from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.”

Bart also presented at the Fifth Annual Conference of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, on the topic of “Contemplative Faculty Development: From Spiritual Emergency to Visions of Wholeness.” Mr. Everson has published an interactive version of his presentation at the [CAT website](#).

Deborah Haynes, Professor of Art and Art History at the University of Colorado Boulder, writes, “My article, ‘[The Blue Pearl: The Efficacy of Teaching Mindfulness Practices to College Students](#),’ recently appeared in the journal *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Volume 33 (2013). Between fall 2003 and spring 2011, I integrated contemplative practices into ten courses with a total of 877 students, and this article summarizes my work. It expands upon the webinar I offered in March 2013, available at the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s [webinar archives](#).

Close to academic retirement, my scholarly and creative life changed drastically in September 2013 with a flood that devastated my home and studio in Jamestown, Colorado. I am writing and posting images about this experience and its aftermath at www.DeborahJHaynes.com/blog.

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John Morrison, Faculty in Composition and Theory at the Longy School of Music of Bard College, has founded an organization, Contemplating Music: the Greater Boston Center for Contemplative Mind in Music. Still in its formative stages, a broad range of musicians take part, sharing what it is that constitutes the presence of contemplation in their musical activities. Music is of course a contemplative activity in itself, so the discovery of the pervasive presence of contemplative practice is ongoing. The hope is to encourage and support the activities of members, and to naturally grow other activities over time. Visit our website at <http://jhmedu.org/CM/>. John also maintains a blog, however irregularly, also called Contemplating Music. Check it out at http://jhmedu.org/CM_blog/index.html

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Iddo Oberski, Senior Lecturer, Learning and Teaching, Centre for Academic Practice at Queen Margaret University, writes, “The initial evaluation of a one-year project on the introduction of contemplative practices at QMU were presented at the 10th Enhancement Themes Conference ‘[Enhancement and Innovation in Higher Education](#),’ held in Glasgow, Scotland, from 11-13 June 2013. [Proceedings](#) were recently published and a more extensive evaluation has been submitted as a book chapter as part of an edited compilation of work on alternative formats in education. The project was funded by the University.

This is the second year that we’re offering contemplative practices at QMU. This takes the form of short meditations at the start of some lectures, mindfulness drop-in sessions, two lunchtime slots every week, taster sessions, introductory presentations about the use of contemplative practices in education and an 8-week mindfulness foundation course for students and for staff. Some of these activities were funded by the University.”

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Louise Smith, Dean of Community Life, Antioch College, writes, “Since it’s reopening in 2011, [Antioch College](#) has been gaining momentum in implementing a Contemplative Education track of the Community Life curriculum. This past academic year, Antioch’s offerings included classes in Mindfulness, taught by dean of community life Louise Smith and a member of the Yellow Springs Dharma Center and Naropa graduate, Katie Egart; Yoga, which is taught in partnership with Yoga Springs Studio in town; and To Shin Do, pictured here. To Shin Do instructor, Johanna Kohout who has her black belt and teaching certification, works

at the college as a Resident Life Manager and is also connected to a dojo in nearby Dayton, Ohio. In addition to course offerings, mindful listening has been practiced during orientation activities and within the governance of the college at weekly Community Meeting. Going forward, dean of community life Louise Smith intends to broaden the offerings within the Contemplative Education track to include more resources for staff and faculty, as well as inviting the community of Yellow Springs to take Contemplative Ed courses at Antioch. Smith and Egart also hope to start a regional group of practitioners in surrounding area colleges and begin to develop more intentional connections with the academic curriculum.”



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This past summer, ACMHE and American University hosted a third workshop titled, “[Contemplative Environmental Studies: Pedagogy for Self and Planet](#).” Twenty-five participants and five teachers practiced meditation and yoga, engaged in art exercises, and shared insights into teaching environmental studies for a week at the Lama Foundation. (Lama is a retreat center in the mountains of northern New Mexico, where, among other things,

Ram Dass wrote [Be Here Now](#).)

The workshop invited participants to dwell on the question of how we can best live and apprentice students into a time of extreme environmental intensification. It explored the psychological, spiritual, philosophical, and political dimensions of the environmental crisis, and throughout the week wove a web of interdisciplinary wisdom about how these come together to provide insight for Environmental Studies as a discipline and for professors striving to live, research, and teach with integrity and purpose.



Among the highlights: ACMHE's Daniel Barbezat demonstrated what teaching with a wild mind and open heart looks like as he led us to the side of Lama Mountain to silently witness a stunning sunset. Meditation instructor Jeff Warren offered morning sitting instruction and practice that allowed us to grow more intimate with our lives. Artist Nicole Salimbene led daily exercises that helped us get beyond the rational mind to experience environmental engagement by reflecting on the aesthetics of contemplative practice and activism. Professor and architect Matthew Jelacic shared stories about building environmentally sound dwellings with the Crow people and

explaining the connection between ecology and social justice. American University Professor **Paul Wapner** served to ground the week in sustained consideration of the politics of environmental protection. Together, teachers and participants developed ways of understanding and utilizing the interface between the inner life and outer environmental engagements.

