

CMN 635: Contemplative Media Studies

Prof. Kevin Healey

MW 9:40 am - 11:00 am

Zoom meeting ID: 976 6599 7710 [password on Canvas]

Course description

This course builds bridges between Media Studies and Contemplative Studies. The latter is a relatively new field that integrates empirical social-science research (neuroscience, medicine, psychology, psychiatry) with insights derived from first-person contemplative practices (mindfulness training, meditation, yoga, arts and music therapy). Recently, Contemplative Studies has expanded to include the humanities, meaning that scholars ask how contemplative practices can inform our study of history, literature, and the arts. At its best, Contemplative Studies aims to discover innovative ways to enhance human flourishing, including both individual well-being and the public good. Such research seeks not just stress reduction for individual practitioners of mindfulness meditation, but social justice for the body politic as a whole. In other words, a more mindful society, a more mindful politics.

As media scholars, we bring to this conversation a unique emphasis on the benefits—and pitfalls—of communication systems and emerging digital technologies (social media, virtual reality, artificial intelligence). To what extent do our media technologies enhance our capacity for mindful attention? How can we design, use, and regulate them more effectively if both individual and collective well-being is our goal? From a critical perspective, we also ask how commercial media systems might distort our understanding of contemplative traditions and practices, appropriating such practices for profit while stripping them of their potentially transformative social benefits. Throughout the semester we will learn about the different dimensions of contemplative research, and students will have the opportunity to learn about and sample various types of contemplative practice. Through academic essays and arts-based assignments, we will strive to become more mindful digital citizens—creative yet critical, hopeful yet judicious with regard to the current and future course of technical development.

Note: This is a writing intensive course.

Required materials

Odell, Jenny. (2019). *How To Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House.

Other assigned readings will be available on Canvas (under Files) or online, as noted in the course schedule.

Quizzes

I will post a set of quiz questions every week. The purpose of the quiz questions is to ensure that you're staying on top of your assignments and engaging the materials closely. The questions will focus primarily on the assigned readings (as noted in the course schedule below), though I may also ask questions about other materials that we use, including for example videos or news segments. All materials covered on the quizzes will be available for you on Canvas, either as a PDF or a link.

Weekly Blog Posts

You will write weekly blog posts in response to the assigned readings. Each of you will serve as a Contributor for our course WordPress site, contemplativemediastudies.wordpress.com. Think of this WordPress site as a magazine for which I am an Editor-in-Chief and you are Contributors. The content you write should be readable by an educated audience, and worthy of sharing on social media. As the semester progresses students in the class will gravitate toward certain topics and approaches under the general heading of Contemplative Media Studies. At the end of the semester each of you will each write a feature story, i.e. a longer written piece that represents original research on a topic of your interest (see Final Project below).

In terms of scheduling, you will write your blog entries and submit them by 12pm (noon) on Thursday of each week, unless otherwise noted on the course schedule. Noon on Thursday is the cutoff for blog posts. This way I can devote Thursday afternoons to reviewing your work. If your post does not meet a minimum standard for publishable material, I will ask you to revise and resubmit it before I publish it. Repeated revise-and-resubmit requests will impact your grade. I will grade the blog posts in batches rather than individually, assigning one grade for each quarter of the semester. Lateness will count against you, so be sure your posts are timely.

Practice Log

This semester you will be required to engage in a contemplative practice every week. Please refer to the Tree of Contemplative Practices, which is available on Canvas under Files. Note that there are seven branches of the tree. Each time you complete a practice session, you'll use the Practice Log to keep a record of when and where you completed the practice. You'll also include a brief description of the practice and a reflection on your experience doing it. For every practice, you should be using some kind of guiding material like a video, an excerpt from a book, a guided audio meditation, etc. Be sure to include bibliographic entry for the material you use as guidance for your practice. Also be sure to keep some kind of evidence of your practice (i.e. a photograph or photograph, an email acknowledging your registration for an event, etc.). You can do the practice when it's convenient for you, but regardless of when you do it, you are required to update your practice log by Friday morning at 9am each week. I will check your practice log every Friday to make sure you are keeping up with the practices.

