

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
College of Education and Human Development
Physical Activity for Lifetime Wellness

RECR 181-DL2 Meditation: Introduction
1 Credit, Spring 2024
T/R 3:00-4:15, Online
(March 12, 2024 – April 29, 2024)

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites: NONE

University Catalog Course Description:

Introduces students to philosophical foundations of meditation. Guides in the practice of meditation and its application to daily mental focus and concentration.

Course Overview:

Introduction to Meditation will provide an opportunity to understand the philosophical, neurochemical and practical aspects of meditation, including its origins, uses and benefits. The emphasis will be on learning through experience, both with in-class exercises and home practice. Topics covered will range from development of concentration to compassion practice and self-understanding, including the associated positive brain changes documented in scientific research.

Course Delivery Method:

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using a synchronous format via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal and Zoom. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available prior to class time on 12 March. Class meets every Tuesday and Thursday.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements:

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported Browsers see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers. To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems.
- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Windows Media Player: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
 - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download

Expectations:

- Course Week:

Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes.
- Log-in Frequency:

Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 2 times per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings.
- Participation:

Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions. Work is not accepted late. Students are expected to show up with working camera and mic.
- Technical Competence:

Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:

Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload:

Please be aware that this course is not self-paced. Students are expected to meet specific

deadlines and due dates listed in the Class Schedule section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due. Work is not accepted late.

- **Instructor Support:**

Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

- **Netiquette:**

The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words. Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

- **Accommodations:**

Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must **be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.**

Learner Outcomes or Objectives:

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Define meditation and its benefits.
2. State the need for and importance of centering and breathing practices.
3. Develop proficiency in the practice of four types of *pranayama*.
4. Demonstrate techniques of progressive relaxation.
5. Demonstrate a sitting pose, including proper alignment.
6. Identify the 5-stage meditation process and demonstrate a working knowledge of refining focus and awareness.
7. Describe benefits of systematic relaxation and meditation.
8. Build their own practice.

Required Text: None

Recommended Text:

Tan, Chade-Meng (2016) JOY ON DEMAND. The Art of Discovering the Happiness Within., (1st Ed.) Harper Collins.

Ricard, Matthieu (2010) WHY MEDITATE? Working with Thoughts and Emotions., (1st Ed.) Hay House Inc.

Piver, Susan (2015) START HERE NOW. An Open-Hearted Guide to the Path and Practice of Meditation., (1st Ed.) Shambhala.

Other readings and/or videos as assigned and posted on Blackboard

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

Assignments and/or Examinations

Final Paper/ Reflection - 15 points

- Students will turn in a short reflective paper discussing topics from class in relation to their meditation practice. Paper will reflect upon bringing meditation concepts into a “real life” mindset. Students are encouraged to write down reflective experiences from the meditation homework.

Final Exam - 15 points

- A written final exam and/or oral presentation reflecting on the student’s understanding of meditation topics and formal practices presented in class. Topics and experiential practice will be thoroughly reviewed and discussed in class.

Attendance 70%

- Because this is largely an experiential course, regular attendance is very important. Attendance and participation is mandatory for this class. Students will be excused from class with a note from a health care provider. The note must be presented immediately upon return to the class. The note may also be emailed to the instructor. Emails and texts do not excuse an absence but are helpful in planning the class session.

Summary Grading: The course will be graded on a 100 point scale comprised of 70 points for attendance and participation, 15 points for written assignment and 15 points for the final project

Grading Scale:

A+ 97-100 A 94-96 A- 90-93

B+ 88-89 B 84-87 B- 80-83

C+ 78-79 C 75-77

D 65-74

Course Information

- Students with injuries or pre-existing conditions that may affect performance must inform the instructor.
- Students with specific medication conditions, limited flexibility or injuries will learn appropriate modifications of poses for their own practices.
- All communication will be through GMU e-mail – the Patriot Web Site.
- Students will need to provide their own mat, pillow, and any other accessories needed for practice
- In this same regard. written assignments and the final project are to be submitted via Blackboard. The final project will entail an experiential practice and presentation.

Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

Class Schedule:

Week		Topics	Readings/Assignment Due
1 03/11 03/14 <i>Complete Breath Intro</i>		Opening Discussion: Introduction/ overview of course objectives. Items needed for practice. What is Meditation? What it is not. The ultimate “Superpower”, modern villains, origins, “goal” and advice for practice. Formal practices: Breath awareness. Complete/ 3 part breath.	Tan, Intro and Ch 1. Ricard, Part I, Part II Piver, Ch 2, 3.
2 03/19 03/21 <i>Alternate Nostril Variation</i>		Opening Discussion: Pillars/preparation for meditation. Why is Meditation difficult? Why do we suffer? The good news/virtuous cycle. Formal Practice: Continuing with the breath and “refreshing concentration,” seated asana, alternate nostril variation.	Tan, Ch 2, Ricard, Part III, pg. 36, (driving force, pg. 46 (causes) and pg. 53. Piver, Ch 9,10.
3 03/26 03/28 <i>Ujjayi Breath</i>		Opening Discussion: Mindfulness/Present Moment Awareness. Obstacles and Antidotes, Types of Meditation, Formal Practice: “Mind Bullies and Soap Bubbles Nature as an anchor, Connecting with the Elements, Informal Practice: Walking Meditation. Ujjayi (Ocean) Breath	Ricard, Part II, Part III, pg. 54 (types) and pg. 61 (Four Foundations of Mindfulness) Piver, Ch. 5., Ch 14.

Week		Topics	Readings/Assignment Due
4 04/02 <i>Alternate Nostril Traditional</i> 04/04 <i>Ujjayi Review</i>		Opening Discussion: Listening anew. Benefits of Meditation and Yoga Nidra; a look at the science. Formal Practice: Loving Kindness Meditation, Progressive Relaxation (Yoga Nidra) and Pranayama Alternate Nostril and Ujjayi review	Tan, Ch 1. Ricard Part I Piver, Ch 1
5 04/09 04/11 <i>Bhramari Breath</i>		Opening Discussion: The science of stress. Working with Anxiety and Depression. Formal Practice: Calm Abiding Meditation, Compassion, Alternate Nostril Pranayama with Mudra. Bhramari Pranayama. Joseph Goldstein Calm Abiding (Anxiety) Seb Gratitude (Depression)	Tan, Ch 3, 5. Ricard, Part III, pg. 81
6 04/16 04/18		Opening Discussion: What is Awareness, Presence, Attention, Concentration and Thought? Tools for developing concentration: Mantra, Mudra, and Sound. Formal Practice: Sound Meditation	Tan, Ch 4, 6. Piver, Ch 15
7 04/23 04/25		Review. Final paper and extra credit due. Meditation and everyday life. Final Exam Presentations.	Ricard, Part III, pg. 135. Final exam week: assignment/presentations. All written papers due by midnight on final day of class.

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- **Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.**

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/> .

Mason students now have FREE access to [TimelyCare](#) – a virtual mental health and well-being platform crafted specifically for college students! With TimelyCare, Mason students will have access to a multitude of virtual mental health and well-being resources that are free and available 24/7. Find out more about the resources available online at [Timelycare.com/gmu](https://www.timelycare.com/gmu) or [Download the app](#)