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Michael Wood, Anglican Chaplain at the at the University of Western Australia, writes: "My interest in contemplative practice at UWA has developed primarily out of reading Parker J Palmer's work ([A Hidden Wholeness](#); [Let Your Life Speak](#); [The Courage to Teach](#)). This has resulted in the development, since 2008, of retreats, quiet days and conversational circles with Academic and Professional (Administrative) Staff. We offer two Quiet Days a year and a two night residential retreat at the end of the year. Attendance is typically between 4-6 participants, some of whom are usually repeat attenders. The desire has been to help staff to value, in their own lives, the creation of intentional reflective space in the company of other academics. In Parker Palmer's words, 'to be alone in the company of others.'

The feedback from these retreats has been unanimously positive. The majority of staff who have attended the quiet days and retreats have continued to meet 3-4 times a year in ongoing conversational circles. This has involved meeting for two hours at the end of a work day followed by dinner together. These gatherings were, for the first five years, designed along similar lines to the Quiet Days, using principles developed by Parker Palmer. i.e. sit in a circle; have a period of silence; re-commit to prin-

ciples of listening & speaking; do a check-in; and reflect on a 'third thing' (poem or image). More recently, since reading The Heart of Higher Education (Parker Palmer, Arthur Zajonc, with Megan Scribner), we have 'morphed' into a more self-organised community of practice on the theme, 'Integrated education for compassionate action in an interconnected world'. This conversation circle is providing a space to explore the practice of integrated education in teaching and research in a more intentional way. It is still early days but we think that the trust which has developed through the earlier work has helped create an environment which is conducive to creative experimentation."

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REFLECTIONS

Bringing Mindfulness into Higher Education
by **Richard S. Ellis**

The benefits of meditation are apparent to everyone who practices this ancient technique. Meditation calms the mind and brings equanimity. It enables us to connect with the wisdom of our bodies and the wisdom of the present moment. It also helps us cope with pain, reduce stress, and alleviate suffering. Mindfulness is the insight gained from meditation. It is the calm and direct awareness of what is happening in the present moment, in your body, in your mind, and in the world around you. By focusing your attention on the present moment, mindfulness cultivates wakefulness and wisdom.

After meditating regularly for a number of years, I decided to introduce meditation and the benefits of mindfulness to the students I teach in the

Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Starting five or six years ago and continuing into the present, I have begun each class with a short meditation exercise, which I do without using the language of meditation and which I make clear is completely voluntary. With small variations here are my instructions.

If you would like to participate, then I invite you to close your eyes, sit up straight in the chair, and start breathing slowly. There is no need to do anything except relax and breathe. Give yourself this gift. As you become aware of your breath, start to feel present.

I also discuss issues of stress with the students. I know that the combination of meditation and discussion is working. For example, in the 20 course evaluations in an undergraduate course that I taught during the fall semester of 2012, 10 students commented favorably on the meditation exercise or remarked that I had created a low-stress learning environment. "I thought the meditation sessions were helpful and helped me to focus better during class," wrote one student. Another remarked, "Overall, even though this class is one of the more difficult ones, it was by far my least stressful."

During the spring semester of 2013 I wanted to expand my effort to bring mindfulness into higher education. First I spoke with my Department Head, Michael Lavine, and with two Associate Deans in my college, all of whom strongly supported me in this endeavor. Their expressions of support inspired me to organize a group of graduate

students in my department with whom I met once a week to discuss issues of stress and to meditate together, cultivating the mindfulness that can heal that stress. I could see in their faces that our discussions were having a profound impact. These graduate students, having grown up, like me, in a culture of competition and overwork, welcomed the wisdom of mindfulness, which teaches that the pressures of academic life are unavoidable but that stress can end.

In their evaluations all the graduate students who participated indicated that they found the weekly meetings extremely helpful. One student elaborated on this when he wrote, "At these meetings, I have been able to practice and explore mindfulness meditation under the tutelage of a knowledgeable and experienced mentor, Professor Ellis. I find the meditation calming, and the short discussions the group engages in prior to meditating are always lively and thoughtful."

During the fall semester of 2013 I was joined by my friend and colleague, Jonathan Machta, a professor in the Department of Physics at UMass Amherst. Jon helped me organize weekly meditation sessions with graduate students both in my department and in his department. We are excited about the possibility of sharing the benefits of mindfulness with more people at the university. We look forward to helping them experience, as we have, how mindfulness can heal the suffering caused by the pressures of academic life and can transform that suffering into insight and wisdom.

Biography of Richard S. Ellis

Richard S. Ellis is a professor of mathematics and an adjunct professor of Judaic studies at the Uni-

versity of Massachusetts Amherst. Jewish spirituality and the wisdom about pain, suffering, and healing that chronic headaches have revealed are the subjects of his book, [Blinding Pain, Simple Truth: Changing Your Life Through Buddhist Meditation](#), which was published in 2011. To find out more about the book, visit the website at <http://RichardSEllis.com>. Richard has published numerous papers in mathematics and related areas and is the author of two math books. He has also published poetry and articles on the Torah, literature, art, and anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and he has taught courses on the Torah and literature at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the Jewish Community of Amherst, and the Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning. Information about Richard's work and interests is available at <http://www.math.umass.edu/~rsellis>.



Our mailing address is:

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

PO Box 817

Northampton, MA 01061

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/>