

① POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Session 1 begins with a succinct statement on the objectives, schedule, and assignments of this course. Then, our topic will be located within the theoretical framework of [Positive Psychology](#), that is, “the scientific study of what makes life worth living.” As another useful reference point, we will adopt the [Tree of Contemplative Practices](#) from the [Center for Contemplative Mind in Society](#); and we will touch upon contemplation as a form of leisure ([Stebbins, 2006](#)). Then, for the mainstay of Session 1, we will explore the work of [Dr. David Levy](#), a University of Washington computer scientist whose fast-paced Silicon Valley career inspired a way of living that is now “...slower, calmer, more contemplative.” Levy makes his case in [Mindful Tech: How to Bring Balance to Our Digital Lives](#). While reading this book, try the *Mindful Check-In* activity on pages 188-189 and come to class prepared to discuss Levy’s ideas and your *Check-In* experiences. Our last hour will be spent in the first of six student-run sessions to learn a new contemplative practice, this one will be related to **STILLNESS** (e.g. meditation, silence, centering).

⑥ COURSE CONCLUSION

Our last session together marks a beginning rather than an ending. A student team will lead us through a *CREATIVE* contemplative practice (e.g. journaling, music and singing, contemplative arts) focused upon this very course, with an eye to the future. We will reflect upon what we have learned and ways to integrate the ideas and techniques into the next stages our lives. The activities will specifically address contemplative approaches to the job search and careers within information institutions.



⑤ INFORMATION, CONTEMPLATION & LIBRARIES

In the past decade, universities and colleges have started to support the well-being of students via contemplative practice ([Bamber & Schneider, 2016](#)), and these initiatives are often based in the academic library ([Moniz, et al., 2016](#)). Taking the Faculty of Information’s Inforum as one such example, we will analyze the emergence, use, and impact of the *iRelax* space and *Mindful Moments* program. In class, Kathleen Scheaffer, Outreach and Instructional Services Coordinator and the creator of *iRelax* and *Mindful Moments*, will be our guest and provide an account of the project. Hugh Samson, an MI student who has taken *iRelax* and *Mindful Moments* as a topic for an ethnographic thesis, will share emergent themes from his research. We will discuss: *How should libraries relate to the idea of contemplation?* Near the end of Session 5, we will learn a fifth new contemplative practice that is **RITUAL/CYCLICAL** (e.g. establishing a sacred/spiritual space, retreats, ceremonies and rituals based in spiritual or cultural traditions).

② THE INTERDISCIPLINE OF CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES

To glean key concepts and perspectives on the topic at hand, we will reconnoiter the emerging interdiscipline of Contemplative Studies. As preparation for Session 2, watch [Contemplative Studies: An Overview and Current State of Our Field](#) by the firebrand, [Dr. Louis Komjathy](#) (alternatively, you may read Chapter 1 of his textbook, [Introducing Contemplative Studies](#)). From these sources, digest definitions for *contemplative studies*, *contemplative practice*, *contemplative experience*, *contemplative science*, and *contemplative pedagogy*. Along the way, note Komjathy’s detailed table of religious contemplative practices and their secular expressions; his model for the “holistic” understanding of contemplative practice; and the diagram of academic disciplines that populate Contemplative Studies. Then, from our own literature, read the article by [Dr. Jarkko Kari](#) and [myself \(2007\)](#) *Information and the Higher Things in Life: Addressing the Pleasurable and the Profound in Information Science*. Based upon these readings, in class we will discuss: *Is there a place for Information Studies at the Contemplative Studies table? What unique ideas or perspective can we contribute?* Our final hour will be spent learning a second contemplative practice that entails **MOVEMENT** (e.g. Qui gong, yoga, labyrinth walking).

INF1005/6 INFORMATION WORKSHOP: INFORMATION AND CONTEMPLATION

Contemplative practice is an umbrella term that encompasses various approaches, disciplines, and methods for developing attentiveness, awareness, compassion, concentration, presence, wisdom, transformation, and a deepened sense of meaning and purpose. This new INF1005/1006 Workshop introduces students at the Faculty of Information to contemplative practice and explores its potential for sparking positive change in Information Studies and in information institutions. The goals of the course are as follows: To examine theoretical points of contact between Contemplative Studies and Information Studies; to imagine contemplative programs, services, and resources for the betterment of information institutions and their publics; and to give participants a structured opportunity to develop their own contemplative practice. This course was designed by Jenna Hartel.

③ SPIRITUAL INFORMATION

Last week’s article by Kari and Hartel ([2007](#)) was a call to action to focus Information Studies on “the higher things in life,” a domain that often includes contemplative practices and experiences. Kari ([2007](#)) has also written about the idea of “spiritual information” and identified eleven relationships between information phenomena and the spiritual. Like-minded scholars have launched substantial research into the nature of information in religious conversion to Islam ([Guzik, 2018](#)); Catholic journal-keeping ([Siracky, 2013](#)); and everyday life in Buddhist Laos ([Gaston, Dorner, and Johnstone, 2015](#)) [read at least one of these items carefully and skim the other two]. In Session 3 we will aim to connect the dots between these studies and what we have learned about contemplative practice and experience thus far in the course. Specifically, we will discuss: *Are contemplative practices and experiences forms of information behaviour? Do these research projects enlarge our understanding of information resources and information systems, and if so, to what ends?* During the last hour of class we will learn a third contemplative practice that is **ACTIVIST** (e.g. pilgrimage, vigils, bearing witness).

④ CONTEMPLATIVE INQUIRY

Nearing the end of this course, we will be newly aware of contemplation as a way of knowing that is centered upon inner, subjective experience. As such, it contrasts with the scientific method, a dominant intellectual tradition based upon the observation and measurement of external phenomena. In Session 4 we will approach contemplative practice as a research process and epistemology in its own right and as an alternative and complement to the scientific method. [Dr. Valerie Janesick](#) has coined the term *contemplative inquiry*, that is, “...qualitative techniques that place a deep and serious emphasis on thought in every component of a study of the social world. From the first germ of an idea about a study, the design of the study is open to mindfulness... and it relies on intuition, creativity, and the imagination” ([Janesick, 2014](#)). We will probe this theme by reading a conversation between Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and five world-renown quantum physicists ([Zajonc, 2004](#)). Consider: *As future researchers, how do you reconcile the scientific method and contemplative practice to create a holistic way of knowing?* To close Session 4 we learn another contemplative practice that is **RELATIONAL** (e.g. council circle, deep listening, storytelling).