



Mindfulness Meditation

Syllabus
2009-2010

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

General Information

Course# AI 217

This course will be offered twice in 2009-2010:

Fall 2009 Quarter:

O'Hare Campus

Mondays, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

September 14th through November 9th, 2009

Winter 2010 Quarter:

Loop Campus

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

January 4th through March 8th, 2010

4 credit hours (for two competencies) or 2 credit hours (for one competence)

Teacher

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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

"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.

Mindfulness meditation practices 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 profound 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.

The approaches to mindfulness meditation that we will practice in this course are rooted in Buddhist philosophies, but also draw from Christian spiritual traditions and from contemporary, non-religious approaches to meditation (e.g., the use of meditation for stress-reduction, health and wellbeing). The mindfulness meditation practices that we will focus on do not require any religious interpretations or commitments. If you do happen to have a particular religious commitment, these practices have great potential to complement that commitment. But mindfulness meditation can also be practiced as a very powerful path to becoming a creative, healthy, relaxed and effective adult. No prior experience with meditation is necessary for this course. You will be expected to maintain a daily mindfulness meditation practice for the duration of the course.

Competencies/ Outcomes

I will provide specific information about this course's competence outcomes in class. You will register to fulfill either one (for 2 credit hours) or two (for 4 credit hours) of the following competencies in this course:

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 the role of silence in cultivating mindfulness.

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. They will compare how Buddhist and Christian approaches to ethics can apply mindfulness to individual and societal mindlessness. 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. There will be a particular emphasis on the practice of "deep writing" as a way to develop mindfulness and creativity.

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. In particular, they will explore how "deep listening" is a mindfulness practice.

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

NOTE: We will use four different books in this course. You are only required to read the books assigned for the competencies you are demonstrating.

You are, of course, welcome to read the others, but I do not expect, require or recommend that. If you have extra time, use it to develop and investigate your meditation practice.

Students registered for the A-3-X competence will read:

Gunilla Norris, *Inviting Silence: Universal Principles of Meditation* (New York: Bluebridge, 2004) (ISBN: 0-9742405-0-8)

Students registered for the A-4 (ethics) competence will read:

Thich Naht Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995) (ISBN: 1-57322-568-1)

Students registered for the A-5 (creativity) competence will read:

Laraine Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath: Embodying Your Authentic Voice* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2007) (ISBN: 978-1-59030-473-0).

Students registered for the L-7 (collaborative learning) competence will read:

Kay Lindahl, *The Sacred Art of Listening: Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2002) (ISBN: 1-893361-44-6)

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 participa-

tion 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 - 9. The reflection papers should be about 500-750 words long for students doing one competence and about 750-1000 words long for students doing two competencies. 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 80 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 eight reflection papers combined are worth a total of up to 160 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 |
|--------------|-------------|
| 208-240 | A |
| 200-207 | A- |
| 184-199 | B+ |
| 168-183 | B |
| 160-167 | B- |

| | |
|---------|----|
| 144-159 | C+ |
| 128-143 | C |
| 120-127 | C- |
| 96-119 | D |
| 0-95 | 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: Introduction to Mindfulness

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Syllabus Review
- Mindfulness and Mindfulness Practices
- Five Qualities of Mindfulness
- Meditation Instruction and Practice
- Mindfulness Goals

Reading assignments for class #2: **REMINDER: for each week you are only required to read the books assigned for the competencies you are demonstrating in this course.**

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 1-15
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 1-20
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, Foreword, Introduction, and pages 1-12 (chapter 1)
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 3-16

Class #2: Establishing a Mindfulness Meditation Practice

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Mindlessness
- Overview of the Competencies
- Four Mindfulness Skills
- Centering: the Extended Practice
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #3:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 17-29
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 21-30
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 13-24
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 17-31

Class #3: Buddhism and Mindfulness Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Centering: the Brief Practice
- Buddhism and Mindfulness Meditation
- The Four Immeasurables
- Pema Chödrön and Jack Kornfield
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #4:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 32-36
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 31-52
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 25-33
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 32-46

Class #4: Christianity and Mindfulness Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Attending: the Extended Practice
- The Christian Contemplative Tradition
- Thomas Keating and Centering Prayer
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #5:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 37-46
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 61-83
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 34-59
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 47-61

Class #5: Non-religious Approaches to Mindfulness Meditation

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Jon Kabat-Zinn and Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #6:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 47-55
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 84-98
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 60-73
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 62-76

Class #6: Creativity as Generative Mindfulness

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Creativity as Generative Mindfulness
- The Creativity of Andy Goldsworthy
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #7:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 57-62
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 104-121
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 74-86
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 77-91

Class #7: Collaborative Learning as Shared Mindfulness

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Attending: the Brief Practice
- Collaborative Learning as Shared Mindfulness
- Deep Listening
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #8:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 69-78
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 122-145
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 87-114
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 92-106

Class #8: Ethics as Engaged Mindfulness

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Ethics as Engaged Mindfulness
- Buddhist and Christian Approaches to Ethics
- Thich Naht Hanh
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Reading assignments for class #9:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 79-92
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 146-159
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 115-130
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 107-121

Class #9: (Topic to be determined)

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

Potential Topics:

Mindfulness Meditation, Stress Reduction and Well-being
Mindfulness Meditation and Neuroscience

Reading assignments for class #10:

- ✓ For A-3-X: Norris, *Inviting Silence*, pages 93-100
- ✓ For A-4: Herring, *Writing Begins with the Breath*, pages 161-206
- ✓ For A-5: Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pages 158-198
- ✓ For L-7: Lindahl, *Sacred Art of Listening*, pages 122-135

Class #10: Sustaining Your Mindfulness Meditation Practice

- Mindful Movement Practice
- Sustaining Your Mindfulness Meditation Practice
- Meditation Instruction and Practice

*"Sit like a mountain,
breathe like a flower."*

-Thich Naht Hanh



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.