

# UNIVERSITY OF DENVER—COLORADO WOMEN'S COLLEGE

## AHUM 1716: Mindfulness

Fall Quarter, 2014

Tuesdays 6pm to 9:50pm

September 8th – November 11th

### INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: Bryce Mathern

Voice Mail: 206.992.1465; Email: brycemathern41@gmail.com

*I will respond to email or voicemail messages within 48 hours.*

### PREREQUISITES: WRIT 1122 and WRIT 1133

*Students are responsible for completing course prerequisites before registering for a class. Students may be removed from a course for which they have not fulfilled the prerequisite course work.*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Our exploration of mindfulness begins by exploring definitions and the science of mindfulness. We will take a critical look at how mindfulness is used in the West and some of the issues in transferring a historically Buddhist tradition into a secular practice. We look at how mindfulness is used in contemporary settings and how it can be used in one's life for greater well-being. We will move on to the specifics of mindfulness in three traditions: Buddhism (Vietnamese Zen), Hinduism (Pantañjali Sutras), and Christianity (Centering Prayer). As we explore these traditions sequentially, we will continue to revisit the definitions and controversies in attempts to work toward greater understanding and, ultimately, a final position paper resulting from a blend of readings, discussions, reflections, site visits, and firsthand mindfulness practices.

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- 1) Gain introductory-level knowledge of three mindfulness traditions, one each from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity
- 2) Develop a critical understanding of concerns surrounding adaptations to and applications of the Buddhist and Hindu mindfulness traditions for secular purposes in Europe and the United States
- 3) Gain beginner's level experience with mindfulness practices of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism, yoga sutras from Pantañjali, and Centering Prayer
- 4) Articulate and argue in support of a position regarding the controversies by relying on readings, discussions, reflections, site visits, and firsthand mindfulness practices.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Colorado Women's College fully endorses the University of Denver's Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research—is in violation of the code and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course.

As student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures ([www.du.edu/honorcode](http://www.du.edu/honorcode)).

**REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS:**

1. Bourgeault, Cynthia, *Centering prayer and inner awakening*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 2004.
2. Chapple, Christopher Key, *Yoga and the luminous: Pantañjali's spiritual path to freedom*. SUNY, 2008.
3. Dreyfus, George, "Is mindfulness present-centred and non-judgmental? A discussion of the cognitive dimensions of mindfulness." In *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12 (1), 41 – 54.
4. Nhat Hanh, Thich. *Peace is every step*. Bantam Books, 1992.
5. Thanissaro, Phra Nicholas, "Religious and secular meditation." In *Challenging Religious Issues*, 2, 23 – 27.

**RECOMMENDED COURSE TEXTS:**

1. Germer, Christopher. "Mindfulness: What is it? What does it matter?" In *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*. The Guilford Press; Second Edition.
2. Neale, Miles: "Frozen yoga and mcmindfulness: Miles Neale on the mainstreaming of contemplative religious practices." Shambhala Sun, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
3. <http://mcmindfulness.com/>

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Blackboard posts: 30 pts (30% of total)
2. Blog/journal: 20 pts (20% of total)
3. 3 Reflection papers: 10 pts each (30% of total)
4. Final position paper: 20 pts (20% of total)

Percentage	Grade
95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0-59	F

## **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance is mandatory in all class sessions. Active participation in class and online discussions is also required and will be a determiner in a student's final grade. An absence, for any reason, will result in forfeiting points for in-class student presentations. These may not be made up in another class session. If an emergency arises, it is the student's responsibility to contact her instructor.

**A grade of incomplete will be granted only under special circumstances as determined by the instructor.** <http://www.du.edu/registrar/records/incompletepolicy.html>

## **TECHNOLOGY USE IN THE CLASSROOM**

In order to create and maintain an optimal learning environment in the classroom, students should use technology appropriately as directed by the instructor for the purposes of the course. Work done on laptops, cell phones, and other devices that is not relevant to the class can hinder the process of communication and shared discussion of ideas that require full engagement by all participants.

## **ADA ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students who require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act must contact the instructor to discuss their needs. Failure to notify the instructor immediately may hinder the college's ability to accommodate accordingly. Students with learning disabilities should also contact the University Disability Services Program at <http://www.du.edu/studentlife/disability/>. University Disability Services houses the Learning Effectiveness Program (LEP) and the Disability Services Program (DSP).

## **OBSERVATION OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

Students wishing to observe a religious holiday not celebrated on the academic calendar may do so provided advanced written notice is given the instructor during the first two weeks of the quarter. With advanced written notice, the absence will be considered an excused absence. For additional information, contact DU's Center for Religious Services (<http://www.du.edu/crs/>).

## **INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE STATEMENT**

CWC is committed to fostering a diverse learning community that is inclusive and respectful. We encourage and appreciate expressions of different ideas, opinions, and beliefs, so that conversations and interactions that could be potentially divisive instead turn into opportunities for intellectual and personal growth. Respecting what others say, their right to say it, and listening to each other are the ways that we all can further thoughtful and enlightening dialogue.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Class Date</b>	<b>Class Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>
Week of Sept. 9	Introduction to Mindfulness	Bourgeault, p. 19 – 21

		Thanissaro Dreyfus
Week of Sept. 16	Mindfulness in Buddhism Site Visit	Nhat Hanh
Week of Sept. 23	Mindfulness in Buddhism	Nhat Hanh
Week of Sept. 30	Mindfulness in Buddhism Mindfulness in Hinduism (yoga)	Finish Nhat Hanh Begin Chapple
Week of Oct. 7	Mindfulness in Hinduism (yoga)	Chapple
Week of Oct. 14	Mindfulness in Hinduism (yoga) Site Visit	Chapple
Week of Oct. 21	Mindfulness in Hinduism Mindfulness in Christianity	Finish Chapple Begin Bourgeault
Week of Oct. 28	Mindfulness in Christianity Site Visit	Bourgeault
Week of Nov 4	Mindfulness in Christianity	Bourgeault
Week of Nov 11	Final Position Paper	

### **ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS AND DUE DATES**

#### 1. Blackboard posts

- I will post discussion questions on Blackboard two times every week, on Tuesdays and Fridays. The questions will focus on the assigned readings and will aim at advancing your understanding of the readings as well as your critical engagement with the controversies surrounding mindfulness practices in Europe and the United States.
- Your weekly engagement in this course requires that you respond to these questions with well-constructed answers that incorporate (and cite) the readings in meaningful ways. (Think of this portion of your grade as replacing in-class discussions.)
- Additional options for responses include: 1) incorporating previous readings, 2) referencing material from outside required readings (news stories, etc), and 3) critical engagement with your personal experiences of mindfulness both in and outside the context of this course. Incorporating any of these options increases your grade.

- **Due dates:** no assigned dates, although you ought to plan to spend approximately two hours each week on Blackboard. (These hours count toward total contact time for the term.)
2. Blog/journal
    - One of the requirements for this course is personal experience with the three mindfulness practices about which we will read. The reason for this requirement is so you are able to engage the criticisms at multiple levels: theoretical and practical.
    - In order to facilitate your understanding of the practical side and, more specifically, your firsthand experiences, you need to blog or journal about your experiences with the mindfulness practices.
    - Your blog/journal
    - Because the Blackboard posts address the academic and theoretical readings, you do not need to engage the readings critically (or at all) in this assignment.
  3. 3 Reflection papers
  4. Final position paper