Instructor Information

Instructor: Lynette Monteiro, PhD, C.Psych.
Office Location: Room Number, Building
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Office Hours: TBA or by appointment

Course Identification

Course Number: EMP 2010HF
Course Format: In-class
Course Name: Buddhist Mindfulness Approaches to Mental Health
Course Location: Room Number, Building
Class Times: Four sessions over the semester (Saturdays)
Prerequisites: N/A

Course Description

Current Buddhist views of mental health incorporate the Dharma and Western psychological approaches to mental health that include a broad range of behavioural, cognitive, and experiential approaches. Historically, Western approaches have been rooted in theories of an ill mind and poor human functioning with treatment of mental illness reflected in the reigning theory of mind. Current models of mindfulness-based and mindfulness-informed draw from the Dharma as an experiential practice are supported by a cognitive process of discernment. Key features of approaches using mindfulness are the cultivation of a fluid sense of self, emotion regulation and the modulation of the causes of stress. These parallel the Buddhist concepts of non-self, skillful or appropriate responses, and the understanding of the causes of suffering. This understanding of mental health has shifted concepts of mental illness with promises of success and cautionary tales of risk.

Buddhist and Western psychological perspectives of mental health share a commonality of being culturally-influenced. To understand the impact and implications of the Buddhist view of mental health, the root Buddhist teachings need to be understood in their cultural context. Because we are embedded in a culture vastly different from the Buddha’s time, the exploration must include our perspectives of mental health and how our own views are socio-cultural constructions. From this platform, we can examine how Buddhist teachings and their integration with Western models seek to sustain mental health. Secularized adaptations of the Dharma for psychological treatment will be examined with consideration of risks of appropriation, dilution, and distortion as well as potential negative effects of mindfulness-based therapies.
Course Resources

Required Course Texts/Bibliography
- No specific texts. All readings will be provided or available via online resources.

Course Website(s)
- Blackboard https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at http://portal.utoronto.ca and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the My Courses module, where you’ll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students. Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask [xxx] for further help.

- Personal Website N/A

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

College

Graduate Level

Each graduate program has detailed statements of “degree level expectations” (goals and outcomes) found in the respective program Handbooks. The harmonized course goals and outcomes (below) describe the level of knowledge and skill that will be characteristic of a typical graduate of the program. Instructors are required to develop a statement of learning outcomes for each course. These outcomes will provide benchmarks for course evaluation/grading and program assessment. Doctoral students are typically required to demonstrate higher levels of ability or expertise.

Religious Faith and Heritage: Students will have an opportunity to explore the general and personal contextual aspects of Buddhist practice and the implications of these aspects to the effective use of Buddhist-based or –informed approaches in psychotherapy.

Culture and Context: Students will explore and develop an understanding of the differences between a faith- and secular-based approach to interventions such as mindfulness. The distinction between mindfulness-informed and mindfulness-based approaches will be used as a template for this exploration.

Spiritual/Vocational Formation: Students will learn how to cultivate their awareness of the impact of practice on their own spiritual development and the ways in which their experience is the ground for cultivating empathy and compassion for themselves and others.

Practices of Area of Specialization: Students will develop an understanding of the theories underpinning Buddhist approaches to mental health and the secular psychotherapies that draw from both Buddhist and Western Psychological concepts. They will also acquire skills in mindfulness approaches based in the Buddhist foundational teachings that can be applied flexibly as faith- or secular-based approaches.
**GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”**

**CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

**CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS**

**EXPECTATIONS:**

*In this course students are expected to demonstrate the following:*

<p>| 1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge | Students will demonstrate familiarity with general and personal contextual aspects of Buddhist practice and the implications of these aspects to the effective use of Buddhist-based or -informed approaches in psychotherapy. Students will articulate an understanding of the differences between a faith- and secular-based approach to interventions such as mindfulness. The distinction between mindfulness-informed and mindfulness-based approaches will be used as a template for this exploration. | Session 1 examines the ways in which Buddhist and psychological concepts are rooted in cultural perspectives of health. This includes exploration of culture, race, gender, socio-psychological factors that can elevate or impede mental health. Session 2 integrates these aspects into the study of compassion. Discussions focus on these issues and students are expected to articulate their own cultural and individual frames of reference with respect to mental health and spiritual inclinations. Session 3 explores the intersection of traditional and secular models and its impact on the ethics of/in mindfulness therapies. Session 4 provides the opportunity to further integrate the practices in the service of others. The focus on values and its impact on interventions offers students an opportunity to understand how empathy and presence are crucial to therapy. These developments will be addressed in their discussions and the paper on ethics in traditional and contemporary Buddhist mindfulness. Session 4 completes the arc of moral cultivation through an exploration of the role of compassion (and differentiation from empathy) as the relational... |</p>
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| 2. Research and Scholarship is defined as the ability to identify a new or unresolved question, to locate that question within a corpus of scholarly research & assess critically the relevant literature, to adopt a methodology(-ies), and to then formulate a thesis and reasoned argument(s) on the basis of the evidence. | Students will demonstrate their understanding by  
- articulating the roots of Buddhist concepts of suffering, its cause, and the path to its cessation.  
- explaining the benefits and risks of Buddhist and Buddhist-derived models of mental health  
- providing interactive and written evidence of their discernment of the degree to which research supports current mindfulness approaches  
- designing ways to mitigate concerns about secularized approaches to Buddhist concepts | Session 3 develops comparative analyses of current literature on mindfulness. Papers assigned will demonstrate the development of critical reading of the current literature. Discussions will focus on refining the students’ understanding of the literature and develop critical thinking in the appraisal of the outcomes of current research models. |
| 3. Level of Application of Knowledge is defined as the ability to engage in self-directed or assisted research, and the ability to produce innovative or original analysis within the context of graduate seminars and courses. In some cases this includes the application of a research language. | Students will show how they have understood current research by  
- explaining the intention of mindfulness-informed and mindfulness-based approaches  
- presenting on and discussing the impact of current understandings of Buddhist-informed and Buddhist-based approaches to mental health issues  
- translating the teachings of the roots of Buddhist concepts of suffering, its cause, and the path to its cessation in current language | The arc of Buddhist practice is of compassion and the commonality to other psychotherapeutic modalities will be traced through discussion. Students will be expected to identify concepts in Buddhist psychotherapy and address their impact in various settings.  
The subtle influences of Judeo-Christian frameworks and our privileged views of health are explored in the discussions in Sessions 1 and 3. Students will have to demonstrate the ability to develop clear comprehension of their interconnectedness with their environment through discussion points and the |
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<td>4. Professional Capacity or Autonomy is defined as the ability to translate the knowledge gained in other research or professional settings, e.g., to undertake further studies in their area of concentration; or to enter or return to other professional vocations for which an advanced understanding of Theological Studies is necessary or beneficial. Students will demonstrate how they have cultivated their awareness of the impact of practice on their own spiritual development and the ways in which their experience is the ground for cultivating empathy and compassion for themselves and others. This will be evidenced through discussions focused on developing a personal practice that supports and sustains their understanding of Buddhist concepts as they go forward into their other trainings exploring the commonality among faith-based traditions as it informs their relationships in the larger community.</td>
<td>summary of their readings. Issues related to ethics and the moral arc of Buddhist concepts are explored and discussed in Sessions 2 &amp; 3. Students are encouraged in the discussion sections to explore issues of values-neutrality in therapy and the subtle influences that may require in ethical decision-making. Further, this is an important opportunity for students to develop deeper understandings of the ethics of using a spiritual process in secular health care systems.</td>
<td>Session 3 explores the cultivation of values, ethics, and moral reasoning from a Buddhist and secular perspective. Discussions and papers by the students will explore the challenges and benefits of bringing a spiritual process to secular practitioners. Specifically, this focuses on the student’s own spiritual path and its potential impact on others. Session 3 also explores the intersection of traditional and secular models and its impact on the ethics of/in mindfulness therapies. Session 4 provides the opportunity to further integrate the practices in the service of others. The focus on values and its impact on interventions offers students an opportunity to understand how empathy and presence are crucial to therapy. These developments will be addressed in their discussions and the paper on ethics in</td>
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<td>Students will demonstrate cultivation of the elements of mindful speech through discussions with their peers. By presenting written critiques of current literature using the framework of research-based language, they will demonstrate how they discern between evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence.</td>
<td>Students will practice the guidelines of mindful speech in their presentations and reflections of each other’s work that are co-established in Session 1. The overall trajectory of the course is to develop a discerning mind in the face of the complexity of this topic. The underlying theme of the course is the appropriate use of Buddhist approaches and mindfulness especially in the context of trauma and with persons of other faith-based practices. This thread runs through all discussions and is a lens through which skillful means in psychotherapeutic relations is explored. Communication competencies are practiced throughout the program. Guidelines and frameworks for interactions will be established in Session 1 and fostered through the discussion periods of each session. These includes practice of Right Speech, which is in effect a practice of compassionate relationship. Presentations throughout the sessions and particularly in the integrative session (Session 4) will provide opportunity to expand on these skills.</td>
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<td>5. Level of Communication Skills is defined as clear and effective communication in both oral and written forms; the construction of logical arguments; the making of informed judgments on complex issues; and facility with standard conventions of style for scholarly writing. Cohort formation is a component of all graduate programs.</td>
<td>Students will demonstrate cultivation of the elements of mindful speech through discussions with their peers. By presenting written critiques of current literature using the framework of research-based language, they will demonstrate how they discern between evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence.</td>
<td>Students will practice the guidelines of mindful speech in their presentations and reflections of each other’s work that are co-established in Session 1. The overall trajectory of the course is to develop a discerning mind in the face of the complexity of this topic. The underlying theme of the course is the appropriate use of Buddhist approaches and mindfulness especially in the context of trauma and with persons of other faith-based practices. This thread runs through all discussions and is a lens through which skillful means in psychotherapeutic relations is explored. Communication competencies are practiced throughout the program. Guidelines and frameworks for interactions will be established in Session 1 and fostered through the discussion periods of each session. These includes practice of Right Speech, which is in effect a practice of compassionate relationship. Presentations throughout the sessions and particularly in the integrative session (Session 4) will provide opportunity to expand on these skills.</td>
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<td>6. Awareness of the Limits of Knowledge is defined as the recognition that Theological Studies is a complex discipline,</td>
<td>Students will show understanding of the differences between a faith- and secular-based approach to interventions such as mindfulness. The</td>
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GRADUATE “DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS”

