AI 217
Mindfulness Meditation

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

Summer 2018 Syllabus

General Information

Quarter: Summer, 2018
Course Number: AI 217
Location: Loop Campus
Time: 5:45 – 9:00 pm
Dates: June 11th through August 13th (No class on July 16th or August 13th. Alternate online assignments those weeks.)
Credit Hours: May be taken for 2 or 4 credit hours

Students from any DePaul undergraduate program are welcome!
To take the course for 2 credit hours just register for one section of the course.
To register for 4 credit hours register twice (i.e., for two separate “sections”).
Contact snlregistration@depaul.edu or 312-362-8001 with any registration questions.

Course Description

Mindfulness meditation practices are powerful ways of regulating and investigating our awareness of our experience. They are rooted in Buddhist traditions and are being widely re-interpreted by neuroscientists, psychologists, philosophers and others. These practices have many benefits, such as improving health and wellbeing, deepening relationships, and enhancing engagement in learning, work, leisure and civic activities. 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.

Instructor

Michael Skelley, Ph.D.; Associate Professor, School for New Learning

Office: 14 E. Jackson, Suite 1400; Chicago, IL 60604
Office Phone: 312-362-6735 (direct line)
Michael Skelley has been practicing various forms of meditation for over fifty years and has many years of experience helping people integrate spirituality and meditation practices into their everyday life and work. He was a Jesuit (a Catholic religious order) for over twenty years, during which time he lived and taught contemplative practice. He has 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. He has belonged 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. He has been a full-time faculty member at DePaul’s School for New Learning (SNL) since 1993 and held DePaul’s Wicklander Chair of Business and Professional Ethics in 2001-2002. Michael received DePaul’s Excellence in Teaching Award in 2004.

Objectives (Competencies)

This course can be taken for either one (2 credit hours) or two (4 credit hours) of the following objectives (competencies).

Contact snlregistration@depaul.edu or 312-362-8001 with any registration questions.

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 specifically demonstrating this competence will explore the theory and practice of mindfulness meditation in greater depth.

A-4: “Can analyze a problem using two different ethical systems.”
The “problem” we are concerned with is the fundamental human challenge of how we can live so that we might reduce suffering and increase happiness for ourselves and others. The ethical systems we are comparing are, on the one hand, the ethical systems connected to Buddhist traditions of meditation and, on the other hand, the value systems that are actually practiced in contemporary American culture. In contemporary American society, ethics is generally assumed to be about narrow questions of morality (i.e., right and wrong action) or legality (i.e., how to comply with the law). Buddhist approaches to ethics are more concerned with wider issues such as cultivating compassion and lovingkindness.

A-5: “Can define and analyze a creative process.”
Students that are demonstrating this competence will explore creativity as one of the fundamental expressions of a mindful life. Meditation is a journey of deepening self-awareness which can unleash the creative, intuitive aspects of our consciousness. Specifically, we will look at the interrelationships between mindfulness and creative writing. We will explore 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.”

Collaborative learning enhances positive, mutual, effective interactions with other people while also increasing our individual capacities to understand the world and act effectively and responsibly in it. In other words, collaborative learning at its best is shared mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation practice can develop capacities to listen deeply, suspend judgment and speak authentically.

Learning Experiences

**Daily mindfulness meditation:** The most important learning experience in this course will be your daily practice of mindfulness meditation (approximately 15 minutes a day, six times a week). Instructions for this practice will be provided throughout the course. You will learn about many different approaches and practices to find which are most effective for you.

**Class sessions** will involve a variety of different activities, including:
- Gentle yoga/mindful movement practices
- Mindfulness meditation practices
- Large and small group discussions
- Presentations from the teacher
- Reflective and creative writing
- Video presentations

There will be a Desire2Learn website ([https://d2l.depaul.edu](https://d2l.depaul.edu)) that will be used to facilitate communication between the class sessions, to submit your reflection papers, monitor your grades and to access supplementary materials and resources.

Required Reading

The following two books are required of all students in this course (whether taking the course for 2 or 4 credit hours.) The books are available through the DePaul bookstore ([http://depaul.bncollege.com](http://depaul.bncollege.com)). Feel free to get e-book versions of the texts.


Required Work

**Class/online participation:** Given the experiential nature of what and how we will be learning in this class, engaged, mindful participation in all of the classroom and required online activities will be an essential part of demonstrating your learning. Make-up assignments will not be accepted for missed class/online participation. **NOTE: Use of digital/computer devices during class time is prohibited.** Due to the subject matter and the experiential nature of this course, use of cellphones, computer and other digital devices is not allowed during class sessions. These may only be used before class and during the designated break time during class. The only exception here is for students who have a relevant accommodation that they have arranged with the Center for Students with Disabilities. Students are free to use e-book versions of the text-books that have been assigned for this course, since these will not be needed during class sessions. **Students should have a pen and a journal or (paper) notebook with which to take notes during every class session.**

**Reflection Papers:** You will be expected to submit a short reflection paper before each of weeks #2 – 9. So, you will write 8 reflection papers. Here are the directions for the papers:

- The reflection papers should be about 500-750 words long for students doing 2 credit hours and about 750-1000 words long for students doing 4 credit hours.

