

Course Content and Syllabus

Contemplative Practice, Health Promotion, and Disability: An Experiential Seminar

Fall Semester 2001

Psychology 4390

T-Th 9:25-10:40 Classroom

Professor: Daniel Holland, Ph.D., MPH

Office: Stabler Hall 601

569-3171

Course Description: This will probably be a very different course from most of those you have taken. The emphasis of this course will involve learning from experience. The experiences made available here will be contemplative practice (or meditation) and somatic education. Both of these types of experience will become more clear to you as the course unfolds. What is important to know going into this course is that both types of experience, contemplative practice and somatic education, often increase a person's awareness of him or herself. This increased awareness may contribute to an enhanced ability to cope with stress, disability, illness, and the trials of every day life.

This course will involve a particular appreciation for, and focus upon, disability and chronic illness as a life challenge. A student need not have a disability or illness in order to enroll in this course, though students with a disability or chronic illness have been particularly encouraged to enroll. The emphasis of the course will involve how each of us can enhance our well being through inward reflection and self-awareness, regardless of our abilities, relative weaknesses and strengths, beliefs, faith, or health status.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a form of contemplative practice that emphasizes awareness of our inner experience. This means lending careful attention to our thoughts, feelings, desires, dislikes, and physical sensations as they arise. MBSR involves a number of forms of contemplative practice, including sitting meditation, walking meditation, an exercise called a "body scan", and very gentle movement practices. We will be doing all of these.

Hanna Somatic Education

Hanna Somatic Education is a gentle program for the mind and body that emphasizes regaining sensory-motor awareness. This form of mind/body health was developed by Thomas Hanna, who built upon the work of Moshe Feldenkrais, the Alexander Technique, and humanistic philosophical principles. Hanna Somatic Education involves a series of exercises and somatic awareness practices that will constitute a significant portion of the course.

Mindful Yoga

The yoga we will be doing will involve very gentle postures done with an emphasis on awareness and breathing. Individuals are encouraged to do the postures only according to their own comfort and ability. The emphasis here is on moment-to-moment awareness as we move and breathe, not getting into the "right" posture. Therefore, one person who cannot comfortably raise her arms over her head, or another person who uses a wheelchair for mobility, participates in these postures the same way as everyone else does: making whatever accommodations are necessary in order to simply gain greater awareness of our breathing and movement in the moment.

Discussion

Each class meeting will involve discussion regarding our experiences with the contemplative practices we are engaging in. Discussion will also cover each student's progress with his or her journal (see course requirements below).

Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance

Attendance is the pre-eminent requirement for this experiential course. Therefore, 50% of your grade is contingent upon your attendance. However, it is understood that missing class at times is unavoidable. Therefore, the following equation will be followed:

<u>If You Miss:</u>	<u>Your Attendance Score Will Be:</u>	<u>Highest Grade Possible:</u>
1 or 2 classes	50%	A
3 or 4 classes	30%	B
5 or 6 classes	20%	C
7 or 8 classes	10%	D
over 8 classes	0%	F

Journal

You are required to keep a journal throughout this course, recording your experiences with the contemplative practices we engage in and any insights or changes you notice. You will turn these journals in for review at various points during the semester. The form of your journal and the method you use to record your experiences is completely up to you. Your journal may be written, or it may be sketches or drawings, or it may be tape recorded, etc. What is important is that you come up with a method of documenting your experience in this course throughout the entire semester. These journals will be reviewed periodically throughout the semester.

The journal constitutes 30% of your grade.

Discussion

Much of the contemplative practices we engage in will emphasize silence. However, times for discussion will allow all course participants to learn from one another regarding how the contemplative practices are being experienced. Participating in the class discussion, meaning both sharing your own experiences and thoughts and listening to others', is very important.

Class Discussion constitutes 20% of your grade.

Readings

The texts for the course are as follows:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). Wherever you go there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life. New York: Hyperion Publishers

Gunaratana, H. (1991). Mindfulness in plain English. Boston: Wisdom Publications

Hanna, T. (1988). Somatics. Reading, Massachusetts: Perseus Books.

Additional readings may be assigned, but this will not be a reading-intensive course. Many class meetings will involve the course leader reading aloud from a variety of sources, including poetry, writings from the mindfulness and Zen meditation traditions, and other sources.

Disability Support Services

It is the policy of UALR to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to Federal law, State law, and the University's commitment to equal educational opportunities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example in seating placement or in arrangement for examinations, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. The chair of the department offering this course is also available to assist with accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services, which is located in the Donaghey Student Center, Room 103, phone 569-3143.

Course Outline

Week #1: August 28th & 30th

Review of the nature and content of the course and requirements
Introduction to the experience of contemplative practice
Discuss option to participate in research project
Mindfulness exercise

Week #2: September 4th & 6th

Introduction to sitting meditation
Introduction to Somatic Education
Discussion
[Data collection from those participating in research project]

Week #3: September 11th & 13th

Introduction to Guided Body Scan
Introduction to Walking Meditation
Introduction to Hatha Yoga
Discussion

Week #4: September 18th & 20th

Sitting Meditation
Somatic Education
Coping with Stress
Assignment: Pleasant and Unpleasant Events Calendar
Discussion of Contemplative Practice Journals

Week #5: September 25th & 27th

Walking Meditation
Somatic Education
Hatha Yoga
Body Scan
Review of Pleasant and Unpleasant Events Calendar
Discussion

Week #6: October 2nd & 4th

Video: Hanna Somatic Education
Video: "Doing Time, Doing Vipassana"
Discussion

Week #7: October 9th (No class on October 11th)

Somatic Education
Walking meditation
Hatha Yoga
Assignment: Communication Exercises
Discussion

Week #8: October 18th (No class on October 16th)

Guided Body Scan
Sitting Meditation
Somatic Education
Review of Communication Assignment
Discussion

Week #9: October 23rd and 25th

Hatha Yoga
Walking Meditation
Sitting Meditation
Discussion of Contemplative Practice Journals

Week #10: October 30th & November 1st

Somatic Education
Sitting Meditation
Walking Meditation
Discussion of Research Regarding Contemplative Practice and Health Promotion

Week #11: November 6th & 8th

Guided Body Scan
Sitting Meditation
Somatic Education
Discussion

Week #12: November 13th & 15th

Hatha Yoga
Sitting Meditation
Somatic Education
Discussion

Week #13: November 20th (November 22nd is Thanksgiving)

Walking Meditation
Somatic Education
Sitting Meditation
Discussion of contemplative practice journals

Week #14: November 27th & 29th

Sitting Meditation
Somatic Education
Walking Meditation
Discussion
[Data Collection from those participating in research project]

Week #15: December 4th & 6th

Sitting Meditation
Discussion and reflection over the semester

Week #16: December 11th

Discussion
Turn in Contemplative Practice Journals