

Mindful Living: A Course on Spirituality for Everyday Life

Instructor: **Pastor Bruce Little**

Topic Overview

Spirituality - Spirituality involves one's capacity for creativity, growth, and a sense of purpose in life. It can be demonstrated by personal traits such as wisdom, love, transcendence, hope, connectedness, and compassion. Spirituality is inclusive of, but not limited to, institutional religion. Since the World Health Organization deemed spirituality as a component of health equal to mental and physical wellbeing, spirituality has received increasing attention in the academic realm (e.g., wellness paradigms, alternative medicine, prayer and healing, outdoor/wilderness adventure, and counseling).

Spiritual themes have been present in the field of counseling for many decades. Viktor Frankl addressed issues of meaning, the humanists (e.g., Rogers and Maslow) addressed themes of transcendence and connectedness, and transpersonal theorists (e.g., Grof and Wilber) proposed a combination of Eastern and Western perspectives on spirituality. Recently, spirituality has appeared as a component of diversity and holistic approaches to wellbeing. Counseling theorists and other mental health professionals recommend attention to the spiritual dimension in order to address the health of the whole person. According to leaders in the area of holistic health, addressing a client's spirituality yields a more enduring outcome than just managing symptoms.

The term 'spirituality' carries with it a variety of connotations, some positive and some negative. Consequently, spirituality may bring up concerns of authoritarian approaches to convince people of certain ideas. *Nothing in this course, including readings, assignments, and/or discussions of particular topics, is designed to persuade you that one particular religious or spiritual belief system is the 'right' one, or that you should adopt certain values or beliefs.* I appreciate your assistance in creating a learning environment that respects differences and values the unique contributions of each person.

Mindfulness - Mindfulness has been defined as an ability to attend to the present moment without evaluation or judgment to cloud perception. Mindfulness can be found in western literature on psychology, health, and communication, and is described as an ability to approach life and new concepts with flexibility and without preconceptions. Mindfulness can also be found in eastern and Buddhist literature, where it is described as a moment-to-moment awareness of life that frees one of suffering and attachments, allowing for the development of spiritual traits.

In this course, we will explore spirituality and creativity in everyday life. Rather than seeking extraordinary, or peak, experiences, we will consider what it means to be mindful of the sacredness in "ordinary" life events. This class has been designed to allow you to reflect upon your journey in life and the role that spirituality and mindfulness play in your optimal wellbeing.

Objectives

1. Expand consciousness in daily living by learning about principles of mindfulness.
2. Develop an awareness of how mindfulness can allow one to navigate life's transitions.
3. Gain a sense of spirituality as it fits into holistic well-being, including:
 - a. Personal spirituality by examining synchronicity, creativity, intuition, and mortality (includes experiential creativity exercises that may help enhance spiritual and emotional awareness and expression).
 - b. Social levels of spirituality by examining human relationships, expectations, social roles/norms, and fearlessness.
 - c. Global spirituality by considering one's purpose and meaning (in an historical context) and exploring one's unique contribution to the advancement of humanity.

Course Texts

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. Hyperion.

Langer, E. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Perseus Books.

Course Policies

1. **Confidentiality** – Please respect the privacy and confidentiality of other students in the class. You may choose to discuss your own experiences in this course with anyone you choose. However, you should not discuss what other people say or do during class-related activities with people outside of our class.
2. **Honor Code** – Plagiarism, cheating, and/or misrepresentation will not be tolerated in any form in this class. On all student work throughout this course, students are expected to uphold the Miracle House of Hope Ministries Honor Code, as defined in particular by the following pledge: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”
3. **Office hours** – Office hours are available by appointment. Please make me aware if you would like to meet with me outside of class time, and I will absolutely make time to meet with you.
4. **Course schedule** – What is provided in the syllabus is a tentative outline of course topics to be covered. Due to such situations as guest speaker availability, varying time for class activities, or other circumstances, certain changes may be made throughout the course. It is the responsibility of the instructor to give appropriate notice of such changes, and it is the student's responsibility to take note of these changes.
5. **Make-up work** – All work is due on the dates listed in the syllabus. No make-up work will be accepted without official documented evidence of extenuating circumstances (i.e. serious illness or accident).