comprising: a broad array of subject areas; methods and sources; various ecclesiastical traditions and social contexts; and, insights from other disciplines.

CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES

distinction between mindfulness-informed and mindfulness-based approaches will be used as a template for this exploration.

They will articulate the roots of Buddhist concepts of suffering, its cause, and the path to its cessation and understand the benefits and risks of Buddhist and Buddhist-derived models of mental health.

CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS

complex history of Buddhism and the current complex relationship it has with secularized models of Buddhist concepts will be the lens through which it is explored. Issues of “unearned privilege” that underlies the valuing of cognitive versus experiential approaches and the unexamined roots of our Western values will be explored in Sessions 3 & 4.

Students’ papers will be guided to reflect a personal and professional exploration of the impact of their social contexts on their understanding of mental health.

Students are expected to have a background in the basic concepts of Buddhism. This course will not address the comparative philosophy of Buddhism as a religion or a theory of mind. It is not a training in the use of secular clinical mindfulness skills.

**Evaluation**

**Requirements**

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in five areas:

Graduate Students:

1. Participation and reading with evidence of careful preparation through short (one paragraph) written summaries submitted each week (between formal sessions) (15%)
2. In-session demonstration of selected practices of mindfulness (15%)
3. A short paper (35%) demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between Buddhist concepts of mental health and how mindfulness approaches would be integrated into psychotherapeutic/caregiving practice (3 pages, single space, Times New Roman, 10 pt). Due one (1) week after the third session.
4. A summary paper (35%) on the debate between traditional and contemporary mindfulness and relationship of Buddhist-based ethics and values to Buddhist perspectives of mental health (3 pages, single space, Times New Roman, 10 pt). Due by 8 PM the day before the last session.

**Grading System**

A+ (90-100)
A (85-89)
A- (80-84)
B+ (77-79)
B (73-76)
B- (70-72)
Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

**Late work (BD).** Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. [The instructor should stipulate the penalty for late work.] This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course. Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

**Late work (Graduate).**

Papers are expected to be submitted via email by 8 PM the day before the last class. Three grace days in total will be allotted following which no extensions will be given. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.

**Course grades.** Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy ([http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm)) or college grading policy.

**Policies**

**Accessibility.** Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at [http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/](http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/). The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

**Plagiarism.** Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST Basic Degree Handbook and the Graduate program Handbooks

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm.

