



Mindfulness & Racial Justice

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Office hours: Via Zoom by appointment (email me)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The colloquium for majors is an interdisciplinary investigation of various philosophical and religious questions. This year we will examine mindfulness: cultivating an embodied presence, receptivity and awareness of whatever arises in oneself and one's surroundings. You will learn how to bring mindfulness to your breath, your body, your feelings, your emotions, and your thoughts, as well as how you might cultivate kindness, compassion, joy, and spaciousness in your life and relationships with others. We will mindfully reflect on our own intersectional identities and experience of ourselves in culture, community, and context as we engage in what Rhonda Magee calls the "inner work of racial justice."

Like any meditation method, mindfulness is cultivated or developed over time. It takes practice and patience to change deep-rooted habits of being distracted or mindless, especially when we live at a time when digital devices constantly vie for our attention. We can fill all of our time – down time, waiting time, even dinnertime – with texts, emails, games, social media, and streamed videos. We reach for our phones instinctively when we experience any inkling of boredom in meetings, classrooms, and restaurants. We avoid uncomfortable encounters with strangers or acquaintances by looking at our phones instead of other people. We can become so engrossed by our phones that we forget where we are, or what we are doing.

These habitual tendencies feed what Buddhists call the "monkey mind" – our natural state of mind where it tends to swing like a monkey from one thought to the next. Without any sense of goal or direction, the mind will reach for whatever calls out most forcefully: a grumbling stomach may prompt one to think about food, or an unsettling conversation may lead one to ruminate on relationships, or an upcoming deadline may lead one to stressful strategizing about how to get things done. We may not even think we have the capacity control our mind or direct our focus, but mindfulness is a means of fastening one's attention, which can alleviate the feelings of discomfort and anxiety that feed our mental chatter. We can become ethical, caring people if we intentionally and purposefully attend to our own minds.

This class will introduce you to a range of mindfulness practices. Some may resonate with you, while others may not; however, the hope is that each of you learns a practice that you can take with you. The class will also challenge some deeply held ideologies, and you will be taking risks that you may find unsettling. We will be examining our own intersectional identities, and I consider myself a co-learner with you in this process.

The course is required of PAR majors in their junior or senior year, and it is open to qualified non-majors. It satisfies the Capstone and Explorations Beyond the Classroom requirement, and it partially satisfies Information Literacy and Writing Intensive requirements in University Studies.

REQUIRED TEXT:

- Rhonda V. Magee, *The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness*. Tarcher Perigee, 2019. (ISBN: 9780593083925; \$27.00)

COURSE WEBSITE:

To access the course webpage, go to <https://uncw.instructure.com/login/ldap> and enter your username and password. Click on 'PAR 400' under 'Courses' to open class website. A copy of the syllabus, assignments, and other course documents will be available on the site.

COURSE GOALS:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the purpose for their experience beyond the classroom, synthesize knowledge from the course to address issues/challenges/questions involved in that experience, and orally communicate the impact on their personal educational development and others in the field after the experience (EBC 1, 2, & 3; Oral Communication)
- Develop an effective strategy to search for, identify, and retrieve information in order to fully address an information need. (IL 1)
- Analyze information in order to evaluate its currency, authority, accuracy, relevance, and purpose. (IL 2)
- Synthesize and appropriately cite retrieved information in order to ensure information is utilized ethically and legally. (IL 3)
- Produce a written paper using the retrieved information that reflects a knowledge and understanding of audience expectations, genre conventions, and citation practices in the fields of Philosophy and Religion (IL 4; WI 1)
- Demonstrate the ability to employ an iterative writing process that includes invention, drafting, and revision in response to instructor feedback to complete a major writing project (WI 2)

--- COURSE SCHEDULE ---

Note: All readings, videos and assignments in the syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week One: Introduction / Mindfulness of Breath

Watch: Introduction to Mindfulness Video

Practice: 5 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 1-18 (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Upload: Assignment on Your Race Story (Due Wednesday January 27 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Write about your own experience of race in American life (or "race story"). Practice "the pause", and write your reflections on the questions raised on pages 16-18 of *Inner Work*, such as: What was it like for you to write those words? What thoughts, feelings, emotions do they bring? Where in your body do you feel those sensations?

Share: Reflections about your "pause," race story, and mindfulness practice this week (Due Friday January 29 by 11:59 pm)

Week Two: Mindfulness of Body

Watch: Mindfulness of Body

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 19-48 (Chapters 2 & 3)

Upload: Assignment on Racial Literacy (Due Wednesday February 3 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: As Magee notes, it may take time to about race in new ways – to establish a sense of “racial literacy.” It requires emotional awareness, and you may feel strong emotions in reaction to what others share about race, or feel emotional when reflecting on your own experiences. Read through your classmates’ reflections on their race stories, practicing “the pause” as you do this, noticing what types of emotions surface. Write about your observations. What reactions and emotions surfaced? What was it like to sit with discomfort? Did you have any “reactions to reactions” (p. 28), such as denial or avoidance?

