

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE AT OSWEGO  
Oswego, New York 13126

**Course Outline for Project SMART 2015 – 16**

- I. COURSE NUMBER AND CREDIT: EDU 525 - 3 SH
- II. COURSE TITLE: Cultivating Learning Communities through Mindful Language and Literacy
- III. COURSE DESCRIPTION: Participants will examine current research and experience practices of mindful language and literacy, including deep listening, interconnection and gratitude practices, peacemaking and restorative justice, and using reflective teaching, mindful language and literacy to build resilient communities of learners.
- IV. PREREQUISITES: Acceptance in Project SMART.
- V. JUSTIFICATION FOR COURSE: Since NYS adopted the Common Core Learning Standards, school districts have been in the process of aligning curriculum and assessments to these standards and preparing students to successfully meet new performance standards. During the past three years on project SMART we have focused on both the substance of these standards and how to support students in achieving them. In a sea change of policy mandates impacting our work, it is important to cultivate strategies for wellbeing. Last year we focused on *Attention and Intention: Empowering Learners*, and this year's course will continue to focus on mindfulness practices to empower learners in community, using mindful language and various aspects of literacy, including reading, writing, viewing, speaking and listening.

We will support school-based teacher teams by providing ongoing, sustained, collaborative, and inquiry-oriented experiences for teachers and college faculty on how holistic mindfulness practices support teacher and student learning. Integrating research from neuroscience and holistic curriculum that attends to physical, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learning and literacy. Participants will develop a research project implementing some aspect of mindfulness practices in their classrooms/lives. We will explore how mindfulness-based language, literature and literacy practices can support the development of resilient communities of learners. Participants will include K-12 educators from Oswego County schools, the Syracuse City schools, the Onondaga Nation School, Albany, Rochester, and other schools across the state - supported by higher education faculty.

VI. COURSE OBJECTIVES: As a result of taking this course, participants will be able to:

1. Experience mindfulness-based language and literacy practices focused on self as learner, and reflect on the impact of these practices on teaching and learning including cognitive, moral, social and emotional development. (AUTHENTIC LEARNING, REFLECTION)
2. Experience and examine practices that develop awareness of attention and interconnection and explore how these practices can deepen learning in community. (AUTHENTIC LEARNING, COLLABORATION, REFLECTION)
3. Experience and examine practices that promote deep listening for understanding, authentic communication across differences, peacemaking and restorative justice. (AUTHENTIC LEARNING, SOCIAL JUSTICE, COLLABORATION, REFLECTION).
4. Choose a path for deeper exploration, through examining in depth one program or practice in daily life and/or the classroom. Programs could include a selection from the following (KNOWLEDGE, PRACTICE):
  - GESA
  - MindUP
  - Heart Math
  - Lineage Project
  - Little Flower Yoga
  - Restorative Justice
  - Peacemaking
  - Other (as negotiated with team facilitator)
5. Collect data on impacts on teacher and students, examine how intentions are formed from one's vision of teaching and learning, and summarize how these intentions connect to actions and actions are reflected in learning outcomes for teachers and students (REFLECTION).

VII. COURSE OUTLINE: Teacher study group teams will:

1. Experience and explore various mindfulness practices, including breath work, movement (e.g. mindful walking, yoga), attending, awareness of thoughts and feelings, integration, and interconnection with others; and reflect on these experiences and their impacts through reflective journals and dialogue circles.
2. Combine practices of being present through awareness of breath, body, thoughts, and feelings with exploring patterns of biases, judgment, expectations for learners, behaviors -- reflection in action using the GESA (Generating Expectations through Student Achievement) program which involves examining research on teacher behaviors linked to student achievement and data on one's own teaching behaviors in these areas -- as well as the underlying beliefs that shape these behaviors. Exploration of our own and others' language and stories will be central to this process.
3. Examine models and processes of social emotional learning which could include practices that cultivate inner peace, kindness, compassion, and gratitude, dealing with difficult emotions and life challenges, reflecting on making healthy decisions, and exploring

narratives of individual and collective identity through artistic expression. Storytelling and mindful language will be integral processes in this investigation.

4. Experience mindful engagement. Being in relationship, learning in community, mindful communication, peacemaking strategies, restorative justice, conflict resolution, multicultural understanding, social justice, sustainable consumption, permaculture, and ecoliteracy are all possible topics for exploration as we seek to cultivate a community of learners through mindful language and literacy.
5. Examine language development around body awareness, emotions and non-emotions, and conflict resolution, and use of this language to reflect on personal experiential learning, including our experiencing through literacy practices.
6. Focus and deepen understanding in one area through an action research project; exploring one program or approach in depth. We will implement the project and collect and analyze data on its impact on teacher and student learning.

VIII. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: Mindful reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing practices; reflection, and team discussions.

IX. COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Each student will work (individually, or on a team) to: (1) review, reflect, and share the past year's professional development activities, (2) learn more about cultivating communities through mindful language and learning addressing the Common Core Learning Standards to support student learning, and (3) complete an individual or group action research plan and data report on one's own and/or the group's practices and learning.

X. MEANS OF EVALUATION: 33% action plan for infusing mindfulness education into practice, 33% teacher and student learning outcomes final report, and, 33% attendance and participation.

XI. RESOURCES: This course will place no additional demands upon the Department or the College. All costs for personnel and materials will be defrayed through a Project SMART TLQP grant to the Institute for Interdisciplinary Educational Studies at SUNY Oswego.

XI. FACULTY REQUIREMENTS: The course will be instructed by an interdisciplinary team of teacher educators, Project SMART teachers, and consultants involved in Project SMART.

XII. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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