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Special Topic:
Mindfulness Foundations and
Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication
CMST 400-003
CRN 31382
Spring 2019

Wednesdays 9:05-11:00 and Saturday, February 23 8:30 – 4:30 (REQUIRED)

Instructor: Dr. Rentsch
Office: 271 Communications Building
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00 and by appointment
Email: jrentsch@utk.edu
Please use the course number (CMST 400) as the subject of
email you send to me.

Course Overview

Welcome to Mindfulness and Communication! Mindfulness is non-judging, accepting attention of the present moment that is available to everyone. It is developed through mindfulness meditation practices. This course is a highly experiential communication course in which you will serve as your own personal laboratory to engage in secular mindfulness practices and to investigate your personal experience with them. You will be able to explore the relevance of the practices in your everyday life and in your communication. You will have the opportunity to develop capabilities related to inquiry, attention, reflection, awareness; and acceptance of cognitive, emotional, and physical experiences. You will become aware of important attitudes associated with mindfulness practice. You will also have the opportunity to examine your personal experience applying mindfulness to your intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. Science has shown mindfulness to be related to academic success; reduction in rumination, stress, and emotional reactivity; and improvements in cognitive functioning, health, and well-being. You will have the opportunity to relate mindfulness to your own interests.

Course Goals

The primary goals for this course are to provide an opportunity for students to (a) obtain a fundamental knowledge of mindfulness practices, (b) develop a mindfulness-based meditation practice, (c) understand the relevance of mindfulness in intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, and (d) understand the relevance of mindfulness in their personal and professional lives by meeting the following objectives:

- Understand and experience mindful attention by establishing a consistent personal practice.
- Understand the relevance of mindfulness in intrapersonal and interpersonal communication by completing course assignments including readings, in-class discussions and exercises, and homework.
- Understand the relevance of mindfulness in their personal and professional communication and lives by completing course assignments including readings, in-class discussions and exercises, and homework.

Course Requirements

This is a laboratory course in which you are your own laboratory where you will investigate your own internal experiences. For this reason, this course meets for an extended time each week and requires a practicum to be held on a Saturday. As you review this syllabus you will see that the course is highly experiential and interactive. This is primarily an experiential course.

Course grades will be based on attendance, performance in class activities, participation in class discussions, practice outside of class and practice reports, experiential papers, a short presentation, and quizzes.

1. Attendance

Attendance is a mindful practice and therefore it is an important component of success in this class. Because this is an experiential course, one must be present to participate. Attendance will be taken during each class. Missing one class will result in the loss of 15 points. If a second class is missed, an additional 50 points will be lost, and if a third class is missed, an additional 100 points will be lost. It is your responsibility to contact the instructor regarding missing a class or the practicum. There will be no make-up classes. Attendance at the one-day practicum is required. The practicum will take place one Saturday from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm as noted on the syllabus. *You should make arrangements now to be able to attend the practicum.* Class and the practicum will start on time. If you arrive late or leave early, it will count as an absence.

2. Class Participation

Participation is a mindful practice. You will be able to earn participation points each week. Participation points encourage you to work with the course material in a meaningful way and to share the experiences (results) from your laboratory.

The class will consist of practice, discussion, and lecture. You are expected to participate in the practices, and during the discussions you should share your experiences with the practices. In addition, you are expected to read or view assigned material in preparation for class and to contribute actively and productively to class discussions of these and the lecture materials. Each

student is responsible for the quality of the discussions and is expected to contribute productively and mindfully to class discussions.

Points will be earned based on the following criteria:

- Coming to class prepared (i.e., having completed all homework assignments and being prepared to discuss them).
- Listening to the speaker mindfully.
- Speaking mindfully (e.g., with integrity, honesty, and staying on topic).
- Having your cell phone(s) and computer(s) turned off and out of reach upon entering the classroom.
- Engaging in class activities.

A note about mindful movement

During class, we will be engaging in mindfulness practices including mindful movements. You are required to participate in all activities only to the extent you feel capable. The mindful movements will be gentle. You are responsible for your body. Do not do anything that you believe will cause discomfort. You may request alternative variations of movements. You may also substitute a movement you feel more comfortable doing as long as it does not distract other class members. Or, you may choose to sit out particular movements and visualize doing them. In any case, observe your own body and do what is best for it.

3. Mindfulness Practice and Practice (Lab) Reports

Cultivating mindfulness requires practice and preparing reports is a mindful practice.

Homework will include engaging in mindfulness practices and preparing reports designed to support the practices. These reports are essentially laboratory reports in which you describe your experience. They are laboratory reports because you will describe your experience as a scientist would report laboratory results. These reports should be written with the attitudes of objectivity, nonjudgment, and acceptance of what is. You should use mindfulness language and address all items. You will meet this assignment by submitting a hard copy of your report at the beginning of each class for the Weeks 2 - 11. You may wish to bring two copies of the report. One to submit to the instructor and one to refer to during class discussion. Late reports will not be accepted unless an absence is excused. The instructor will hold the reports in confidence unless a report suggests a risk to yourself or others.

4. Experiential Papers

Reflection is a mindful practice. Experiential papers give you the opportunity to reflect on the relevance of mindfulness in your everyday life. Each paper will be a specified length, double-spaced using APA format. Hard copies of your papers are due by the end of class on the dates noted in the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted unless an absence is excused. Two papers are required and more detailed instructions for each are forthcoming.

- Reflection on the experience of your growing mindfulness with respect to your intrapersonal communication including the practicum experience. (2-4 pages)

- Reflection on your experience bringing mindfulness into your interpersonal communications. (4-7 pages)

5. Presentation

Formally presenting your experience is a mindful practice. You will have the opportunity to share with the class highlights from your experience and your intentions for incorporating mindfulness into your life. More details regarding this assignment are forthcoming.