Note that the Practice Log is divided into two parts. Part 1 consists of a sampling of the seven categories of practice on the Tree of Contemplative Practices. Part 2 consists of an intensive (i.e. repeated) practice in two complimentary areas (see Final Project below). See the Practice Log Checklist document on Canvas (under Files) for additional details. At mid-semester and then again at the semester's end, I will ask you to submit a copy of the practice guidelines with all of the details filled in and the check-boxes checked off.

Mid-Term Exam

The mid-term will consist of two written essays. The first is meant to assess whether you understand the basic concepts in contemplative media studies (definitions of terms as well as overarching ideas, arguments, and concerns) and are able to apply those concepts thoughtfully and creatively. I will provide a prompt that will ask you to make connections between the

readings (i.e. identifying patterns and themes, finding relevant quotes to support your arguments, etc.) and to articulate a thoughtful argument about them.

The second essay will focus on your practice log. I will provide a prompt that asks you to reflect on your experience learning about and doing the different types of practices we cover in the first half of the semester. While the practice log (see above) asks you to describe what you did during each practice session, this part of the mid-term essay will ask you to assess the meaning of your practice sessions in the context of the course. This will help you decide what direction to take for the second half of the course, where you will be asked to develop a more integrated practice.

Final Project

An important premise of contemplative studies is that practice and scholarship go hand in hand, and that scholarship benefits from explicit reference to practice. Contemplative Media Studies assumes this premise as well, and focuses specifically on how practice can inform critical analysis of media technologies, content, and institutions. Following this premise, the final project is an opportunity for you to integrate practice and scholarship. Whereas in the first half of the semester your Practice Log and blog posts were mostly separate assignments, in the second half of the semester we want to make explicit connections between the two. The Final Project will therefore require you to develop an “integrated” practice that has both a personal/individual and social/civic component, and to use this practice to deepen your analysis of a topic of your choice in media studies. I will provide examples from past semesters and more detailed guidelines. You’ll prepare your final project as a written essay with multimedia elements as appropriate (photographs, video, etc.) and we will publish it to our course website.

Grading

10%	Quizzes
10%	Attendance/Participation
20%	Blog Posts.....Due Thursdays at noon (graded 9/17, 10/15, 11/12, 12/3)
20%	Practice Log (Parts 1 and 2).....Due Fridays at 9am (graded mid-term and end-of-term)
20%	Mid-term Exam.....Due Thurs. Oct. 22 by noon
20%	Final Project.....Due Tues. Dec. 15 by noon

Weekly Schedule

In general, the structure for each week is as follows: We’ll meet via Zoom on Mondays, and then again on Wednesdays. I’ll offer feedback, provide guidance on the upcoming assignments, and answer whatever questions you might have. We may also watch or listen to supplementary materials together, and the content of these materials may be part of the weekly quiz. I may create break-out rooms and ask you to do small-group discussions or activities. As noted above, you will submit your weekly blog posts by **Thursday at noon**. Then you’ll turn your attention to your practice log, and post and update to that by **Friday morning at 9am**. These weekly deadlines will allow me to review your work, publish your blog posts (or ask you to revise them first), and update my records of your work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1		
8/31	M	<p>Owen-Smith, Patricia. (2018). "Contemplative Practices in Higher Education." <i>The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</i>. Indiana University Press. pp. 24-57.</p> <p>Rogers, Holly. (2016). <i>The Mindful twenty-something</i>. Oakland, CA : New Harbinger Publications, Inc. READ: Introduction AND Parts 1 and 2 (about 70 pages) This reading is available online through the UNH library at this link.</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category is <u>ritual</u>.</p>
9/2	W	
WEEK 2		
9/7	M	LABOR DAY NO CLASSES
9/9	W	<p>GUEST: Marlon Blake, Program Coordinator at Fullerton College</p> <p>Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i>. Introduction: Surviving Usefulness. Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i>. Chapter 1: The Case for Nothing.</p> <p>Samuel, Sigal. (July 3, 2020). "How to be alone." <i>Future Perfect</i>. Vox. https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/4/11/21212845/how-to-be-alone-coronavirus-quarantine-isolation-solitude</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category of practice is <u>stillness</u>.</p>
WEEK 3		
9/14	M	<p>Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i>. Chapter 2: The Impossibility of Retreat.</p> <p>Plante, Thomas (Ed.). (2010). <i>Contemplative Practices in Action: Spirituality, Meditation, and Health</i>. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. Chapter 1: "Introduction: Contemplative Practices in Action." Chapter 2: "Similarity in Diversity? Four Shared Functions of Integrative Contemplative Practice Systems."</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category of practice is <u>movement</u>.</p>