Share: Reflections about your “pause,” racial literacy, and mindfulness practice this week (Due Friday February 5 by 11:59 pm)

Week Three: Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

Watch: Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 49-61 (Chapters 4 & 5)

Upload: Assignment on Your True Inheritance (Due Wednesday February 10 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the “From Place to Ground” practice in *Inner Work*, pages 59-61. After the practice, write about your reflections on the questions that Magee poses about your ancestral lineage, how your family came to the place you call home, what parts of the story may be unknown, or hidden and left out, the community in which you live, and that which you share with the rest of the world. What bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions surfaced as a result of your practice?

Share: Reflections about your true inheritance and mindfulness practice this week (Due Friday February 12 by 11:59 pm)

Week Four: Mindfulness of Emotion

Watch: Mindfulness of Emotion

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 65-93 (Chapters 6-7)

View: Documentary “Wilmington On Fire” (<https://libcat.uncw.edu/record=b3106356~S4>)

Upload: Assignment on Your Racial Emotional Awareness (Due February 17 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the “Racial Emotional Awareness” and “Awareness of the Embodied Self” practices in *Inner Work*, pages 71-73. After doing the first practice, reflect on the questions: What thoughts, emotions, and sensations come up when you are asked to address the topic of racial disparities when alone, or in mixed company? What stories do you tell to explain those disparities, and to what extent are they based in facts? What insights on race are you aware of now? After doing the second practice, reflect on the questions: What were you taught to believe about bodies like yours? About differently racialized bodies? How might this aspect of your social identity have shaped your experience in the world? Have you spent more time in places where you were in a significant minority or majority based on your race or gender? Are there ways that this identity has been a source of comfort/advantage to you, or source of discomfort/disadvantage to you? Write about your reflections doing these practices.

Share: Reflections about your racial emotional awareness and embodied self (Due Friday February 19 by 11:59 pm)

Week Five: Mindfulness of Thought

Watch: Mindfulness of Thought

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 74-115 (Chapters 8 & 9)

Upload: Assignment on Mindfulness of Intentions (Due February 24 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the “Practicing Mindfulness of Intentions for Doing Racial Justice Work” practice in *Inner Work*, pages 100-102. After doing the first practice, write about the questions for reflection, including: Where am I seeing racism up close? How am I living notions tied to my own “race”? What racial (or other identity-based) slurs am I using or hearing in my interactions with others? What stereotypes am I coming up against or noticing? What ideas about race did you pick up from your family or neighborhood? How are they affected by information you are receiving now (through media or otherwise)? Which intentions would you most like to carry forward in the work ahead?

Share: Reflections about your intentions and mindfulness practice this week (Due Friday February 26 by 11:59 pm)

Week Six: Open Awareness

Watch: Open Awareness

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 116-137 (Chapters 10 & 11)

Upload: Assignment on Mindfulness of Intentions (Due March 3 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the “Mindfulness of Racecraft” and “Mindfulness of Microaggressions and Internalized Bias” practices in *Inner Work*, pages 135-137. Reflect on the questions raised for each practice, and write about the insights that arose for you during those practices.

Share: First, mindfully read through the posts from weeks 4 and 5, pausing and intentionally directing your attention to your bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions that arise as you read. Then, share your reflections about what it was like to “mindfully listen” to your classmates’ experiences in this way. (Due Friday March 5 by 11:59 pm)

Week Seven: Lovingkindness

Watch: Lovingkindness

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 141-162 (Chapters 12 & 13)

Upload: Assignment on Compassion for Self & Others (Due March 10 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the “Skillfulness of Compassion for Self and Others” practice in *Inner Work*, pages 158-160. After doing the practice, write about your bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions doing the practice. What was it like to imagine extending compassion to others in this way? What thoughts and emotions came up?

Share: Reflections about lovingkindness and extending compassion to others (Due Friday March 12 by 11:59 pm)

Rough Draft of Final Project Due Friday March 12 by 11:59 pm

Week Eight: Mindfulness of Structural Racism

Watch: 13th (Documentary by Ava DuVernay)

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 163-199 (Chapters 14-16)

Upload: Assignment on Bringing Awareness to Structural Racism (Due March 17 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the “Bringing Awareness to Structural Racism in Your Life” practice in *Inner Work*, pages 198-199. After doing the practice, write about your reflections on the following questions: Looking back on the places I most identify as home, what was the racial makeup of the neighborhoods in which I grew up? How exactly did this community come to be that way? What laws and policies with racially disparate intentions were in place, and what were their effects on my predecessors, parents, and me? How are the legacies of these structural conditions shaping my life experiences – my opportunities, my challenges – now? How did my family come to live where they did, and how were they received? In what ways has my own life been affected by this history? What about the lives of people in my circle of friends and family? What might I do now to better address the legacies of these practices in my own life, and in my community?

