Contemplation and Creativity

Southwest Symposium for Contemplative Pedagogies
HON204: Course for students from ASU Bartett Honors College

- Question
- Intention
- Methodology
- Practice
- Assessment
- Examples of Creative Practice
- Research Study
- Q and A
Question:

How can contemplative practice help students enhance creativity?
Intention

My intent is to encourage students to:

- Experience deeply and fully the space of creativity
- Explore tools to allow this space to emerge (however fleetingly)
- Practice with attention and non-judgment
- Communicate
Communicate

Students share their practice with each other

Discover collaborations with individuals or the entire class

Present creative project at the end of the semester
Methodology

Introduce methods of contemplative practice including conscious movement and stillness during every class period

Practice physical exercise “flow” at least once a week

Explore principles and discipline of “deep practice” in a self-chosen creative discipline

Introduce literature in neuroscience and psychology demonstrating how attention, intention, and contemplative practices impact brain function
Deep Practice

- *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle

- “Deep Practice is a slow and uncomfortable interaction with something that is just out of your grasp and just beyond your capabilities.” Anne Bogart

- “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” Samuel Beckett

- Deep Practice actually changes the physical makeup of the brain.
Practice outside of class

- Select activity they want to improve (drawing, playing an instrument, photography, journaling, poetry, body work such as chi gung, yoga, or running)

- Commit to practice 10 minutes a day for the semester

- Integrate contemplative practice into daily deep practice
Practice in class (75 minutes 2x a week for 16 weeks)

Seated Contemplative Practices

   Belly breath, alternate nostril breathing, three-part breathing, gathas, loving kindness meditation, guided imagery, body scan, breathing counts (7-2-4-2)

Moving Contemplative Practices

   Walking meditation, Chi Gung, Tai Chi, Flow
What is the Flow?

• History and Context

• The flow is a technique for practicing presence and creativity. It offers a vocabulary for movement through time and space.

  • Time: Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, Repetition
  • Space: Shape, Gesture, Architecture, Spatial Relationship, Topography
Why the Flow as Deep Practice?

- Practice Creativity
- Practice Presence
- Tap into the body's wisdom
Practicing the Flow

- Zero Position
- Flow
- Intuitively shape time and space
- Articulate the experience
- Identify the blocks
Assessment

Logs are turned in weekly documenting 10-minute daily practice

Two papers reflecting on daily deep practice

Two Creative Project Proposals

Oral presentation of research from scholarly article from neuroscience and psychology journal on how mindfulness or contemplative practices impact brain function

Presentation and documentation of final creative project
Student evaluations (mid-term)

“Without attending this contemplative class, I don’t think I would ever give myself time to breathe.”

“I now practice meditation on my own and use deep breathing exercises on a daily basis.”
“These contemplative and meditative practices have helped me become a more compassionate, aware, levelheaded person.”

“It clears my head and relieves the stress. In those moments, I do not have to worry about anything; all I have to do is the exercise.”
Research Study

IRB Protocol and exemption

Consent form

Survey over 3 semesters
Conclusions/Discussion

- Examples of Student responses
- Challenges
- New approaches
- Questions