

		NAME:	Kammie Takahashi		
		DEPARTMENT:	Religion Studies		
		TERM OFFERED:	FALL 2014		
Are you teaching the FYS as an overload?	N	Are you interested in attending a 3-day, end of term, paid writing workshop for faculty?	Y	Are you applying for grant money through FCT for this FYS?	N
Department Chair approval to offer this course as part of your faculty load		(In lieu of a signature, electronic approval may be sent to <a href="mailto:WPC@muhlenberg.edu">WPC@muhlenberg.edu</a> )			

## Proposal to offer a First-Year Seminar

This form should be completed for all new and returning first-year seminar courses. First-year seminar proposals will be reviewed and approved by the Writing Program Committee. We understand that your proposal may be in the preliminary stages of development, but this information helps us provide you with feedback and approval. Please submit this completed form to [WPC@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:WPC@muhlenberg.edu), by **Friday, January 24, 2014**.

**If you have offered this first-year seminar at the college in previous years**, please provide:

- The title \_\_\_\_\_
- The most recent semester the seminar was offered \_\_\_\_\_
- The most recent syllabus. *The syllabus may be attached in lieu of the information requested below, or you may provide the information and receive feedback from the Writing Program Committee.*

**If you are seeking approval for a new first-year seminar**, please provide:

- A Working Title of Seminar
  - Compose a working title that you think will be appealing to incoming students while also emphasizing the academic focus of the course.
  - Please Note: Titles longer than 24 characters will be abbreviated on course schedules and student transcripts.
- Catalog Description of Seminar
  - In 200 words or less, please explain the seminar's focus, including the major questions that you will address and a few of the texts that you plan to read.
  - A sentence that describes the kind of writing you plan to do in the course would be helpful.
- Proposed Reading List
  - First-year seminars must include rigorous, college-level reading. Students need to learn how to negotiate academic texts.
  - Please note that films cannot substitute for readings.
- A brief discussion of how writing will shape the pedagogy of your course
  - What kinds of writing assignments do you envision and how many?
  - Please see the attached Guidelines & Best Practices for Teaching First-Year Seminars for more information.

Approved

Provisionally approved

Not approved

**Working Title**

Sitting Down to Write: Investigating Contemplation and Writing

**Catalog Description of Seminar**

"Reduce Stress!" "Discover Inner Peace!" From Tazo's Zen Tea to Google's "Search Inside Yourself" seminars, modern Western references to traditional meditative techniques are everywhere. What are the traditional, often religious, referents of these modern expressions, and what elements of those practices are common across traditions and historical periods? What role do these practices and references to them play in today's American culture? This seminar explores the wide variety of traditional and modern contemplative techniques, as well as their contemporary implementations in the diverse spheres of the visual and performing arts, education, business, exercise, psychology, environmental ethics, medical science, and activist practices. How is meditation understood as process? As performance? As expression? In reading authors who have written about meditation, or have used it in their own writing, we will also experiment with various contemplative writing exercises to explore their possible contributions to our own writing process.

**Proposed Reading List**

The following is a list of readings I am considering.

Traditions of Contemplation: Observational and Generative

Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Blackwell, 1995.

Dogen, E. *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*. New York: North Point Press, 1995.

Eckhart, M. *Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1995.

Roth, H. D. "Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis." In M. Csíkszentmihályi and P.J. Ivanhoe, *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of Laozi*. SUNY, 1999, pp.58-96.

Merton, T. *The Wisdom of the Desert (New Directions)*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1970.

Goleman, Daniel. *The Meditative Mind: The Varieties of Meditative Experience*. New York: Tarcher, 1996.

Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*. Vintage, 1989.

Meditation and Art

Basho, M. *Narrow Road to the Interior: And Other Writings*. Boston: Shambhala, 1999.

Dustin, C. & Ziegler, J. *Practicing Mortality: Art, Philosophy, and Contemplative Seeing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

The Science of Mindfulness

Austin, James. *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

Varela, Francisco, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

Secular Applications

Riskin, L. "The Contemplative Lawyer: On the Potential Contributions of Mindfulness Meditation to Law Students, Lawyers, and their Clients." *Harvard Negotiation Law Review*, 7, 1, 2002.

Levy, David. "No time to think: Reflections on information technology and contemplative scholarship." *Ethics and Information Technology*, Volume 9, Number 4 / December, 2007.

Williams, J. Mark G. and Jon Kabat-Zinn. *Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins and Applications*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Baer, Ruth A. "Mindfulness Training as a Clinical Intervention: A Conceptual Review." *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10, 2 (Summer 2003): 125-43.

Approved

Provisionally approved

Not approved

### Being Mindful as Readers and Writers

Burggraf, Susan and Peter Grossenbacher. "Contemplative Modes of Inquiry in Liberal Arts Education." *LiberalArtsOnline*, June 2007.

Barbezat, Daniel & Mirabai Bush. *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Moellering, Kurt. "Walking as Knowing in William Wordsworth's *The Excursion* and Henry David Thoreau's Natural History Essays" in "William Wordsworth, Henry David Thoreau, and the Construction of the Green Atlantic World." PhD diss., Northeastern University, 2010.

#### **A brief discussion of how writing will shape the pedagogy of your course**

One of the keys to good writing is patient and careful observation, a holding-off from judgment while we notice patterns, tendencies, irregularities and synchronicities. It is a process that resembles the contemplative techniques of a variety of philosophical and religious traditions. Students will be asked to engage with these techniques as objects of their own critical analysis, but also to explore the practices of introspection and observation as potential resources for their own writing-as-thinking process. Thus, journaling, free-writing, passage pointing, and descriptive writing will be frequently assigned, and their utility in the writing process examined by students based on their own experience.

Not all meditation involves merely observing, however, and the course will also take up more analytic, embodied, and creative forms, again as objects of study and as models for the reading and writing.

I would like to assign aspects of the final paper on a particular form of meditation in stages and versions, allowing students to take their time with discrete types of thinking and writing about one particular topic. I envision these stages to look something like this:

Stage 1: Central Questions (free writing in response to initial readings)

Stage 2: Descriptive Essay (describing interesting or surprising elements in the material)

Stage 3: Questioning Assumptions (reading one another's writing and trying to locate assumptions within it)

Stage 4: Investigating Possible Criticisms (writing from a "Devil's Advocate" position, making an argument)

Stage 5: First Full Draft (rewriting a single section multiple ways to explore the power of language)

Stage 6: Final Version (a 7-10 page analytical paper)