Share: Reflections about your awareness of structural racism in your life (Due Friday March 19 by 11:59 pm)

Week Nine: Exploration Beyond the Classroom: Anti-Racism and Allyship 7-Day Journey

This week (actually, ten days: March 20-30) will fulfill the Exploration Beyond the Classroom requirement for the course. You will be expected to complete each of the seven days outlined here:

<https://gsb-sites.stanford.edu/anti-racism-and-allyship/>

As you work through each day, you will complete sections of the Anti-Racism and Allyship Journey Workbook (downloadable on their homepage), and at the end of the 7 days, you will upload the completed workbook to Canvas. **You will receive all or no credit.** (In other words, I will not be grading your responses, but in order to receive credit, you should have completed all the sections of the workbook.) (Due March 31 by 11:59 pm)

Week Ten: Mindful Communication About Race

Watch: Mindful Communication

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 203-228 (Chapters 17 & 18)

Upload: Assignment on Mindful Communication and Bearing Witness to Whiteness (Due April 7 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: First, do the “Mindful Speaking and Listening” practice from *Inner Work*, pages 213-215 with a partner. After doing the practice, write a reflection on these two questions: What was it like for you to practice mindful speaking and listening in this way? How might such ways of communicating support you in working for a more just world?

Next, do the “Bearing Witness to Whiteness and Racism” practice on *Inner Work*, p. 227, choosing any image or short video (no more than 1 minute) that depicts both whiteness *and* an individual suffering from racism in a contemporary setting. Afterwards, ask yourself: What did I notice? What did I find hard to see? What are the links I see between this representation of whiteness, race-based suffering, and the suffering of other vulnerable people in my community, and in the wider world? How can I take this experience into the world and be a more effective witness to the hidden or under-acknowledged suffering of others?

Share: Reflections about your experience practicing mindful speaking and listening, and bearing witness to whiteness. (Due Friday April 9 by 11:59 pm)

Week Eleven: Mindfulness in Everyday Life

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 229-283 (Chapters 19-21)

Upload: Assignment on Bringing Mindfulness to Everyday Life (Due April 14 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: This week, you have the choice to do one or more of the following:

- Stop for Mindfulness in Sticky Situations in Your Everyday Life (p. 261-262)
<https://www.mindful.org/a-guided-s-t-o-p-practice-for-focused-awareness/>
- Grounding in the Flow of the Elements (p. 267-272)
- Being What Matters & Engaging What Matters (p. 273-274)
- Lovingkindness Meditation for Collective Liberation (p. 275-278)
- Colorinsight Practice: Racial Suffering & Repair Practice (p. 279-280)

After doing the practice, write about your reflections about what thoughts, emotions, and sensations came up for you in the practice(s) you chose.

Share: Reflections about your awareness of structural racism in your life (Due Friday April 16 by 11:59 pm)

Week Twelve: Relational or Interpersonal Mindfulness

Watch: Tull, "Relational Mindfulness"

Practice: 10 minutes of mindfulness each day

Read: *Inner Work*, 287-334 (Chapters 22-25)

Upload: Assignment on Interpersonal Mindfulness (Due April 21 by 11:59 pm)

Prompt: Do the "Recognizing the Experience of Community" practice in *Inner Work*, pages 309-311. After doing the practice, write a response to one or more of the following reflection prompts: What have you gained from your connection to the so-called other (whomever you were taught to think of that way)? What have you given to others? What difficulties have you caused to others? How are aspects of your life now linked to or sustained by the suffering of others? What are the borders you've placed on your heart to make this suffering okay? What are you willing to let go of, what borders are you willing to dissolve, in the struggle for justice?

Share: Reflections about mindfulness of community (Due Friday April 23 by 11:59 pm)

Final Draft of Final Project Due April 27 by 11:59 pm
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

ASSIGNMENTS (44 points; 4 points each) For each assignment, you should write 500 words (~2 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt font) in response to the prompt. Be as detailed as possible when discussing the bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts that surfaced during your practice. You will use these reflections as the basis for what you share to your classmates.

SHARING REFLECTIONS (11 points; 1 point each) For each module, you will write at least 150 words (i.e. at least 1 paragraph) reflecting on your assignment and mindfulness practice that week.

EXPLORATIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM PROJECT (20 points)

In addition to writing a formal research paper, you will be exploring what happiness means to you personally and professionally. You should keep a written and visual journal about your own understanding of "happiness" and how it relates to your personal and educational development. You will also interview five other people (friends, family members, or acquaintances) about their views of happiness. You will submit a 5-page paper halfway through the semester where you analyze these various perspectives, bringing them into dialogue with what you read from the *Happiness* text and

additional readings posted on Canvas and including at least three quotations from different philosophers in your paper.

