



Externship: Mindfulness Meditation Retreat at Starved Rock State Park

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

Spring, 2010

Course Syllabus

General Information

Course#: LL 302

Location: Starved Rock Lodge; Uttica, IL

Dates: Thursday, April 15th through Sunday, April 18th, 2010

Competencies: L-10 and L-11 (4 credit hours)

Pre-requisite: Research Seminar

Course Description

Mindfulness meditation is a gentle way of exercising your mind, heart and spirit. "Mindfulness" refers in general to the ways we express the immense potential that each of us has to be fully aware of, freely engage in, and creatively respond to our daily experiences. Mindfulness is the deepest and most important foundation for adult learning. But we can easily lose touch with this capacity and so we constantly need to re-discover and nurture our capacity to live mindfully. Mindfulness meditation practices are simple yet powerful ways of investigating and training our minds so that we can unleash and integrate our deepest human potential. These practices have many benefits, such as improving health and well-being, enhancing performance in work, school and leisure activities, healing relationships, and deepening our sense of spirituality.

All the class meetings for this course will take place during a retreat at the beautiful Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center in Uttica, IL (1.5 hours drive from Chicago). Starved Rock Lodge sits high atop a wooded bluff overlooking the Illinois River and is surrounded by the 2,630 acres of thick forests, 18 lush canyons and sparkling waterfalls of Starved Rock State Park, the largest state park in Illinois and one of the "Seven Wonders" of Illinois. This awesome place will provide an inspiring and restful setting for our retreat.

The retreat will begin at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 15th, 2009 and conclude at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 18th, 2009.

Your participation in the entire retreat is required to pass this course. There will be learning activities to prepare for, and to follow-up on, the retreat. But these pre- and post-retreat learning activities will all take place online. Therefore, this course is available to SNL students from all our campuses, including online students.

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.

Starved Rock State Park

Starved Rock State Park (www.starvedrockstatepark.org) is the largest state park in Illinois. It includes over 2600 acres, eighteen canyons and waterfalls, and almost sixteen miles of hiking trails. There are many different kinds of wildlife that can be viewed in the park, including white tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, raccoons, flying squirrels, red-tailed hawks, wild turkeys, and bald eagles. Starved Rock State Park is located along the Illinois River at the junction of the DesPlains and Kankakee rivers. Starved Rock received its name after a group of Illiniwek Indians starved to death atop of the rock during a battle in the 1760's. At one time there were four different Indian tribes in the area: the Illiniwek, Potawatomi, Fox, and Ottawa. In the late 1600's, the French settlers Father Marquette and Louis Joliet formed trading villages in the area and also built Fort St. Louis on top of Starved Rock. Starved Rock's multi-million dollar Visitor's Center opened in 2002 and contains historic displays, a concessions stand, aquarium, and movie theater.

Starved Rock Lodge (www.starvedrocklodge.com) was built in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a federal work program for men during the depression. There have been two major renovations of the lodge, one of which added a new wing of rooms and the swimming pool/sauna. The Great Hall in the lodge contains a very unique, massive, double-sided fireplace. In addition to the 72 guest rooms and 22 cabin rooms, the lodge also serves as a Convention Center with the ability to accommodate 250 people. The hotel features charming guest rooms, on-site dining, an indoor pool, therapeutic massage, a gift shop, a cafe, and "The Back Door Lounge".

Pre-Registration Required

Space is very limited for this course and you must ask to pre-register by sending me an email inquiry before **January 15th, 2010** (mskelley@depaul.edu). Include your day and evening phone numbers and your DePaul student ID number in this email.

Successful completion of Research Seminar is a pre-requisite for doing an Externship at SNL. First priority for this class goes to students who have already completed Research Seminar at the time that they apply to pre-register for the course. The second priority will go to students who are registered to take Research Seminar in the Winter quarter of 2010. The third priority will go to students who have not taken or registered for Research Seminar at the time that they apply to pre-register, but who have their Faculty Mentor's permission to take this course.

Fees and Payments

The retreat fee for the course is currently estimated to be **\$675**. The retreat fee includes three nights lodging (single occupancy) at Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center and some meals.

The \$675 retreat fee will be due in two installments. 1) A non-refundable deposit of \$200 will be required when your pre-registration is accepted. 2) The balance of your retreat fee (\$475) will be due on **Friday, March 12th, 2010**.

