Dr. Genie Giaimo—ggiaimo@middlebury.edu

Class Period: Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday 8:15am – 10:15am

Class Meeting: LIB230

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 10:15 – 11:15am and by request, LIB225E (Office in CTLR)

**Disclaimer**: Yoga includes physical movements as well as an opportunity for relaxation, stress re-education and relief of muscular tension. As is the case with any physical activity, the risk of injury, even serious or disabling, is always present and cannot be entirely eliminated. If you experience any pain or discomfort, you will listen to my body, discontinue the activity, and ask for support from the instructor. Students participate in yoga at their own risk and will assume full responsibility for any and all damages, which may incur through participation.

**WRPR 1010: Contemplative Writing, Contemplative Practice**

Slowing down and staying centered at Middlebury (and in life) can be challenging. In this course, we will engage in different forms of contemplative practice, such as movement, meditation, breathwork, and contemplative writing. We will read about the history and philosophies of these practices and engage with them. We will also look at how space and place affect these practices by visiting different contemplative spaces and reflecting on their construction and effects on our practice. These reflections will be used to create a final autoethnographic project to synthesize the practical, intellectual, and emotional components of the course. **College Writing (CW) Course, CMP, SOA, PE credit**.

**Course Objectives**

* To slow down.
* To learn about the histories and philosophies of contemplative practice.
* To practice different forms of contemplative practice.
* To create writing that comes from engagement with contemplative practice.
* To experiment with different methodologies such as autoethnography, interviews, and rhetorical analysis.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

* Find a method of contemplative practice that feels beneficial.
* To critically engage with the histories of contemplative practice.
* To be prepared to facilitate contemplative practice with others.
* To synthetize and integrate contemplative practices into life beyond this course.
* To uncover more about selfhood and community through engaging in and writing about contemplative practice.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS**

* Various articles that will be scanned and uploaded on Canvas.
* You will also need a notebook for class, a functioning Middlebury e-mail account, an active Canvas account, and a reliable means to save your work electronically

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING PHILOSOPHY**

There are several writing assignments throughout the semester some of which are given credit/no credit, such as your writing reflections, and some of which are long form and given detailed evaluative feedback, such as the final project and final project proposal. There will also be opportunities to engage in digital composing—based on interest—and oral communication. All written work will be due to me electronically via Canvas.

This course uses a modified [labor-based grading model](https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/labor/). At the beginning of the semester, you will create an individual learning plan that includes your own goals in addition to mine. During the semester, you will receive qualitative (written) and personalized feedback for each of your assignments. You will not, however, receive numerical or letter grades until the end of the course. This “ungrading” model might make some students feel apprehensive as they might wonder how they are performing in the course. I include assignment points breakdown for you to review how each assignment is factored into the outcomes for the course (writing logs, for example, are cumulative and worth a fairly large portion of final grades but, also, they are low stakes writing that takes place over the semester rather than during a specific point in the semester). This key will allow you to calculate your final grade if you feel apprehensive about this assessment model. Throughout the semester, however, you will also have opportunities to revise long-form assignments and to self-assess your performance and revisit your goals for the course. I will be here to guide you in your learning process, too.

This course is a practicum that includes self-directed exploration of contemplative practices; therefore, I expect you to be organized and detail-oriented including being attentive to course content, engaging in effective project management, and being communicative (**please check your email regularly!**) If you need support in this endeavor, please reach out and talk to me during my office hours, or via email, and I can help to refer you to some useful resources on campus to help you with your planning and carrying out of your academic work for this class.

Finally, I have aimed to make the workload as manageable as possible. I am, however, open to feedback and happy to discuss workload adjustments.