FINAL PROJECT (25 pts; 10 pts for First Draft, 15 pts for Final Draft) Your project should entail a significant amount of research and writing about a topic related to mindfulness and/or racial justice. Before you write, you should identify:

- Your **purpose**. What are your goals? What do you want your audience to do, think, or feel? What are your audience's expectations? How will they use what you tell them?
- Your **audience**. Whom do you want to reach? What is their background (education, life experiences, etc.)? What are their interests, motivations, and values? Is there any demographic information you should keep in mind that might influence what or how you write? What might they already know, or believe, about your topic? What do you need to tell them, and what is the best way to do so? What's your relationship to the audience, and how does it affect your language? What does your audience need and expect from you? What kind of response do you want? How can you best appeal to your audience?
- Your **genre**, which is influenced by the audience you see as your prospective reader. What is your genre? An op-ed? A personal narrative? A collection of poems? A website? A social media forum? A paper? The genre will shape how you approach your writing project.
- Your **stance**. What is your attitude about your topic – critical, curious, opinionated, passionate, etc. – and how can you present it best to achieve your purpose? What tone will best convey your stance? Do you want to seem reasonable, angry, thoughtful, funny, ironic, etc.? How is your stance likely to be received by your audience? Will revealing your stance help you reach your audience, or would it be better to not directly say where you're coming from? Your stance may also be affected by the expectations of the genre of writing that you choose. Personal narratives and memoirs, for example, allow you to reveal your feelings and experience about a topic.
- Your **timing**. Why are you writing about this at the present moment, and how might the present moment demand a response?

Your **first draft** should include a **bibliography** of your sources and an **explanation** of what makes them authoritative, how they address an information need, and how together they incorporate the range and diversity of perspectives on the topic. Some sources may be scholarly, others may be popular; just be sure you make it clear *why* you are appealing to a source (again, what makes the author authoritative, the statistics credible, etc.). I would encourage you to seek guidance from experts, such as our liaison librarian Lisa Coats (coatsl@uncw.edu) and also consult the Randall Library resources on: Anti-Racism (<https://library.uncw.edu/guides/antiracism>) and Mindfulness (https://library.uncw.edu/guides/randall_library_resources_on_mindfulness).

I will be giving feedback on your drafts so that you can revise them and share them with your classmates. They are due on **Tuesday April 27 by 11:59 pm** so that you can view each other's work on the last day of class on Wednesday April 28.

COURSE GRADES:

Grades for the course will be based on a combination of the following means of evaluating student performance:

1. 55% Assignments and Shared Reflections
2. 20% Exploration Beyond the Classroom Project
3. 10% First Draft of Final Project (Including Bibliography and Explanation of Sources)

4. 15% Final Draft of Final Project

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

93–100% = A	73–76.9% = C
90–92.9% = A-	70–72.9% = C-
87–89.9% = B+	67–69.9% = D+
83–86.9% = B	63–66.9% = D
80–82.9% = B-	60–62.9% = D-
77–79.9% = C+	below 60% = F

LATE POLICY:

I will deduct 20% off your grade for every 24 hours that your work is late.

WRITING SERVICES, UNIVERSITY LEARNING CENTER

<https://uncw.edu/ulc/services/writing/index.html>

(910) 962-7857

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All writers, whatever their experience or expertise, revise what they write. All writers have outside readers - people who read and respond to a developing text. For these reasons, Writing Services at the University Learning Center provides several ways for UNCW students to receive peer response to drafts of their papers while they work on improving their writing skills. Visit their homepage to learn about their **Writing Center**, their **Online Writing & Learning (OWL)** program, and their **Writing Lab**.

HONOR CODE: All members of UNCW's community are expected to follow the academic Honor Code. Please review the UNCW Honor Code carefully (as covered in the UNCW Student Handbook and available here: <http://www.uncw.edu/odos/honorcode/>). Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this class.

PLAGIARISM: All written work in this course *must* be original to you. If you consult outside texts, please cite the sources in proper format. This pertains to all external sources (books, journals, newspaper articles, etc.). I will report all suspected cases of plagiarism to the Office of the Dean of Students for review. Examples of plagiarism include: failure to acknowledge the source(s) of even a few phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; failure to acknowledge a quotation or paraphrase of paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea central to the paper's or project's structure; failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one's own work, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.

VIOLENCE/HARASSMENT: UNCW practices a zero tolerance policy for any kind of violent or harassing behavior. If you are experiencing an emergency of this type contact the police at 911 or UNCW CARE at 962-2273. Resources for individuals concerned with a violent or harassing situation can be located at: <http://www.uncw.edu/wsrc/crisis.html>

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

If you have any concerns or questions, fell free to contact me by email or speak to me during my

office hours.