

**Hon 373: Contemplation and Imagination:
A Writing and Contemplative Practice Workshop
Spring 2013**

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Office Hours: M 2:30 – 3:30, W 11:30 – 12:30, F 2:00 – 3:00, and by appointment

Required Texts

Poetry

The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry, J. D. McClatchy

The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, & Issa (Essential Poets), Robert Hass

Creative Non-Fiction

The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Writing Flash Nonfiction: Advice and Essential Exercises from Respected Writers, Editors, and Teachers, Dinty Moore

Dakota: A Spiritual Geography, Kathleen Norris

Mindfulness

Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment--and Your Life, Jon Kabat-Zinn

Intro

In *Mindfulness for Beginners*, Jon Kabat Zinn writes,

We could say that all of the greatest works of art and culture and science, the contents of museums and libraries throughout the world, and what unfolds in concert halls and between the covers of great works of literature and poetry, stem from the human mind that knows itself to one degree or another or that is at least interested in exploring the interface between knowing and non-knowing.

In this class, we'll have a chance to get to know our own minds, hearts, and bodies and to explore the interface between knowing and non-knowing by the means of writing, reading, conversing about our work and the work of other writers, and practicing mindfulness meditation. It is my hope that this exploration will lead to some powerfully written works of poetry and prose as well as to some fresh insights into the nature of our own experiences.

Discipline

“The word *discipline*,” Kabat-Zinn notes, “comes from *disciple*, someone who is in a position to learn.” In this class, I would like you to develop a *regular* discipline of reading, writing, and meditating. While adding this discipline to your already busy lives might seem, at first, to be a burden, I hope you will find it, in the end, to be liberating.

What do I mean by “regular”? Well, ideally, on a **daily** basis. I understand that it may not be possible for you to keep up with all three activities every day throughout the semester. So, let’s call daily practice a goal. Try to establish a routine of doing these things, if possible at a fixed time, as many days of the week as you can. I think you will find that if you establish the routine, you may increase the likelihood that you will write and read with greater insight and that you will experience some benefits that can come from daily meditation, perhaps as soon as within a few weeks. You need not spend a lot of time on this on a daily basis—even five minutes of daily meditation, and maybe ten or fifteen minutes of daily writing, and a few minutes of daily reading. The guided meditations on the cd that comes with *Mindfulness for Beginners* run anywhere from about 11 to 18 minutes. Especially at the beginning, you might find these guided meditations to be helpful. Maybe you can try a guided meditation one or two times a week and then do a shorter meditation on your own the other days. Let’s say you try to devote an average of about 30 minutes total to **daily** reading, writing, and meditating for this class. Of course, before assignments are due you will probably need to spend more time writing and/or reading.

Writing

Notebook

I’d like you to keep some kind of **notebook**—it can be on your computer, in a physical notebook, or a combination of the two—in which you will record your observations of and reflections on your experiences with the contemplative practices and with writing and reading. It can also include drawings, quotes from things you read, overheard dialogue, lists—almost anything. Think of it as a basket that you will fill over the course of the semester with things that you intuit belong in it. At the end of the semester, I’ll ask you to review what you’ve written in your notebook and to compose a short essay in which you identify and reflect on a few insights into your experiences of writing, reading, and meditating this semester.

Poetry and Non-Fiction

I would like you to produce one piece of fully realized work, by which I mean, in part, a piece of writing that leads both you and a reader to some meaningful, fresh insight into whatever experience you are exploring in that piece of writing. What do I mean by one piece of work? Well, it could be one non-fiction essay or one poem. While the goal, as I said, is to produce just one piece (poetry or non-fiction) as fully realized as possible, we will start many pieces of writing, especially during the first half of the semester. To set a pace that should help us generate

enough raw material with which to work, I will ask you to turn in drafts of two different pieces of writing each week during the first half of the semester. This should give you enough raw material (10 drafts) from which to choose a couple of pieces that have potential for further development. We'll work on the next drafts of three pieces during the first few weeks after spring break. From these developed drafts, you'll choose one piece to continue developing and, finally, finish by the end of the semester.

We will have opportunities to share work-in-progress with each other—with partners, in small groups, and with the entire class—for feedback. You will also receive feedback from me on much but not all of your written work.

Reading

The reading we do for the course should give us opportunities to look carefully at another writer's craft and vision. It will also give us an opportunity to study a writer's process of inquiring into and exploring a subject as he or she moves from sight and ignorance toward insight and understanding.

Individual Conferences

We will meet for individual conferences at least once and possibly twice during the semester.

Special Events

Visiting Writers

We are very fortunate to be having two writers, Jay Michaelson and N. C. Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti, visit our class this semester. Their writing and teaching can offer us guidance and, I hope, inspiration for our own work.