Neither the retreat fee nor the balance of the retreat fee can be paid through your DePaul Student account. Nor will credit card payments be accepted. **Both fees must be paid by check.** Make your checks payable to **DePaul University** and mail them to me (Michael Skelley, Ph.D. (School for New Learning; DePaul University; 14 E. Jackson, #1400; Chicago, IL 60604).

In addition to the retreat fee, you will have to pay for a total of 4 credit hours of tuition for the 2 competencies of the course (L-10 and L-11). You will have to pay your tuition through your student account as you would for any other course.

Competencies/ Outcomes

This course fulfills the Externship (L10, 11) competencies. The competence statements are:

L-10: Can reflect on the learning process and methods used in an experiential project.

L-11: Understands and can apply principles for the practice of mindfulness meditation.

An “Externship” at SNL is intended to give you an opportunity to focus on the particular dynamic of learning from direct experience in new situations. The emphasis in Externship is on thoughtful reflection about how your learning occurs. The central issues of the Externship are to push yourself to define and to expand your learning style, to learn about something with which you don’t have much experience, and to familiarize yourself with your ability to successfully adapt to new learning. During this particular Externship course, we will explore the powerful, transformative ways in which mindfulness meditation achieves these elements of learning from experience.

Specifically, in this Externship you will:

- Identify and explain a personal learning goal related to mindfulness meditation
- Identify and select mindfulness meditation practices to support the goal
- Employ mindfulness meditation practices to achieve the desired learning goal
- Explain the interrelationship between one’s own profile as a learner and new learning opportunities offered by mindfulness meditation
- Explain the nature and outcomes of this particular learning experience

Pre-retreat Activities

Required Pre-retreat Activities: I will provide you will some materials to read before the retreat. I will also ask you to participate in some online discussion on the course Blackboard website. I will send you information at the beginning of the Spring, 2010 quarter about these assignments. (There is no required textbook for this class.)

The Retreat

The retreat will involve a variety of different activities, including:

- Various meditation practices
- Large and small group dialogues
- Short interactive presentations from the teacher

- Journal writing
- Simple yoga and mindfulness of the body practices
- Audio/video presentations

There will also be plenty of free time during the retreat for you to relax, explore the beauty of Starved Rock State Park and enjoy the company of other SNL students.

Meditation Practices: 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.

Tentative Retreat Schedule:

Thursday

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|-------------|--|
| 10:00-12:00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to the retreat • Mindful movement practice • Group introductions |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch on your own |
| 1:00-4:00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three dimensions of mindfulness: body, mind and behavior • The three qualities of a mindful body • Seated meditation instruction and practice • Two types of meditation practices: focusing and insight ("<i>shamatha</i>" and "<i>vipassana</i>") • Mindfulness of breathing • Prone meditation instruction and practice • Discussion |
| 4:00-7:00 | Free time |
| 6:00-7:00 | Group dinner |
| 7:00-9:00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film: "Dhamma Brothers: East Meets West in the Deep South" |

Friday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast on your own
- 9:00-12:00
- Mindful movement practice
 - Meditation practice
 - Mindlessness and the three mental poisons
 - Developing introspection
 - Discussion
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch on your own
- 1:00-4:00
- Meditation practice
 - Walking meditation instruction and practice
 - The four immeasurable qualities of mindful behavior
 - Cultivating loving-kindness
 - Discussion
- 4:00-6:00 Free time
- 6:00-7:00 Group dinner
- 7:00-9:00
- Film: "Baraka: A World Beyond Words"

Saturday

- 8:00-9:00 Breakfast on your own
- 9:00-12:00
- Mindful movement practice
 - Meditation practice
 - Cultivating compassion
 - Five qualities of mindful awareness
 - Discussion
- 12:00-1:00 Group lunch
- 1:00-4:00
- Meditation practice
 - Four meditation skills
 - Discussion
- 4:00-6:00 Free time
- 6:00-7:00 Group dinner
- 7:00-9:00
- Film: "How to Cook Your Life: Finding Nirvana in the Kitchen" (Zen Chef Edward Espe Brown)

Sunday

- 8:00-9:00 Group breakfast
- 9:00-12:00
- Mindful movement practice
 - Meditation practice
 - Discussion
- 12:00-1:00 Group lunch
- 1:00-4:00
- Meditation practice
 - Discussion
 - Course evaluations
- 4:00 Departure

Retreat Supplies: Dress is casual for the whole retreat. We will do some gentle yoga or “mindful movement” during the retreat, so dress comfortably for that. You should bring a yoga mat or large beach towel with you. You should consider bringing your own meditation cushions with you. (I will provide you with more information about optional meditation supplies before the retreat.) Bring paper and pen for note taking and journal writing.