**Breakdown of Assignments**

* **Readings:** Readings must be completed **before** you come to class for the day. All readings will be uploaded to Canvas, and, linked in the syllabus. We will use readings in our in-class so please make every effort to complete them.
* **Daily Journaling:** These are contemplative writing assignments that occur pre-and-post movement/meditation practice. They are completed daily and while they will be reviewed mid-semester, I will ask you to keep these reflective writing pieces handy for in-class discussion. This is an element of contemplative practice; therefore, it is “graded” based on completion rather than assessed based on content. It will form the basis of your final project so please do dedicate some time and thought to these!
* **Experiential Activities (2):** Throughout the semester, you will conduct ~ 2 activities that engage with contemplative practices. You will conduct an interview of a person (personal or professional) about their contemplative practices; you will write a rhetorical analysis of the websites of contemplative places likes the Bread loaf Mountain Zen Community; for your final project, you may do site visit and write-up observations and thoughts about your experience. These activities will be started during class time and then shared via Canvas on the due dates (shared below).
* **Final Project Proposal:** 1-page final project proposal/outline that combines the research methodology of autoethnography with contemplative practice. We will conference together to discuss your final project proposal.
* **Final Project:** Return to your pre-and-post reflective notes, think back on your movement and meditation practices, and consider the intellectual content of the course as you put this all together in an autoethnographic final project. This project will marry personal experience, methodological observation, analysis, and intellectual content in a final written project. The writing may be written and structured as an IMRAD or narrative-based genre. You may also include a multimodal component (brochure, website, digital portfolio, video short, podcast short, etc.) that articulates what you have practiced and learned in the course for an external audience outside of our class.

**PROJECTS OVERVIEW:**

* Daily journaling: 25%
* Activities (2): 20%
* Final project proposal (1 page): 10%
* Final Presentation: 15%
* Final project: 20%
* Attendance and Participation, 10%

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| **Assignment** | **Description** | **Due Date** |
| **Daily Journal** | Each day in class, we will engage in reflective writing and contemplative practice. You might also include reflective writing in your personal contemplative practice plan. For the check-in and final submission, you can include representative reflective writing to share. This is informal, reflective, personal writing. | Mid-semester check-in and End of semester |
| **Activity 1** | Interview a person of your choosing about their contemplative practices, transcribe interview, and write brief description of findings. Include reflection on process. Interview write-up 750 words without transcript, 250 words for reflection piece. | Due end of week 1 (Sunday at 6pm, ET) |
| **Activity 2** | Rhetorical analysis of contemplative organization’s website. 500 - 750 words. | Due end of week 2 (Sunday at 6pm, ET) |
| **Final proposal** | A 1-page proposal for your final project plan including: topic/structure/approach to writing autoethnography that is rooted in your pre-and-post written reflections and contemplative practices from the past semester. The final is open-ended, so both digital and writing-based models are open to you. | Due end of week 3 (Sunday at 6pm, ET) |
| **Presentation** | 5 – 10-minute presentation about your final project | Jan 30 and 31st (in-class) |
| **Final Project** | Return to your pre-and-post reflective notes, think back on your movement and meditation practices, and consider the intellectual content of the course as you put this all together in an autoethnographic final project. This project will combine personal experience, methodological observation, analysis, and intellectual content in a final written project. The writing may be written and structured as an IMRAD or narrative-based genre. You may also include a multimodal component (brochure, website, digital portfolio, video short, podcast short, etc.) that articulates what you have practiced and learned in the course for an external audience outside of our class. | Due Friday Feb 2 by noon. |

**Formatting for Written Work**

Unless specified otherwise, **formal** writing assignments should be typed double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. APA citation style should be used for referencing any of our readings. We will be learning about and engaging with the [IMRAD (introduction, method, results, and discussion) approach to writing](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC442179/) for the final project as this is one option for how to format your autoethnography. We will also learn about [low stakes](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/cross-discipline-skills/low-stakes-writing-assignments) and [high stakes](https://www.stthomas.edu/wac/forfaculty/developing/activelyuseassignmentsinclass/highstakes/) writing as the course has a combination of these two approaches to teaching writing.

**Participation, Respect, and Attendance Defined**

Because of the nature of the winter term semester, things move quickly. This means that you need to do your best to avoid missing class (unless there is a crisis or you are ill). Attendance, however, does not simply mean presence. You are expected to come to class prepared to participate, which means having done the reading and writing assignments. I also expect you to be intellectually and socially present in class discussion, group work, and other assigned tasks.