**Back-up copies.** Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

**Obligation to check email.** At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course. *Forwarding* your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

**Email communication with the course instructor.** The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs should be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

**Course Schedule**

Offered over 4 sessions with four segments in each day (noted as 1a., 1b., 1c. & 1d. below)

9 AM – 4 PM; short breaks in morning and afternoon; lunch break at noon

If necessary or requested, there may be inter-session online group meetings organized

**Session 1**

**Establishing Understanding**

1a. *Introductions, administrative issues, overview of course content, expectations*

1b. *Cultural Concepts of Mental Health*

   a. Overview of the historical and current definition of mental health
   b. Spirituality, psychology, and mental health
   c. Exploration of our views of mental health, cultural based ideas of psychological weakness, malingering, etc.
Readings

De Silva, 78-81.
De Silva, 82-92.

Salguero, P. 2016. “Paging Dr. Dharma: The curative virtues of Buddhist practice are as old as Buddhism itself.” Tricycle Magazine, 71-104.

1c. Buddhism and Mental Health

a. What was Buddhism intended to do for us?
b. What are the cultural, societal, political influences in its history?
c. How has it evolved from Theravada to Mahayana (to Secular)

Readings


1d. Discussion/Reflection: What has been our cultural and personal development in general? Regarding our Buddhist/spiritual views? Subtle biases, influences?

Session 2

Buddhism – Path of Wisdom and Compassion

2a. Studying the Wisdom Path of the Dharma

a. Four Noble Truths
b. Eightfold Path
   i. Wisdom – clarifying the mind
   ii. Sila – the moral arc
   iii. Concentration – cultivating steadiness
   c. Implications for psychological perspectives

Readings
2b. Discussion/Reflection & Practice: Influence of core Buddhist concepts on perspectives of mental health

2c. Practicing the Compassion Path of the Dharma
   a. Brahma Viharas & Bodhisattva Vow – practice of virtues and values

Readings
Four brahma viharas and near & far enemies: http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/dhamma-lists/

2d. Discussion/Reflection & Practice: How do the Brahma Viharas and bodhisattva vows cultivate a different perspective of mental health?

Session 3
Modern Buddhism

3a. Secular Buddhism
   a. Stepping out of the role of rituals
   b. Secularization/Psychologizing of Buddhism: Mindfulness today
      i. The controversy of sila, ethics, values, and virtues

Readings
Secular Buddhism podcast: Robert Wright on why Buddhism is True (interview).  

3b. Discussion/Reflection & Practice: What are the risks of the contemporary mindfulness approach to the Buddhist model of mental health? Does it value the individual process over the communal good? Has sila, the moral arc of practice, been left out?
3c. Common Ground: Integration of Buddhism and Mindfulness

   a. Mindfulness-informed, mindfulness-based
      i. Research – hope or hype?
   b. Perspectives of self, emotional regulation, stress models and skillful means

Readings

   American Psychologist. 70, no. 7 (October): 621-631.
Heuman, Linda. 2014. “Don’t believe the hype: Interview with neuroscientist Cathy Kerr.” Tricycle
Monteiro, L. 2016. “Implicit ethics and mindfulness: Subtle assumptions that MBIs are values-neutral.”
   International Journal of Psychotherapy, Special Issue: Mindfulness as Psychotherapy (July), 210-224.
   the middle path in the tangle of concerns.” Mindfulness 6, no. 1, 1-13.
   mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions. Washington, DC, US: American
   Psychological Association.

3d. Discussion/Reflection & Practice: How do we honour diversity and the values of our clients in this
model?

Session 4

Buddhist Mindfulness for Compassionate Caregiving

4a. Buddhist Models of Compassionate Care

   a. Compassionate action
   b. Moral arc of practice

Readings

Edelglass, William. 2016. “Mindfulness and Moral Transformation: Awakening to others in Śāntideva’s
ethics.” In The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Ethics. Edited by Shyam Ranganathan. London
   UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.
Giles, Cheryl A. & Miller, Willa B. 2012. Selections from The Arts of Contemplative Care: Pioneering
   voices in Buddhist chaplaincy and pastoral work. Boston MA: Wisdom Publications
Shambhala Publications. 2014. Selections from Radical Compassion: Shambhala Publications authors on
   the path of boundless love. Boston MA: Shambhala Publications

4b. Discussion/Reflection & Practice: Who are we becoming in these moments of practice?

4c. Reflections & Going Forth
Bibliography


Cheah, Joseph. "Adaptation of Vipassana Meditation by Convert Buddhists and Sympathizers.”