9/16	W	<p>GUEST: Karolyn Kinane, Associate Director of Pedagogy and Faculty Engagement at the Contemplative Sciences Center at University of Virginia.</p> <p>NOTE: Sep. 18-20: Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)</p>
WEEK 4		
9/21	M	<p>Langer, Ellen. (2006). <i>On Becoming an Artist: Reinventing Yourself through Mindful Creativity</i>. New York: Ballentine Books.</p> <p>Introduction. Chapter 1: A Life of Mindful Creativity. Chapter 2: Becoming Authentic. Chapter 6: The Mindlessness of Social Comparison.</p> <p>Samuel, Sigal. (July 15, 2020). "What would Rumi do in a pandemic?" <i>Future Perfect</i>. Vox. https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/7/15/21315120/rumi-sufism-muslim-pandemic-isolation-omid-safi</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category of practice is <u>creative expression</u>.</p>
9/23	W	
WEEK 5		
9/28	M	<p>GUEST: Sarah-Marie Hopf, founder of Thriving in a Noisy World.</p> <p>Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i>. Chapter 3: Anatomy of a Refusal.</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category of practice is <u>generative</u>.</p>
9/30	W	
WEEK 6		
10/5	M	<p>Purser, Ron. (2019). <i>McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality</i>. London: Repeater Books.</p> <p>Chapter 1: "What Mindfulness Revolution?" pp. 7-24.</p> <p>Rogers, Holly. (2016). <i>The Mindful twenty-something</i>. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.</p> <p>READ: Chapter 18: Relating Mindfully. This reading is available online through the UNH library</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category of practice is <u>relational</u>.</p> <p>Suggested practice session: Music for Healing and Balance</p>

		<p>presented by Reginald Cyntje Wednesday, October 7th, 2020 3 - 4:30 pm ET / 12 - 1:30 pm PT Free and open to all Register here.</p>
10/7	W	
WEEK 7		
10/12	M	<p>Yes, we have class today! This is an instructional day.</p> <p>Magee, Rhonda V. (2019). <i>The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness</i>. New York, NY: Tarcher Perigree. Introduction Chapter One: Pausing and Reckoning Chapter Two: Sitting With Compassionate Racial Awareness</p> <p>Samuel, Sigal. (July 2, 2020). "On Buddhism and Blackness." <i>Future Perfect</i>. Vox. https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/7/2/21310378/buddhist-mindfulness-meditation-black-activism-future-perfect</p> <p>Enrico Riley: The Blues in Me, Witnessing love Date: 10/15/2020 Time: 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Location: Zoom Register here:</p> <p>You may also visit this exhibition at the UNH Museum of Art and write about your visit for this week's practice journal. The Museum is open Mon., Tues., Wed. and Fri., 12:00–4:00 p.m. Thurs., 12-6:00 p.m.</p> <p>Practice journal: This week's category of practice is <u>activism</u>.</p> <p>NOTE: Indigenous People's Day</p>
10/14	W	NOTE: Oct. 17: Navaratri begins (Hindu)
WEEK 8		
10/19	M	<p>Mid-term workshop</p> <p>NOTE: Prof. Healey will be chatting with Ron Purser via Zoom on Tuesday 10/20 at 2pm.</p>