6. **Cell phones** – Class time is sacred time. Please make sure you turn off your cell phone before class starts.

7. **Electronic submission of class assignments** – Student assignments will NOT be accepted electronically (via email) without prior permission of the instructor for a specific assignment. Permission will be granted only in extreme circumstances.

8. **Students with disabilities** – Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with Miracle House of Hope Ministries. Miracle House of Hope Ministries will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Grading Scale

90-100 points = A

80-89 points = B

70 – 79 = C

60 – 69 = D

59 or below = F

Course Assignments

Spiritual Journals – 20%

This assignment requires the **development of two separate journals** that will be presented to the rest of the class at the end of the semester.

- a. **Affirmation journal (10%)**– This is a creative journal filled with images and words that represent the spirituality you would like in your life and the world around you. An affirmation journal is different from a scrapbook of old memories/pictures because it looks ‘forward’. You want to seek out images and writings that stretch you just a little beyond where you are now. In this book, affirm what you want in your life that would bring passion, joy, give you energy, and contribute to the world you will leave behind. It is also different than a “wish” journal because you are not presenting material things that you want to “have.” Emphasize what would bring you serenity and love. Your journal should inspire you when you look at it. You can use poems, fables, inspirational and good will stories, pictures from magazines of nature, words that depict adventure and passion, art, photography, etc. Feel free to use your own work, poetry, painting, etc. Everything should be placed into an 8 x 11 notebook and fill **at least** 25 pages (One side is one page).
- b. **Career journal (10%)**– This is a collection of information from research on the Internet (or other related sources). It will be presented in a separate 8x11 notebook and fill **at least** 25 pages (front *and* back is one page for this journal). You will print direct synopses/summaries off of websites (a page that represents what aspect you liked). One page per website will count. You are **strongly encouraged** to write in comments, circle ideas on the pages, or briefly describe what intrigued you about a specific website/career, but there will be no formal paper or summary in this journal.

The career journal should display all kinds of jobs and social organizations or institutions that relate to your “dream job.” Too often, people settle for a “traditional” path and go through the motions of pursuing their career on autopilot. Our careers contribute to our identity and our sense of meaning and purpose in the world. People who love their work often say they would do it even if they were not getting paid. And some people even say that they would pay someone *else* for letting them do their work. See if you can find possibilities that inspire you to feel similarly positive about working.

These are not **job “openings.”** *Do not search under career search engines.* Think of the things you love to do and would love to learn about. Then put them into the web search engine to see variations of how they exist in the world. Imagine that you are an entrepreneur and you need to research how other people do things. Then you will take your favorite pieces from various places to build the job that you would love. The search will guide you, so you can start out unclear. Just post your favorite findings in the journal, including their descriptions. Go for breadth on this project. Try to incorporate as many different options as possible rather than focusing exclusively on one area.

- c. **Poster/collage summarizing your ‘favorite findings’** In order to receive full credit for the journals, you will need to present your findings to the class. After all of this searching, what can you conclude about how you will manifest your spirituality in the world? This is what you will discuss in your presentation. These presentations will take place on the last two meetings. Your presentation should last approximately 15-20 minutes. Please come prepared to describe what your process has been in both of these projects (affirmation and career journals), and how they have influenced your thoughts, feelings and sense of direction about your career possibilities. Please speak to the instructor if you have concerns about this component—it will be a casual roundtable discussion format and need not be a significant source of student stress.

Course Texts, Supplemental Readings, and Weekly Reflection Papers – 20%

Because we all learn from each other in this class, it is essential that you complete the assigned readings on schedule and come prepared to participate in the class discussions. Weekly reflection papers are an opportunity to integrate the week’s readings, your thoughts on any class material or activities, and any experiences in your own life that seem relevant to your own process of spirituality and mindfulness. Please type and double-space your papers using a 12-point font. I encourage you to be creative with these papers—write them as you might journal for your own development and process, not for mine. As long as you show that you’re reading and thinking about the material’s relevance to your day-to-day life, you will receive full credit for these papers.

Class Discussion, Attendance, and Participation– 20%

Each person in the class should come prepared with the reading(s) for the week. The instructor and students will collaboratively facilitate the discussion and questions. You do not need to be an expert on the material nor be able to answer all questions on mindfulness or meditation.