**This course also has a set of guidelines about engagement in class discussion including:**

* “Pass” or “pass for now” if you are not willing or ready to respond.
* Allow others to finish their speaking and avoid interrupting.
* Avoid attempts to persuade.
* Respect time boundaries.
* “Move up” or “move back” to share airtime.
* Speak for yourself and not on behalf of others.
* Maintain confidentiality regarding stories and students.
* Take the learning, but not others’ stories.
* Attend to technology in ways that allow you and others to be as present as possible.

**COVID & Other Illnesses**

**Winter term moves at an accelerated pace, but the purpose of this course is first and foremost to engage in contemplative practices/writing which is difficult if you are unwell**. **Therefore, if you are ill, please do not come to class.** I will post notes from class discussion daily; however, each student should have 1 – 2 “buddies” to debrief about class, engage in in-class activities like peer review, etc. Furthermore, if more than 3 students (25%) cannot attend class due to illness, we will move to remote learning via Zoom (link on Canvas). **Email me if you plan on not attending class because of illness with as much lead time as possible.**

**Middlebury College Policies**

**Honor Code Pledge and Academic Integrity**

Because writing is often a collaborative endeavor, it can be hard for students to reconcile peer review, collaboration, and other communal elements of writing with the honor code ("I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment"). The Middlebury Writing Center—online and drop-in tutors, and our course tutor—are authorized to support your writing needs. You will also be expected to conduct peer review in this course; **this means that you are allowed to engage with your classmates on writing but please do not copy or replicate each other’s work**. Please don’t feed each other suggestions or answers (however helpful it may seem at the time), as it impacts your paper’s content and is considered stepping over into unauthorized support. We will discuss the honor code in class but email me with questions or concerns.

**ChatGPT and other AI Assisted Writing Programs (limited use)**

AI-assisted writing has upended how people interact with writing; it has also changed the knowledge economy (e.g., coding, marketing, technical writing etc.). However, this is a writing intensive course and I stand by the cognitive and metacognitive benefits of engaging in the process of writing; therefore, I ask that you **do not use ChatGPT for any of the process-oriented elements of writing which include but are not limited to: brainstorming/outlining, drafting, content development, revision (different from editing), etc.** You may use ChatGPT for editing (again, different from revision) and I would be curious to see what the algorithm does to your writing. Revision (e.g., structure, organization, audience, content, etc.) should not be altered using AI-assisted programs like ChatGPT. We will discuss this more in class but here is a [great piece that echoes my thoughts (if not exactly my policy)](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwapo.st%2F45sag9X&data=05%7C01%7Cggiaimo%40middlebury.edu%7C97bb549481184ba7006c08dba95a2450%7Ca1bb0a191576421dbe93b3a7d4b6dcaa%7C1%7C0%7C638289976837321379%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=gtlEq9o8CYpi6DwPL1u0%2B4AKYX9kmf2sHsezq4xJuPA%3D&reserved=0) on the affordances of engaging in writing.

**Disability access/accommodation**

Students who have Letters of Accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through the Disability Resource Center. Please contact ADA Coordinators at [ada@middlebury.edu](mailto:ada@middlebury.edu) for more information. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Academic and Personal Resources at Middlebury (AKA Everyone Needs a Little Help Sometimes)**

I have been a Writing Center Director in four different Colleges and Universities, additionally, I have created several community writing centers in Boston, MA and Columbus, OH. What I have learned from this valuable experience is that writers thrive when they engage with others about their ideas and their writing process. There is nothing wrong with wanting to share your writing. In fact, I expect you to do this through engaging with your peers. However, sometimes in a college class, we have other questions such as: how to plan for assignments in different classes, or subject-specific questions. For these questions, and others related to your academics, we have many resources through the CTLR and Library. Of course, sometimes, our needs are outside of the realm of academic support, in which case Anderson Freeman Center, Counseling Services, and Disability services will be places to turn for answers. Because of the robust support at Middlebury, and the many challenges we face as we transition into and through college, I hope you will make use of support from the following resources:

* **Writing Center (go/WC)**: Supports course-based and non-course-based writing; peer tutor for course:
* **Library Liaison**:
* **CTLR**: http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/ctlr (Peer and professional tutors in writing, quantitative skills, languages, and time management/executive functioning.
* **Anderson Freeman Center (go/afc)**: Inclusive community, particularly support for BPIC first generation students.
* **Counseling Services (go/counseling)**: Support on all kinds of emotional/social issues, including adjusting to college life!
* [**Disability Resource Center**](http://www.middlebury.edu/student-life/community-living/diversity-inclusivity/american-disability-act)

**Sample Contemplative Practice/Contemplative Writing Plan (students will design specific elements of their own plan)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday (optional)** | **Sunday (optional)** |
| Pre-Journal | Pre-Journal | Pre-Journal | Pre-Journal | Pre-Journal | Pre-Journal | Pre-Journal |
| Yoga with Adrienne | Yoga with Adrienne | Yoga with Adrienne | Yoga with Adrienne | Yoga with Adrienne | Yoga with Adrienne | Yoga with Adrienne |
| Meditation | Meditation | Meditation | Meditation | Meditation | Meditation | Meditation |
| Post journal | Post journal | Post journal | Post journal | Post journal | Post journal | Post journal |
|  | Readings due for class | Readings due for class | Readings due for class |  |  | End of week assignments due |

***Yoga typically refers to a collection of methodologies aimed at achieving spiritual transformation and culminating in the union of the individual and the divine. (The word derives from the Sanskrit for “yoking” or “joining.”) Taken together, as they usually are in practice, they constitute a science of consciousness (p. 10, American Veda*).**

**Course activities Breakdown:**

**Daily Practices During J Term (M – R and optional F/Sat./Sun):**

* Pre-post Journal (after contemplative practice) focusing on feelings and headspace
* Yoga with Adrienne (30-day yoga journey)
* Meditation (daily)
  + <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/walking_meditation>
  + Kim Beekman: <https://soundcloud.com/enlightenwithkim/sets/daily-meditation-recordings?si=e007035d8c92424c9d94916ca08d5137&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing>
  + Yoga Farm resources (search under “playlists” for guided meditations): <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP9ji_atnKoEb941fPUlJ7w/featured>
  + Lynn Fraser: <https://lynnfraserstillpoint.com/>
  + Heart Chakra Meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPSw_rCSDXI>
  + Scott Spiritual Center—Develop your own mindfulness practice: <https://www.middlebury.edu/scott-center/mindfulness-midd/developing-your-own-practice>

**In-Class Practices:**

* Pre-class readings (for in-class discussion)
* Class Visitors
* Writing workshops
* Writing conferences (with Dr. Giaimo) about final project

**Daily Course Schedule**

**Week 0**

**Day 0: Thursday January 4**

**Agenda:**

* Class goals and workload/expectations (develop contemplative practice/writing plans)
* What are your goals for this course? (Spend time writing)
* Introduction to contemplative practice
* Engage in contemplative activity

**Week 1**

**Sample Daily Practices Plan (follow yours)**

* Journal before and after these activities especially focusing on feelings and headspace pre and post practice
* Yoga with Adrienne (30-day yoga journey)
* Meditation (varying length)

**January 8, 2024: Day 1**

**Readings:**

* “Suffering is Not Enough” & “The Heart of Practice” from *Being Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh
* “[The Place of Practice in Contemplative Pedagogy and Writing](https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/contemplative/kinane2019.pdf),” Kinane
* Introducing Contemplative Studies, Louis Komjathy, Chapter 2
* [Introduction to Buddhism](https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/introduction_to_buddhism)

**Agenda:**

* Free write on suffering
* Create a snow labyrinth
* Deep breathing and meditation activity
* Discussion of readings