Creating a Mindful Campus: Investigating Boundaries, March 22 – 24, 2013

This semester we'll be hosting a retreat/conference called "Creating a Mindful Campus: Investigating Boundaries". The retreat/conference will provide participants—UNCA students, faculty and staff as well as folks from other institutions (local, throughout the state, and perhaps elsewhere in the Southeast)—an extended opportunity for contemplative practice and for exchanging ideas about the value and use of contemplative practice and contemplative pedagogy.

I'd like as many of you as possible to attend at least a portion of the retreat/conference. I am also hopeful that each of you can find some meaningful way to contribute to the event—whether by helping promote it or by staffing a registration table or by documenting one or two sessions or by other means. In class, I will give you an overview of the event, and together we can brainstorm some meaningful ways for you to be involved with it.

Assessment

Since this is a class of exploration and inquiry, I would like to explore something else with you this semester—the possibility of self-assessment for determining 30% of your grade for the course.

Self Assessment

Just before spring break, and then again just before the end of classes, you will be asked to turn in a written self-assessment of your work. In this self-assessment, you will have the opportunity to reflect on each aspect of your work—writing, reading, participation in contemplative practices, contribution to class discussions, involvement in the “Creating a Mindful Campus” retreat, and whatever else comes up. In your self-assessment, you will also assign yourself a grade worth 30% of your final grade.

My Assessment

I will read and respond to your self-assessment, offering additional observations as they seem appropriate. If I don't agree with the grade you've assigned yourself, I will assign you a different grade and I will provide my rationale for giving you that grade. If we are not in agreement on this portion of your grade, we can discuss the grade in a private conference.

Credit for Assignments Submitted

I will give you full credit for each required assignment you complete and submit on the due date. In total, this credit will count for 70% of your final grade.

Grading Weights and Scale

Weekly Writing Assignments: 5 @ 20	=	100
Draft #2 of each of three pieces @ 50	=	150
Finished piece of writing	=	100
Final reflective essay	=	100
Creating a Mindful Campus Conference Participation	=	100
Self Assessment essays @ 25	=	50
Self Assessment (grade)	=	300
Class Participation	=	100
Total	=	1,000

Grading Scale

95 and above = A

92 – 94.5 = A-

87.5 – 91.5 = B+

85 – 87 = B

82 – 84.5 = B-

77.5 – 81.5 = C+

75 – 77 = C

72 – 74.5 = C-

67.5 – 71.5 = D+

65 – 67 = D

62 – 64.5 = D-

Calendar

1/14

1/21 MLK Day: Class Will Meet

Mindfulness for Beginners, pp. 1 – 25, plus 137 - 142

The Essential Haiku: Basho, pp. 3 – 30

Flash Non-Fiction: Brenda Miller, “Friendship, Intuition, and Trust: On the Importance of Detail”, pp. 28 – 32

Short, informal piece of imaginative/reflective writing due

1/27 God & Sex: Jay Michaelson and open mic reading, 7:30 p.m., Laurel Forum

1/28 Jay Michaelson visits class; class begins at 5 p.m. and will conclude at 6:30

Handout of poems by Michaelson

Weekly writing #1 due

2/4 *Mindfulness for Beginners*, pp. 26 - 46

The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry: Rita Dove, pp. 557 – 560; Edward Hirsch, pp. 545- 548

Weekly writing #2 due

2/11 *Mindfulness for Beginners*, pp.49 - 75

Flash Nonfiction: Lia Purpua, pp. 1 – 7; Barie Jean Borrich, pp. 8 – 14; Carol Guess, pp. 15 - 21

Weekly writing #3 due

2/18 *Mindfulness for Beginners*, pp. 79 - 100

The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry: W. S. Merwin, pp. 256 – 264;
James Wright, pp. 286 - 294

Weekly writing #4 due

2/25 *Mindfulness for Beginners*, pp.101 - 120

Flash Nonfiction: Brett Lott, pp. 22 – 27; Rigoberto Gonzalez, pp. 33 – 36; Anne Panning, pp. 37 - 42

Weekly writing #5 due

3/4 *Mindfulness for Beginners*, pp.122 - 133

The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry: Elizabeth Bishop, pp. 22 – 38

Flash Nonfiction: Jennifer Sinor, pp. 57 – 63; Lee Martin, pp. 64 – 69; Peggy Shumaker, pp. 82 - 85

Mid-term self-assessment due

3/11 Spring Break

3/18 *Dakota*, pp. 1 - 44

The Essential Haiku: Basho, pp. 31 – 70

Draft #2 of each of two pieces

3/22 – 3/24

Creating a Mindful Campus: Investigating Boundaries

3/25 Joseph Bathanti visits class, class meets from 5 – 6:30 followed by Bathanti's reading

Handout of Bathanti poems

Draft #2 of one piece due

4/1 *Dakota*, pp. 45 - 89

- 4/8 *Dakota*, pp. 90 – 144
Draft #3 of one piece due
- 4/15 *Dakota*, pp. 144 - end
- 4/22 Final revision of one piece due
- 4/29 Last Class
End of semester self-assessment due
- 5/6 Final meeting