Due to the experiential nature of this class, your active and thoughtful participation during group discussion, creative writing and meditation exercises is essential for an effective learning experience. The instructor will take roll in each class. Unexcused absences will impact your ability to play a significant role in class discussion, thereby reducing your grade. Per UF policy, the student must provide proper documentation in order for their absence to be excused. Please contact the instructor if you know you are going to miss class.

*******You can consider that your weekly presence will earn you a ‘C’ and it will take contributions beyond this to develop a grade of ‘A’ for participation.*******

In particular, evidence of reading and integrating the assigned books and articles for the course will elevate your score closer to 100%.

***Please note that level of disclosure about your personal life is up to you and will not impact your grade. You can share at various levels – thoughts and questions about the books, observations about life events related to class, as well as personal applications and questions related to class.**

*In order to create a safe and open atmosphere that encourages the exploration of personal spirituality, I ask that CONFIDENTIALITY be kindly respected and observed by all class members. CONFIDENTIALITY means that whatever personal information a student or instructor discloses during class, within the limits applicable by law, should remain within and among us as valued, confidential information.

Professional Annotated Bibliography on Spirituality – 10%

In order to increase your awareness of the scientific research on spirituality, you will give a brief (1/2 page typed, single-spaced) summary of **5 peer-reviewed articles** in an area of your choice. (This means that they should be found in professional journals as opposed to articles in pop magazines or opinions on websites). **At least two of these studies must be outcome studies, including either qualitative or quantitative analysis of data; the remaining can be theoretical articles on spirituality that discuss how the term relates to your profession of choice.** Basically, you are looking for articles on spirituality that will inform you as a future professional about how to incorporate spirituality into your work.

Helpful **keywords** to help you pull up spirituality-related articles include:

Creativity, intuition, death, art/play therapy, nontraditional/alternative health, holistic, love, adventure therapy, experiential, eastern, spirit, spirituality, spiritual issues, transcendence, purpose and meaning, homeopathy, ancient wisdom, natural healing.

It is important for you to select articles directly distinguishing spirituality from psychology topics. You can almost always find the term directly – even if it takes other words to get at it.

It is ideal for you to select articles that are related. For instance, if you are interested in helping professions, you might choose articles about counseling and spirituality. Other topics could be health and spirituality, wellness and spirituality, nursing and spirituality, etc. If you are feeling

uncertain about your career path, you can explore several different areas (e.g., law and advertising). Feel free to see me if you are having trouble with a starting point. However, it is best to get an **early start**. This is a challenging project, and the closer you get to the deadline, the more difficult it will seem.

Your ½-page summaries should focus purely on the findings reported about spirituality, and should **NOT** include personal reactions.

Additional Book and Reaction Paper – 10%

Mindfulness is addressed in many spiritual traditions and can take many different forms in the literature. In addition to the two course texts, you are required to read a third book of your choice that relates to this class. Some titles are suggested below; you are welcome to choose another book if you wish. However, you must clear any book you choose, whether on the list or not, with the instructor first. Please consider this assignment an opportunity to really look into an area of the class material that interests you personally. The book is hopefully one you would enjoy reading on your own, even if you were not required to. **NOTE:** A 4-page, typed double-spaced reaction paper summarizing the book's salient points and thoughtfully reflecting on the book's relevance for your own life is required.

Spiritual/Religious Experience – 10%

Attend a spiritual/religious event, discussion, workshop etc. from a culture different than your own, and write a 4-page reflection paper about it. You **MUST** get approval from the instructor prior to completing this experience. This does **NOT** include Miracle House of Hope Ministries guest speakers. We will discuss this assignment in greater detail the first day of class.

Writing your Obituary, Epitaph, and Eulogy, and creating a Soundtrack for your Funeral—10%

In many wisdom traditions, regular contemplation of our mortality is regarded as one of the most instructive exercises to help us live each moment to fullest, with greater appreciation, sincerity, love, and joy. Regardless of personal beliefs about the afterlife, this exercise is designed to help you reflect on the life you are living *now* and the life you most want to live before the time of your death. The instructor will also complete this exercise, and afterwards we will share as a class about our experiences completing this assignment. We will also discuss this assignment together in class later in the semester. While you are encouraged to refrain from completing this assignment until closer to the due date, you are also encouraged to begin reflecting on it now.

