LL 302 / SNC 198
Mindfulness Meditation Retreat at Starved Rock State Park

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

Spring 2018 Syllabus

General Information

Quarter: Spring 2018
Course #: LL 302 (SNL Externship) or SNC 198 (Liberal Studies Junior Year Experiential Learning)
Credit Hours: 4
Retreat Fee: $650 (charged to student account at registration)
Location: Online and Starved Rock State Park; Utica, IL
Retreat Dates: Thursday, April 26th through Sunday, April 29th, 2018

School for New Learning Prerequisites: L2, L-4, L-5 and instructor’s permission
School for New Learning Competencies: L-10 and L-11 (Externship)

Liberal Studies Program Prerequisites: Junior status and instructor’s permission

The course will be offered again in:
- Fall, 2018 (Starved Rock retreat on September 27th – 30th, 2018)

Course Description

This online-offsite hybrid course includes a four-day mindfulness meditation retreat at Starved Rock State Park in Utica, IL as well as online learning activities throughout the quarter. 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 interested in a contemporary, secular approach. These practices have many benefits, such as improving health and wellbeing, deepening relationships, and enhancing engagement in learning, work, leisure and civic activities.

All the class meetings for this course will take place during a retreat at the beautiful Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center in Utica, IL (1.5 hours drive from Chicago). Starved Rock Lodge sits high atop a wooded bluff overlooking the Illinois River in the magnificent Starved Rock State Park. Every student will have a private room in the Lodge for the retreat.
The retreat will begin promptly at **10:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 26th** and conclude at **4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 29th, 2018**. You will be responsible for your own transportation to and from Starved Rock. We will attempt to coordinate ride sharing before the retreat. Your participation in the entire retreat is required to pass this course.

**Please note: this is not a four-day course.** The course work will extend throughout the entire quarter. There will be required learning activities before and after the retreat. This includes the expectation that you will maintain a daily meditation practice of (e.g., 15 minutes daily) throughout the quarter. Participation in the entire retreat is a requirement of the course.

The pre- and post-retreat learning activities will all be mediated online (via D2L). Therefore, this course is available to students from all DePaul campuses, including online students.

**Instructor**

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

**Office:** 14 E. Jackson, Suite 1400  
**Office Phone:** 312-362-6735 (direct line)  
**Cell Phone:** 773-629-5023 (use only during business hours)  
**E-mail:** mskelley@depaul.edu

Michael Skelley has been practicing various forms of meditation for over forty-five 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 Roman 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.

**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, numerous 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.
Starved Rock Lodge (www.starvedrocklodge.com) was built in the 1930’s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. 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. The hotel features charming guest rooms, on-site dining, an indoor pool, a gift shop, a cafe, and "The Back Door Lounge". Every student will have a private room in the Lodge for the retreat.

Pre-Registration/Instructor Approval

Space is limited for this course and you are advised to pre-register for it in advance. Instructor approval is required. You cannot register for this class yourself on Campus Connection. Request permission to take the course by sending Dr. Michael Skelley an email at mskelley@depaul.edu. Include your cellphone number and your DePaul student ID number in this email. Briefly explain why you want to take this course. Pre-registration begins two quarters in advance of the course.

Fees and Tuition

The retreat fee for the course is $650. The retreat fee includes three nights lodging (single occupancy) at Starved Rock Lodge and all your lunches and dinners during the retreat. This fee will be billed to your DePaul student account when you are registered for the course. In addition to the retreat fee, you will have to pay for a total of 4 credit hours of tuition for the course.

School for New Learning Externship Competencies

SNL students in this course (LL 302) will develop the following competencies:

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.

Specifically, in this Externship you will:

- Identify and explain personal learning goals related to mindfulness meditation
- Identify and select mindfulness meditation practices to support those goals
- Employ mindfulness meditation practices to achieve the desired learning goals
- Explain the interrelationship between your profile as a learner and new learning opportunities offered by mindfulness meditation
- Explain the nature and outcomes of this particular learning experience
Liberal Studies Junior Year Experiential Learning Outcomes

DePaul students fulfilling the Liberal Studies Program Junior Year Experiential Learning requirement in this course (SNC 198) will learn to:

- Apply particular concepts about mindfulness meditation from readings, lectures, discussions, etc. to an analysis of your experience of practicing mindfulness both at the retreat and in your daily life.
- Use your experiences of mindfulness practices to reflect on the impact of your experience on your understanding of course content.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between mindfulness practice and ethics.
- Use your understanding of mindfulness practice to respond in more appropriate and meaningful ways to school, work, leisure and civic experiences.

Required Textbook

Mark Coleman’s *Awake in the Wild: Mindfulness in Nature as a Path of Self-Discovery* (New World Library, 2006). The paperback version is recommended, but the e-book is OK. It is easily available from Amazon.com. You should also be able to get it from the DePaul bookstore at the Loop campus and online at http://depaul-loop.bncollege.com/

Other texts and materials may be assigned during the course.

Grading & Assessment

**School for New Learning students (LL 302):**

The default grade for SNL (LL 302) students in this course is a pass/fail. Successful and effective completion all the pre-retreat and post-retreat online writing assignments and engaged participation in the entire retreat is required for passing the course. The two reflection papers described below are not required for SNL students doing the course pass/fail.

Any SNL students who would rather do the course for a letter grade need to inform Michael in writing no later than the 5th week of the quarter. SNL students doing the course for a letter grade will need to do the two reflection papers described below in addition to successful and effective completion all the pre-retreat and post-retreat online writing assignments and engaged participation in the entire retreat. They will be graded on the letter grade basis below.