- In each paper, you should: 1) report something specific and concrete that you tried in your meditation practice this week; 2) report what happened when you did that, including what may have happened sometime afterwards; and 3) discuss these experiences in relationship to the readings, videos, class experiences and weekly notes.

- Since these papers are very short, do not waste space in your paper with quotations out of the assigned books. You can and should refer to ideas from the books but discuss those ideas in your own words. Additional research beyond the materials we are already using in this course is neither necessary nor particularly recommended for these papers. There is more than enough material in the course in your practice to reflect on.

- Write out the complete competence statement(s) that you are registered for at the beginning of every reflection paper. Be sure to put your name and the date at the beginning of your paper. The papers should be double-spaced and in 12-point font. They should be Microsoft Word files (.doc or .docx).

- Your papers are due before class begins each week. Submit them through the Submissions section of the D2L website. Points may be deducted for assignments that are submitted late, if those assignments are even accepted. Contact the instructor in a timely manner if an extension of a deadline is needed.

- The assessment criteria for these papers will be provided at the time of the first class session.
Assessment & Grading

At the end of the quarter, you will be given a letter grade for each competence you are registered for. Your final grade(s) in this course will be based on the number of points you earn from your class participation and reflection papers. I do not accept any extra credit work or rewritten papers. You can track your grades on the D2L website throughout the course.

Class attendance and participation are 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. It is impossible to duplicate what happens in class. If you miss any class sessions, you will miss out on some key learning experiences. Make-up assignments will not be accepted for missed class/online participation.

The eight reflection papers are each worth up to 20 points. So the eight reflection papers combined are worth a total of up to 160 points. A complete assessment rubric for these papers will be provided at the first class. Points may be deducted for assignments that are submitted late, if those assignments are even accepted. Contact the instructor in a timely manner if an extension of a deadline is needed.

Your final grade(s) will be determined as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>208-240</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>200-207</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>184-199</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>168-183</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>160-167</td>
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<td>144-159</td>
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<td>128-143</td>
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<td>120-127</td>
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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. Be aware of the policies of your degree program concerning how many Pass/Fail grades you can have.

See the policy statement at the end of this syllabus about Incomplete grades.
Weekly Schedule & Reading Assignments

Week #1: June 11th, 2018

Reading assignment for week #2: Chapter 1 “The Fundamental Ambiguity of Being Human” and Chapter 2 “Life Without the Story Line” in Pema Chodron, *Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change*

Week #2: June 18th, 2018

Reading assignment for week #3: Chapter 1 “Chasing Your Tail” and Chapter 4 “Introducing the Eight-Week Mindfulness Program” in Mark Williams and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World.* NOTE: we are skipping over chapters 2 and 3 in the Williams & Penman book.

Week #3: June 25th, 2018

Reading assignment for week #4: Chapter 3 “Laying the Foundation,” Chapter 4 “Be Fully Present, Feel Your Heart, and Leap,” and Chapter 5 “Staying in the Middle” in Pema Chodron, *Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change.*

Week #4: July 2nd, 2018


Week #5: July 9th, 2018


Week #6: July 16th, 2018: NO CLASS SESSION THIS WEEK. ALTERNATE ONLINE ASSIGNMENT.

Reading assignment for week #7: Chapter 6: Mindfulness Week Two: Keeping the Body in Mind” in Mark Williams and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World.*
Week #7: July 23rd, 2018

**Reading assignment for week #8:** The Third Commitment: Committing to Embrace the World Just As It is. “Chapter 9 “Nowhere to Hide” and Chapter 10 “Awakening in the Charnel Ground” in Pema Chodron, *Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change.*

Week #8: July 30th, 2018

**Reading assignment for week #9:** Chapter 7: Mindfulness Week Three: The Mouse in the Maze” in Mark Williams and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World.*

Week #9: August 6th, 2018

**Reading assignment for week #10:** Chapter 8: Mindfulness Week Four: Moving Beyond the Rumor Mill” in Mark Williams and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World.*

Week #10: August 13th, 2018 NO CLASS SESSION THIS WEEK. ALTERNATE ONLINE ASSIGNMENT.

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### Important Policies & Resources

**Use of digital/computer devices during class time is prohibited:** Due to the subject matter and the experiential nature of this course, use of cellphones, computer and other digital devices is not allowed during class sessions. These may only be used before class and during the designated break time during class. The only exception here is for students who have a relevant accommodation that they have arranged with the Center for Students with Disabilities. Students are free to use e-book versions of the textbooks that have been assigned for this course, since these will not be needed during class sessions.

**Writing Help:** For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, avoiding plagiarism and much more, see the [Writing Guide for SNL Students](https://snl.depaul.edu/writing). For on-campus and online tutoring, see the DePaul University Writing Centers at: [dePaul.edu/~writing](http://dePaul.edu/~writing).

**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 at: academicintegrity.depaul.edu/

**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: studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook

**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.