10/21	W	Mid-term workshop
WEEK 9		
10/26	M	<p>Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i>. Chapter 4: Exercises in Attention.</p> <p>Healey, Kevin. (2015). "Contemplative Media Studies." <i>Religions</i>. Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 948-968.</p> <p>Parodies of mindfulness meditation: https://www.facebook.com/TheShadowsFX/videos/769695350543155</p> <p>F*ck that: An Honest Meditation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92i5m3tV5XY</p> <p>NOTE: Navaratri Ends (Hindu)</p>
10/28	W	
WEEK 10		
11/2	M	Healey, Kevin. (2020). "The Ethics of Augmentation: A Case Study in Contemplative Mixed-Reality." In Joshua Fisher (Ed.), <i>Augmented and Mixed Reality for Communities</i> . CRC Press.
11/4	W	
WEEK 11		
11/9	M	<p>Huston, Dan. (2015). <i>Communicating Mindfully: Mindfulness-Based Communication and Emotional Intelligence</i>. 6th ed. Cleveland, OH: August Learning Solutions.</p> <p> "Chapter 1: Getting Started." pp. 12-33.</p> <p> "Chapter 3: Becoming Better Listeners." pp. 60-77.</p> <p>GUEST: Dan Huston, author of <i>Communicating Mindfully</i>.</p>
11/10	T	<p>Yes we have class today.</p> <p>CLASSES FOLLOW WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE</p>
11/11	W	<p>Veterans Day (NO CLASSES)</p> <p>NOTE: Nov. 14: Diwali (Hindu)</p>
WEEK 12		
11/16	M	Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i> . Chapter 5: Ecology of Strangers.

11/18	W	
11/20	F	All face-to-face meetings end on Friday Nov. 20, 2020
WEEK 13		
11/23	M	Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i> . Chapter 6: Restoring the Grounds for Thought. Doran, Peter. (2017). <i>A Political Economy of Attention, Mindfulness and Consumerism: Reclaiming the Mindful Commons</i> . New York, NY: Routledge. Yes we have class today.
11/25	W	NO CLASS
WEEK 14		
11/30	M	Odell. <i>How To Do Nothing</i> . Conclusion: Manifest Dismantling. Forbes, David. (2019). <i>Mindfulness and Its Discontents: Education, Self, and Social Transformation</i> . Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing. Chapter 14: "Visions for a Counter Program." pp. 186-213. (From Section 4: An Evolving Contemplative Education).
12/2	W	
WEEK 15		
12/7	M	Final project workshop
12/9	W	Final project workshop
12/11	F	Fall semester classes end NOTE: ALL UNH final exams will be conducted only online as scheduled from December 15 to December 22.

Additional materials

Podcast Mini-series: *Future Perfect: The Way Through*

Every Wednesday starting July 1, 2020

Available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher.

See Jud Brewer's research on anxiety, addiction and mindfulness:

<https://turnto10.com/studio10/health-and-beauty/breaking-bad-habits-11-12-2019>

Course Workload and Credit Hour Expectations

This syllabus reflects the federal definition of a credit hour, which entails a minimum 3 hours of engaged time per week per credit over a 14-week semester. Examples of engaged time include class time, assignments, examinations, laboratories, participation in course-related experiences, conferences, and office hours.

Netiquette Guidelines

Netiquette is the socially and professionally acceptable way to communicate on the internet. We are all expected to abide by these guidelines of "netiquette" when using online communication tools with your classmates and instructor. Guidelines can be found on the Student Resource Hub and the Faculty Resource Hub, and in this [knowledge base netiquette guidelines article](#).

Course disruptions

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to change when necessitated by revised course delivery, semester calendar or other circumstances. Information about changes in this course can be obtained at the myCourses site or by contacting me via email.

Class recordings

Lectures or other class meetings may be recorded for online transmission or classroom use using the UNH media platforms. Your voice or image may be captured on the recordings and the video or audio may be used by UNH and its agents or employees to provide instruction and/or as a review tool for students in this class.