**Liberal Studies Program students (SNC 198):**
Liberal Studies (SNC 198) students must do the course for a letter grade. In addition to successful and effective completion all the pre-retreat and post-retreat online writing assignments and engaged participation in the entire retreat, Liberal Studies students are also required to do the two reflection papers described below.

**Grades in this course will be determined as follows:**

- Active participation in the entire retreat is worth **40 points**.
- D2L discussion postings are worth up to a total of **40 points**.
- The two reflection papers are worth up to a combined total of **40 points**.

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<th>Total Points</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>101-104</td>
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**Pre-retreat Activities**

All students in the course will participate in online discussions starting at the beginning of the quarter to prepare for the retreat experience. You will be required to post a 400 word reflection to each of the weekly D2L discussions in which you describe and assess the meditation experiences you are having, relate these to the required reading and the instructor’s input, and respond to postings made by other students. Specific directions for these assignments will be given in the D2L discussions.

**The Retreat**

The retreat will involve a variety of activities, including:

- Mindfulness meditation practices, indoor and outdoor
- Large and small group dialogues
- Short interactive presentations from the teacher
- Journal writing
- Gentle mindfulness of the body practices
• Audio/video presentations

**Transportation to and from Starved Rock State Park is not included in the retreat fee.** You will be responsible for arranging your own transportation. Starting about a month before the retreat, there will be an online discussion forum available for making arrangements to share rides. On past retreats, all the students who needed rides to/from Starved Rock were able to coordinate those with other students.

**If you would like to stay at Starved Rock Lodge the night before the retreat** there are some rooms available at your own expense but with our group rate. You will pay this directly to Starved Rock Lodge. Contact Michael Skelley about how to reserve one of these rooms.

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 students.

**You are expected to come to the retreat prepared to fully and exclusively participate in this experience.** The retreat will not be a time to work on homework for other classes or school projects. You should let your family, friends and co-workers know that you will out of contact during the retreat (except for real emergencies).

**You will be expected to abstain from using your cellphone and other digital devices** (except for e-readers for the course textbook) throughout the retreat. If you use your cellphone to tell time, bring a wristwatch along.

**We will spend as much time as we can outside in the park, no matter what the weather conditions may be.** You will not be expected, however, to engage in any outdoor activities that may be beyond your fitness level. We simply want to explore how the natural setting of the park can help develop us develop greater mindfulness.

**Tentative Retreat Schedule (subject to change):**

**Thursday**
- 10:00 – 12:00  Group orientation to the retreat
- 12:00 – 1:30  Group lunch and free time
- 1:30 – 4:30  Group discussions and meditation practices
- 4:30 – 6:00  Free time
- 6:00 – 7:00  Group dinner
- 7:00 – 9:00  Film and discussion

**Friday**
- 8:30 – 10:00  Group discussions and meditation practices
- 10:00 – 10:30  Break
- 10:30 – 12:00  Group discussions and meditation practices
- 12:00 – 1:30  Group lunch and free time
- 1:30 – 4:30  Group discussions and meditation practices
- 4:30 – 6:00  Free time
- 6:00 – 7:00  Group dinner
- 7:00 – 9:00  Film and discussion
Saturday
8:30 – 10:00  Group discussions and meditation practices
10:00 – 10:30  Break
10:30 – 12:00  Group discussions and meditation practices
12:00 – 1:30  Group lunch and free time
1:30 – 6:00  (To be determined)
6:00 – 7:00  Group dinner
7:00 – 9:00  Film and discussion

Sunday
9:00 – 12:00  Group discussions and meditation practices
12:00 – 1:00  Group lunch
1:00 – 4:00  Group discussions and meditation practices
4:00  Departure

Retreat Supplies:  Dress is casual for the whole retreat. We will spend as much time as we can outside in the park, no matter what the weather conditions may be. So bring shoes/boots, clothes and outerwear that will allow you to be outdoors. Nearly all of the trails in the park are unpaved, so be sure to have good, weatherproof footwear. Bring a wristwatch, since you be expected to avoid your cellphone during the retreat.

You will have the option of doing some of the indoor meditation practices lying down on the floor. So you should bring a yoga mat, sleeping bag cushion or large beach towel with you. If you would like to do some of the seated meditation practices while seated on a cushion, you can bring your own mediation cushions with you. (Michael will provide more information about optional meditation supplies before the retreat.) Bring the textbook and a notebook 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 Activities

Required Post-retreat Activities:  After the retreat, you will be expected to continue to engage regularly in a weekly series of readings and online discussions with the class. These discussions are a required part of the course and will be designed to help you learn how to apply the practice of mindfulness meditation to your daily life. Additional learning materials will be provided during this period. Active participation in these discussions is a requirement for passing the course.
Reflection Papers (for a letter grade only)

These papers are only required of students doing the course for a letter grade. See “Grading and Assessment” above to see if this applies to you.

Reflection Paper #1 (Book Report): With the instructor’s 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:

- Explain who the author of the book is and what his/her background is.
- 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.
- Assess the usefulness/helpfulness of the book you read.

Reflection Paper #2 (Additional Meditation Experience Report): With the instructor’s help and approval you will select and participate in a meditation training/group experience and write a 1000 word reflection paper 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. Other options are also possible with the instructor’s permission. In your paper you should:

- Explain what the organization is that provided the experience you had.
- 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.
- Assess the usefulness/helpfulness of this experience you had.

Important DePaul 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 “Incomplete Grade Contract Form” available on the SNL 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://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/. Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as ones 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:** Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul’s Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations that can provide you with enrollment information, or inquire via email at csd@depaul.edu. **Loop Campus** - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002  **Lincoln Park Campus** - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677. Students are also invited to contact me privately to discuss your challenges and how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use during this course. This is best done early in the term and our conversation will remain confidential.

**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.

**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.