



Introduction to Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation

Syllabus
2009-2010

Michael Skelley, Ph.D.
DePaul University School for New Learning

General Information

Course# AI 107

Fall 2009 Quarter:

Loop Campus

Wednesday, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

September 16th, 23rd, 30th; October 14th, 21st, 2009.

(No class October 7th.)

This is a 5 session, 2 credit hour class. It may only be taken for 1 competence.

Teacher

Michael Skelley, Ph.D.; Associate Professor

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I have been practicing various forms of meditation for over forty years and I have many years of experience helping people integrate spirituality and meditation practices into their everyday life and work. I have a B.A. in Philosophy and Letters from St. Louis University, a M.A. in Biblical Languages and Literature from the Catholic University of America, a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Boston College and a M.A. in Organization Development from Loyola University-Chicago. I belong to the American Academy of Religion, the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies and the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. I have been a full-time faculty member at SNL since 1993 and I held DePaul University's Wicklander Chair of Business and Professional Ethics in 2001-2002. I received DePaul University's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2004.

Course Description

In this 5 session (2 credit hour) course, you will be introduced to theories and practices of mindfulness meditation from the Buddhist tradition. We will explore in particular how mindfulness meditation can enhance creativity, address the ethical challenges of contemporary life, and foster collaborative learning. Class sessions will involve extensive practice in mindfulness meditation, listening and dialogue. You will be expected to maintain and reflect on a daily mindfulness meditation practice for the duration of the course. While the approach to mindfulness meditation we will use in this class is rooted in Buddhist philosophies of the mind, but it does not require religious or spiritual interpretations.

“Mindfulness” is a way of being fully engaged in our lives with extraordinary levels of emotional and mental balance. It is the opposite of the ordinary state of our minds, in which our minds are buffeted by all sorts of mental afflictions and distortions. When we draw out the deeper, innate potential for mindfulness that we each have, we are freed from this mental/emotional disease and discover the grounds of genuine happiness and deep wisdom.

This course will draw primarily from Tibetan Buddhist meditation practices. These are very simple yet powerful ways of settling, investigating and training our minds so that we can achieve this profound balance and engagement. They develop our potential to have attentive and nonjudgmental relationships with ourselves and with everyone around us. They help us gain deep insights into our experiences and cultivate creative and transformative ways of responding to the challenges of living and working in the world. Mindfulness meditation practices cultivate fundamental ethical values such as loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. The skills that mindfulness meditation practices build are truly the deepest foundations for becoming lifelong adult learners who are able to engage in transformative learning both independently and in collaboration with others.

Competencies/ Outcomes

You may register for only one of the following competencies:

A-3-X: “Understands and can practice a model of mindfulness meditation.”

Everyone in the course will learn key aspects of the theory about, and practical principles of, mindfulness meditation. Students that are demonstrating this competence will explore these in greater depth with a particular emphasis on Tibetan Buddhist models.

A-4: “Can analyze a problem using two different ethical systems.”

Students that are demonstrating this competence will explore ethics as a form of engaged mindfulness. There will be a particular emphasis on practices for cultivating lovingkindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity (the “four immeasurables”) through meditation.

A-5: “Can define and analyze a creative process.”

Students that are demonstrating this competence will explore creativity as a form of generative mindfulness.

L-7: “Can learn collaboratively and examine the skills, knowledge, and values that contribute to such learning.”

Students that are demonstrating this competence will explore the theory and practice of collaborative learning as a form of shared mindfulness.

Learning Experience

Daily mindfulness meditation: The most important learning experience in this course will be your daily practice of mindfulness meditation (approximately 15 minutes). Instructions for this practice will be provided throughout the course.

Class sessions will involve a variety of different activities, including:

- Mindfulness meditation practices
- Large and small group dialogues
- Presentations from the teacher
- Reflective and creative writing
- Simple yoga and mindfulness of the body practices
- Audio/video presentations

There will be a course Blackboard site (www.oll.depaul.edu) that will be used to facilitate communication between the class sessions and to post supplementary materials and resources.

Required Reading

The required textbook for this class is:

Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, *The Joy of Living: Unlocking the Secret and Science of Happiness* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007). ISBN 978-0-307-34731-2.

Publisher’s description: Born in 1975 in Nubri, Nepal, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche is a rising star among the new generation of

Tibetan Buddhist masters trained outside of Tibet. Deeply versed in the practical and philosophical disciplines of the ancient tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, he is also conversant in the practical and theoretical issues and details of modern culture, having taught for nearly a decade around the world, meeting and speaking with a diverse array of renowned scientists and ordinary people yearning to rise above the suffering inherent in the human condition and achieve a state of lasting happiness. His honest, often humorous accounts of his own personal difficulties have endeared him to thousands of Buddhist and non-Buddhist students across the world.

Evidence of Competence

You will demonstrate your achievement of the competencies that you are taking in this course in two ways:

Class participation: Given the experiential nature of what and how we will be learning in this class, engaged, mindful participation in all of the classroom activities will be an essential part of your demonstration of your learning.