Please see below for an explanation of the individual components of the project:

Obituary—An obituary is the short announcement of your death that may appear in the newspaper. Most commonly, it includes your age at the time of death, the people who survive you, and the location of services (if any). It may also include the cause of death, your notable accomplishments, and your occupation. Please reflect on where you'd like to be in the process of your life when you die, and write a realistic obituary.

Epitaph—An epitaph is the pithy statement that is inscribed on your tombstone. Consider this the condensation of the essence of your life into a phrase. It may help you to think about how you would like to be remembered, or how you would like to be thought of by a stranger passing your grave. If you do not plan to have a tombstone or gravesite (the instructor falls into this category herself), please still complete this exercise.

Eulogy—A eulogy is the longer, more intimate summation of your life and your person that is read by a loved one or a spiritual figure at your funeral/memorial service. This part of the assignment will probably take the most time. Eulogies may be creative, poetic, humorous, and/or heartfelt, but please take the assignment seriously. Think ahead to the time of your death, and consider where you will have lived, what your life’s work entailed, with whom were you in significant relationship(s), your likes and interests (particular food, books, art, places, etc.), your religious, spiritual or philosophical beliefs, what brought you joy, what aspects of you brought joy to the people who are mourning you, etc. You may also want to include details such as your financial situation, education, and health.

Soundtrack for your funeral—After you have died, imagine that you will leave a CD with music that will be played to the mourners at your funeral or memorial service. What songs would you include on the CD, and why? What kinds of words, images, sounds, and feelings do you wish to convey to the people you will leave behind you, about your life, your love for them, your regrets, your beauty, the fun and joy you’ve experienced, what you’ve learned is important, etc.? **NOTE:** This assignment requires that you turn in a typewritten component listing the songs on your soundtrack (minimum of 8), and a paragraph explaining why you have chosen to include each song. You are encouraged to bring the CD to class to share on the day the assignment is due (and share with the instructor, who would love to hear what you’ve put together), but due to some students’ technological limitations, a hard copy of the CD is not required.

Supplemental Readings:

Albom, Mitch	Tuesdays with Morrie
Badiner, Allen Hunt	Mindfulness in the Marketplace
Beck, Charlotte Joko	Everyday Zen Nothing Special
Bennett-Goleman, Tara	Emotional Alchemy: How the Mind can Heal the Heart
Bien, Beverly & Thomas	Finding the Center Within
Boorstein, Sylvia	It’s Easier Than You Think That’s Funny, You Don’t Look Buddhist Don’t Just Do Something, Sit There Pay Attention, For Goodness’ Sake
Borysenko, Joan	Minding the Body, Mending the Mind A Woman’s Journey to God
Brach, Tara	Radical Acceptance
Buscaglia, Leo	Living, Loving, Learning; Love

Chodron, Pema	When Things Fall Apart The Places That Scare You Comfortable With Uncertainty Start Where You Are The Wisdom of No Escape No Time to Lose
Coelho, Paulo	The Alchemist
Dossey, Larry	Healing Words, Prayer is Good Medicine Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind Body to a New Era of Healing
Epstein, Mark	Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart Thoughts without a Thinker
Gawain, Shakti	Creative Visualization The Path of Transformation Developing Intuition
Glaser, Aura	A Call to Compassion
Goldstein, Joseph	The Experience of Insight, Insight Meditation: The Experience of Freedom
Goldstein, Joseph	with Seeking the Heart of Wisdom
Kornfield, Jack	
Goleman, Daniel	The Meditative Mind
Grey, Alex	The Mission of Art
Hanh, Thich Nhat	Peace is Every Step The Miracle of Mindfulness Calming the Fearful Mind Living Buddha, Living Christ
Hartzema, Robert	You Are the Weaver of Your World
His Holiness The Dalai Lama	The Universe in a Single Atom and every other book he has written`
Kabat-Zinn, Jon	Coming to Our Senses Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Mindfulness Meditation
Khalsa, Dharma Singh and Stauth, Cameron	Meditation As Medicine
Khema, Ayya	Being Nobody, Going Nowhere Who is My Self? A Guide to Buddhist Meditation
Kongtrül, Dzigar	It's Up to You
Ladner, Lorne	The Lost Art of Compassion
Levine, Stephen	A Gradual Awakening Who Dies? An Investigation of Conscious Living and Conscious Dying
Liu, Eric	Guiding Lights
Manné, Joy	Conscious Breathing
Merton, Thomas	Thomas Merton: Essential Writings
Mipham Rinpoche, Sakyong	Turning the Mind Into An Ally

