

## Course Content and Syllabus

### **Mindfulness Meditation and Health Promotion**

T-Th 9:25-10:40 Classroom: Wesley Foundation

Professor: Daniel Holland, Ph.D., MPH

Office: Stabler Hall 601

dcholland@ualr.edu

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.

#### Course Content:

##### ***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.

##### ***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 20% 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.

### ***Final Paper***

A final paper of 8 to 10 pages is required. This paper should cover a topic on meditation or contemplative practices that is relevant to the course. Relevant topics might include:

- A review of methods for measuring mindfulness
- A review of various methods for enhancing sensory-motor awareness (Hanna Somatics, Feldenkrais, etc.)
- An analysis of a short story, poem, or book that addresses mindfulness or contemplative practices
- Etc.

### Readings

The texts for the course are as follows:

Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living*

Thomas Hanna's *The Body of Life*

Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein's *Insight Meditation*

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:**

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:**

Introduction to sitting meditation

Introduction to Somatic Education

Discussion

#### **Week #3:**

Introduction to Guided Body Scan

Introduction to Walking Meditation

Discussion

#### **Week #4:**

Sitting Meditation

Somatic Education

Coping with Stress

Assignment: Pleasant and Unpleasant Events Calendar

Discussion of Contemplative Practice Journals

#### **Week #5:**

Walking Meditation

Somatic Education

Hatha Yoga

Body Scan

Review of Pleasant and Unpleasant Events Calendar

Discussion

**Week #6:**

Video: Hanna Somatic Education

Video: "Doing Time, Doing Vipassana"

Discussion

**Week #7:**

Somatic Education

Walking meditation

Assignment: Communication Exercises

Discussion

**Week #8:**

Guided Body Scan

Sitting Meditation

Somatic Education

Discussion

**Week #9:**

Walking Meditation

Sitting Meditation

Discussion of Contemplative Practice Journals

**Week #10:**

Somatic Education

Sitting Meditation

Walking Meditation

Discussion of Research Regarding Contemplative Practice and Health Promotion

**Week #11:**

Guided Body Scan

Sitting Meditation

Somatic Education

Discussion

**Week #12:**

Sitting Meditation

Somatic Education

Discussion

**Week #13:**

Walking Meditation

Somatic Education

Sitting Meditation

Discussion of contemplative practice journals

**Week #14:**

Sitting Meditation

Somatic Education

Walking Meditation

Discussion

**Week #15:**

Sitting Meditation

Discussion and reflection over the semester