Reflection Papers: You will be expected to submit a short reflection paper for each of classes #2 - 5. The reflection papers should be about 750 words. The reflection papers should reflectively synthesize some of the most important insights that you have gained from your reading, meditation practice, classroom experience and journaling. I will provide more specific directions about these papers in class. I will assess each paper on the following five criteria:

- Your ability to think clearly about ideas, theories and practices associated with mindfulness meditation.
- Your understanding of, and engagement with, the reading material and classroom experience.
- Your ability to develop and reflect on your own insights.
- Your ability to connect your learning to your competencies.
- Your ability to communicate effectively in writing.

Assessment & Grading

Class attendance and participation is worth up to 8 points per class session. So you can earn up to a total of 40 points for attendance and participation in all class sessions.

The eight reflection papers are each worth up to a total of 20 points. So the four reflection papers combined are worth a total of up to 80 points. I will provide a complete assessment rubric for these papers at the first class.

At the end of the quarter, you will be given a letter grade for each competence you registered for. Your final grade(s) will be based on your combined reflection paper grades and on your class participation. Your final grade(s) will be determined as follows:

Total Points	Final Grade
104-120	A
100- 103	A-
92 - 99	B+
84 - 91	B
80 - 83	B-
72 - 79	C+
64 - 71	C
60 - 63	C-
48 - 59	D
0- 47	F

If you wish to take the course on a **Pass/Fail** basis, you must inform me in writing (by email) before the third class. Once you have chosen to do so, you cannot change back to a letter grade.

See the policy statement at the end of this syllabus about Incomplete grades.

Class Schedule & Reading Assignments

Class #1: Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Syllabus Review
- Introduction to Buddhist Meditation
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignment for class #2:

- ✓ *The Joy of Living*, chapters 9 and 10 (pages 129 - 141)

Class #2: Objectless Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Objectless Meditation: Resting the Mind in its Natural State
- Lovingkindness
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignment for class #3:

- ✓ *The Joy of Living*, chapters 11 and 12 (pages 142 - 171)

Class #3: Object Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Object Meditation: Working with Sensations, Thoughts and Feelings
- Compassion
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignment for class #4:

- ✓ *The Joy of Living*, chapters 13 and 14 (pages 172 - 205)

Class #4: Practical Principles of Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Practicalities of Meditation
- Empathetic Joy
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #5:

- ✓ *The Joy of Living*, chapters 15 and 16 (pages 209 - 232)

Class #5: The Fruit of Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Sustaining a Meditation Practice
- Equanimity
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Important Policies

Attendance and participation policy: Given the experiential nature of the learning process in this course, it is essential that you attend and participate fully in every class session. Your final grade(s) may be lowered due to unexcused absences or tardiness.

Incompletes: Incomplete (IN) grades are temporary grades indicating that the student has a satisfactory record in work completed, but for unusual or unforeseeable circumstances not encountered by other students in the class and acceptable to the instructor is prevented from completing the course requirements by the end of the term. The student must request this grade from the instructor by submitting the form, "[Incomplete Grade Contract Form](#)," available on the [SNL forms Website](#). At the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) following the term in which the incomplete grade was assigned, a remaining IN grade will automatically convert to an F grade. Ordinarily no incomplete grade may be completed after the grace period has expired. Instructors may not change IN grades after the end of the grace period without the SNL Exceptions Committee's permission.

Academic Integrity: Please familiarize yourself with DePaul's Academic Integrity policy, which is available online at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook/code16.html>. Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion and may include assigning a grade of F for the assignment and/or the final course grade. Actions taken by the instructor do not preclude the college or the university from taking further punitive action including dismissal from the university.

Disability Accommodations: Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Produc-

tive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Chronic Illness Initiative: The Chronic Illness Initiative (CII) provides access to higher education for students disabled by a chronic illness. Students who struggle with illnesses that unpredictably increase and decrease in severity such as chronic fatigue syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus or illnesses requiring frequent hospitalizations such as cancer or heart disease, may have found it difficult, if not impossible, to meet the requirements of a conventional college program. At the School for New Learning, staff and faculty are compassionate and committed to helping CII students achieve their educational goals. For more information, contact CII at CII@depaul.edu.

Adult & Suburban Student Services: The mission of the Office of Adult & Suburban Student Services is to provide an area where adult students can address their unique and special needs. This office serves as the liaison between adult students and academic and administrative units of the University, helping them to easily navigate DePaul's system. On-site staff members are available at the Adult Student Center, 11017 DePaul Center, Loop Campus; phone: 312-362-6216.

DePaul Code of Student Responsibility: The Code outlines the minimum acceptable level of conduct expected of every student of DePaul University, including respectful classroom behavior. DePaul condemns any form of harassment, discrimination, and/or assault behavior and any such conduct is subject to University disciplinary sanctions. See the complete code at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook/index.html>

Complaints Regarding Grading, Teaching or Advising: Students with complaints about grades, teaching, or advising should first try to resolve the problem with the faculty or staff member involved. If no satisfactory resolution can be reached, students may then discuss the matter with the Associate Dean of the School for New Learning, 200 Lewis Center, 312-362-8001.