To glean key concepts and perspectives on the topic at hand, we will reconnoiter the emerging interdisciplinary 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, secular 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. Gui 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.

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, 2019); Catholic journal-keeping (Sircaky, 2013); and everyday life in Buddhist Laos (Gaston, Dormer, 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).

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