6. Quizzes

Preparing for and taking quizzes is a mindful practice. Quizzes provide you an opportunity to demonstrate that you have reviewed, organized, and integrated the course material. Four short quizzes will be offered throughout the semester. The quizzes will cover important material presented by the instructor in class and assigned readings or videos. There will be no make-up quizzes. Your best scores on three quizzes will count toward your grade.

Grading Procedures

Your experiences of mindfulness are your experiences. They are to be observed and experienced, but not judged. Therefore, your class participation, participation reports, and reflection papers will be graded based on what your performance in class, your adherence to the assignment, and your ability to reflect on and report your experience rather than on the content of your experiences of mindfulness.

Grading

| Requirement | Point Distribution | Total Points |
|---|---|--------------|
| 1a. Attendance: Class | Potential to lose points 15, 50, 100 | |
| 1b. Attendance: Practicum | 65 | 65 |
| 2. Class Participation | 10 points x 15 weeks | 150 |
| 3. Practice Reports | 10 points x 10 weeks | 100 |
| 4a. Experiential Paper 1 | 45 | 45 |
| 4b. Experiential Paper 2 | 80 | 80 |
| 5. Presentation | 20 | 20 |
| 6. Quizzes | 20 points x 3 best | 60 |
| TOTAL | | 520 |
| Grading Scale | | |
| A = 92% and above A- = 90-91% B+ = 88-89% B = 82-87% B- = 80-81% C+ = 78-79% | C = 72-77% C- = 70-71% D+ = 68-69% D = 62-67% D- = 60-61% F= Less than 60% | |

*The instructor reserves the right to alter course and grading requirements if necessary.

Communication

I will correspond with you using email and Canvas. Please check both frequently.

This class will most likely be different any other class you have taken. You may find that it presents unique challenges that you may wish to discuss with me and I am happy to meet with you. I wish for this class to be a meaningful experience for you. If you wish or need to contact me, please do so using email. I am happy to schedule a time to meet with your or to talk with you via phone. Of course, you are welcome to stop by my office during my office hours.

I sent an introductory email to you. If you have not received it, you should let me know using my email address listed above (jrentsch@utk.edu).

Class Policies

1. Turn off cell phones and computers upon entering the classroom.
2. **Under no circumstances** will taking pictures or recordings (audio or video) of class be permitted.
3. Students commit to practicing mindfulness in class and to respecting each other in class and outside of class.

Required Course Materials

1. Readings will be distributed as required.
2. A mat is required to support activities conducted in class.
3. Wear loose fitting, comfortable, and modest clothing to class to aid mindful movement.

Optional Materials

1. A small blanket.
2. Socks, sweater.

Required Statements & Information

Counseling Center

Student Counseling Center
1800 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996-4250
Phone: 865-974-2196
Fax: 865-974-7039
Email: counselingcenter@utk.edu
<http://counselingcenter.utk.edu/>

Mobile Crisis: 865-539-2409 (available 24 hours)
Suicide Hotline: 1-800-784-2433 or 1-800-SUICIDE
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Academic Integrity

“An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”

Students are responsible for maintaining academic integrity. Violations of The University of Tennessee's policy on academic honesty will not be tolerated. Offenders will be subject to the disciplinary actions prescribed by the university's policy.

Disability Services

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library at 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services. "Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Student Disability Services in Dunford Hall, at 865-974-6087, or by video relay at, 865-622-6566, to coordinate reasonable academic accommodations.

Diversity Statement

CCI recognizes and values diversity. Exposing students to diverse people, ideas, and cultures increases opportunities for intellectual inquiry, encourages critical thinking, and enhances communication and information competence. When all viewpoints are heard, thoughtfully considered, and respectfully responded to, everyone benefits. Diversity and fairness unite us with the wider professional and global community.

University Civility Statement

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other's well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

Schedule of Topics & Assignments

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Date</u> | Schedule of Topics & Assignments |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| 1 | January 9 | Introduction |
| | | Intrapersonal Communication |
| 2 | January 16 | Attitudes Communicate: Mindfulness Attitudes |
| 3 | January 23 | Body Communicates: Body as a Point of Inquiry |
| 4 | January 30 | Limits of Communication: Labels, Constructs, Hinderances |
| 5 | February 6 | Mind-States Communicate: Mind-States as Points of Inquiry <i>Quiz 1</i> |
| 6 | February 13 | Stress Communicates: Understanding Stress Reactions as Messages |
| 7 | February 20 | Mindfulness in Stressful Communications |
| | February 23 | Practicum Saturday, February 23 8:30-4:30 |
| 8 | February 27 | Compassion and Empathy in Communication <i>Quiz 2</i> |
| 9 | March 6 | Relating to What is Here <i>Paper Due (Last day to submit)</i> |
| | | Interpersonal Communication |
| 10 | March 13 | Mindful Listening |
| 11 | March 20 | SPRING BREAK |
| 12 | March 27 | Mindful Speech <i>Quiz 3</i> |
| 13 | April 3 | Moving Toward and Communicating Difficult Emotions |
| 14 | April 10 | Difficult Conversations |

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|
| | April 17 | Mindfulness in Personal and Professional Life: Media Use <i>Presentations</i> <i>Quiz 4</i> |
| 15 | April 24 | Mindfulness in Personal and Professional Life: Self Care Closing <i>Presentations</i> <i>Paper Accepted</i> <i>2 points extra credit to turn in paper now</i> |
| | Exam week April 30- May 7 | <i>Paper Due</i> |

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to alter the assignments and grading.

Dr. Joan R. Rentsch, Professor

CMST 400: Mindfulness Foundations and Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication.

Spring 2019.

Portions of this syllabus was adapted with permission from Kerri Potter's work at the University of Iowa.