McDonald, Kathleen	Ruling Your World
Remen, Rachel Naomi	How to Meditate
Reynolds, David K.	Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal
	Playing Ball on Running Water: Living Morita
	Psychotherapy—the Japanese Way to Building a Better Life
Rosenberg, Larry	Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation
Salzburg, Sharon	Voices of Insight,
	Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness
Schaef, Anne Wilson	Living in Process: Basic Truths for Living the Path of the Soul
Strand, Clark	Meditation Without Gurus: A Guide to the Heart of Practice
Thurman, Robert	Infinite Life
Tolle, Eckhart	The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment
	Weiss, Andrew Beginning Mindfulness
Weiss, Brian	Many Lives, Many Masters
Wilber, Ken	Integral Psychology
	No Boundary
	The Simple Feeling of Being
	Grace and Grit

Schedule of Topics (** Indicates work DUE)

August 29th:	Introductions Review syllabus Go over all assignments Discuss textbooks Breath Exercise and Breathing Article Stop Sign Experiment
September 5th:	Mindfulness – What is it? **Reflection Paper due** Kabat-Zinn: Introduction and Part I, pp. 1 – 46. Guided Meditation Discuss Stop Sign Exercise
September 12th:	Mindfulness: Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions **Reflection Paper due** Kabat-Zinn: Part I, pp. 47 – 99. Guided Meditation My Life As a Book Exercise
September 19th:	Varieties of Meditation **Reflection Paper due**

Kabat-Zinn: Part II, pp.103 - 169. Body
Scan Meditation

September 26th: **Meditation: A Bit about Practice **Book
Report Essay Due**
Reflection Paper due
Meditation**

October 2nd: **Gratitude, Forgiveness and Mindfulness
Reflection Paper Due
Kabat-Zinn: Part III, In the Spirit of Mindfulness, pp.171-270
Forgiveness Meditation
Letter of Forgiveness**

October 9th: **A Different Take: Roots and Costs of Mindlessness
Reflection Paper Due
Langer: pp. 1-79
Walking Meditation**

October 16th: **Spirituality and Career: Exploring the Possibilities....
Reflection Paper Due
Annotated Bibliography Due**

Langer: pp. 133-152
Meditation: Eating a Raisin Mindfully

- October 23rd:** **Mindful Living: Mindfully Sleeping, Eating, Breathing & Exercising**
****Reflection Paper Due****
Langer: pp. 115-131; 171-204
OFF-CAMPUS ACTIVITY PLANNED – details TBA
- October 31st :** **Mindfulness, Aging and Mortality**
****Obituary, Epitaph and Eulogy Paper Due****
****Soundtrack to your Funeral Due****
****Reflection Paper due****
Langer: pp. 81-113
Guided Meditation
- November 7th:** **Mindful Relationships: An Exploration of Interpersonal Communication**
****Spiritual/Religious Experience Paper Due ****
**** Reflection Paper Due****
At home readings: Carl Rogers, *On Listening*; and Phillip Moffitt, *The Yoga of Relationships*
Tonglen Meditation
- November 14th:** **Mindful Relationships: Fear, Honesty, and Love**
****Reflection Paper Due****
Langer: pp. 153-170
At home readings: Moustakas, *Honesty, Idiocy and Manipulation*
Loving Kindness Meditation
- November 21st:** ****Spiritual Presentations**** (Both journals and the poster/collage must be completed and delivered at the time of your presentation)
- November 28th:** ****Spiritual Presentations**** (Both journals and the poster/collage must be completed and delivered at the time of your presentation)
- December 5th:** **Culminating Experience/Reflections**
- December 13th:** **Essay Final Exam at 5:30 pm**