Non-students on the Retreat: Do not invite anyone else to come along with you on the retreat. So, do not invite your spouse/partner, children, parents, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc., etc. You should be prepared to give you full attention on the weekend to the retreat and to the people that you are doing the retreat with.

Retreat Attendance: You will be expected to participate in all the retreat activities and remain on the grounds of Starved Rock State Park throughout the retreat in order to pass the course.

Post-retreat Activity

Required Post-retreat Activities: After the retreat, you are required to write a reflection paper of approximately 1500 words about what you have learned about mindfulness and mindfulness meditation from this retreat. Your paper should provide the following:

- ✓ A summary of your experience (if any) with meditation before this retreat and the goals you had for the retreat.
- ✓ Descriptions of one or more meditation practices that you learned how to do on the retreat. Explain what ways you may have found those practices helpful and/or unhelpful.

- ✓ Explanations of one or more concepts that you learned about on the retreat. Explain what ways you may have found those concepts helpful and/or unhelpful.
- ✓ Reflections on how you might be able (or not able) to apply the practices and ideas you learned on this retreat in your life.

When you have finished your reflection paper, please email it to me (mskelley@depaul.edu). I think it would also be nice if you posted it in the Discussion Board section of our Blackboard so others from the class can read it too. But I am not requiring that.

These papers are **due by Friday, June 4th** at the latest. But I suggest that you do this sooner than that, while the retreat experience is still fresh in your mind.

Optional Additional Post-Retreat Learning Activities: If you are doing the course for a letter grade (see below), I will expect you to do **one** of the following activities to be eligible for a "B" grade and **both** of the following activities to be eligible for an "A" grade.

- **Optional Book Report:** With my help and approval you will select a book or other reading materials (about 75 pages) relevant to this course and write a 1000 word review of it/them. In your paper you should:
 - ✓ Briefly explain who the author of the book is and what his/her background is.
 - ✓ Briefly summarize the key practices and/or ideas you learned about from this book.
 - ✓ Compare and/or contrast what you learned from this book with what you learned from the retreat.
 - ✓ Briefly give you assessment of the usefulness of the book you read.

Please call or email me to get approval of the book you want to use for this assignment. This assignment is due by Friday, June 4th at the latest. Please email me your paper (mskelley@depaul.edu). I suggest that you also post it on the Discussion Board of our Blackboard for the benefit of the others in the class.

- **Optional Meditation Group Experience:** With my help and approval you will select and participate in a medita-

tion training/group experience at some place convenient to where you live and write a 1000 word reflection about your experience. You might visit a meditation/yoga center, a religious or spiritual organization or a health/wellness/recreation facility for this meditation experience. Please discuss this with me as soon as possible after the retreat so that we can agree on what you will do. In your paper you should:

- ✓ Briefly explain what the organization is that provided the experience you had.
- ✓ Briefly summarize the key practices and/or ideas you learned about from this experience.
- ✓ Compare and/or contrast what you learned from this experience with what you learned from the retreat.
- ✓ Briefly give you assessment of the usefulness of this experience you had.

Please call or email me to get approval of the place/ program you want to use for this assignment. Your report on this assignment is due by Friday, June 4th at the latest. Please email me your paper (mskelley@depaul.edu). I suggest that you also post it on the Discussion Board of our Blackboard for the benefit of the others in the class.

Grading & Assessment

Grade Options: The default grade option for this class will be "Pass/Fail". If you would like to be graded with a letter, you will need to do one or both of the optional assignments (above).

C- to C+ (or "Pass") range: Successful and effective completion of the pre-retreat and post-retreat online writing assignments and engaged participation in all of the retreat activities.

B- to B+ range: Successful and effective completion of the pre-retreat and post-retreat online writing assignments, engaged participation in all of the retreat activities, and of either the book review or the additional post-retreat meditation group experience.

A- to A range: Successful and effective completion of the pre-retreat and post-retreat online writing assignments, engaged participation in all of the retreat activities, and of both the book review and the additional post-retreat meditation group experience.

Important Policies

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 acknowledgment 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 acknowledgment.

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 Productive 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.

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.