**January 9, 2024: Day 2**

**Readings:**

* “Feelings and Perceptions” and “Meditation in Daily Life” from *Being Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh (~22 pages total)
* [Is Mindfulness the Dharma and Other Questions](https://www.inquiringmind.com/article/3102_18_winston-is-mindfulness-the-dharma-and-other-questions/) (website)

**Agenda:**

* Free write
* [Engage in elemental meditation](https://grewalcenter.com/blog/meditation/what-is-elemental-meditation/) (Yoga Farm): Write about 5 personal objects that represent the five elements to you: Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether
* Discussion of readings
* Activity 1 check-in

**January 10, 2024: Day 3**

**Readings:**

* Read the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*
* “Conducting Effective Interviews,” Merriam and Tisdell

**Agenda:**

* Free write on your morals and values
* Discuss interview practices/ethics
* Active listening activity (interview classmate, engage/practice active listening strategies)
* Discuss *Yoga Sutras*

**January 11, 2024: Day 4**

**Workshop Day—Work on interview project in-class**

**Agenda:**

* Free write
* Discuss interview project
* Jennifer Bates (director of Learning Resources), visits class, 9:15

**Due By end of Week 1:**

* Interview a person about their contemplative practices (meditation, breathwork, journaling/other writing, spiritual practice etc.) this person could be a professional or personal connection.
* Transcribe interview
* Analyze the interview transcript and write-up results
* Write a brief reflection on interview/practice

**Week 2**

**Sample Daily Practices Plan (follow yours)**

* Journal before and after these activities especially focusing on feelings and headspace pre and post practice
* Yoga with Adrienne (30-day yoga journey)
* Meditation (varying length)

**January 15, 2024—MLK Jr. Day, No class**

**January 16, 2024: Day 2**

**Readings:**

* *Handbook of Mindfulness*, “Can “Secular” Mindfulness Be Separated from Religion?” Page 75
* *Handbook of Mindfulness*,“Is There a Corporate Takeover of the Mindfulness Industry? An Exploration of Western Mindfulness in the Public and Private Sector,” Page 181

**Agenda:**

* Free write
* Mandala drawing
* Discuss readings
* In-class activity (using social media, explore how terms like “wellness” and “self-care” and “contemplation” trend. Do some analytical work here—what kinds of images and language are associated with these terms?)

**January 17, 2024: Day 3**

**Readings:**

* “Interbeing” from *Being Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh
* “[Contemplation as Kairotic Composure](https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/contemplative/stavenhagen_dougherty2019.pdf),” Stavenhagen & Dougherty
* [Rhetoric: A Brief Introduction](https://newcollege.asu.edu/writing-program/guide/rhetorical-an-introduction) (website)

**Agenda:**

* Free write
* Mandala drawing (continued)
* Discuss rhetoric and Kairos
* Conduct rhetorical analysis of contemplative places and spaces ([Scott Center](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/scott-center), [SpIN](http://www.spiritinnature.org/), [Breadloaf Mountain Zen Community](https://www.breadloafmountainzen.org/), [MetaEarth](https://mettaearth.org/https:/mettaearth.org/), sites of your interest)
* Project 2 check-in **(Due Sunday)**

**January 18, 2024: Day 4**

**Readings:**

* “Interbeing” from *Being Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh (continued)
* Excerpts from Bhagavad Gita [Introduction and chapters 1 & 2](https://archive.org/details/BhagavadGita_201604/mode/2up?view=theater) (Lars Martin Fosse translation) and [chapters 8 – 12](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Bhagavad_Gita_chs8-12.pdf) (Stephen Mitchell translation)

**Agenda:**

* Free write
* Deep breathing/relaxation
* Discuss readings
* Engage in circle dialogue ( “Ripening the Silence” activity)

**By end of week 2:**

* Complete and post your rhetorical analysis of contemplative organization’s website.
* Post selections from your reflective writing for first two weeks of term along with reflection on how semester is going (see Canvas announcement for details).

**Week 3**

**Sample Daily Practices Plan (follow yours)**

* Journal before and after these activities especially focusing on feelings and headspace pre and post practice
* Yoga with Adrienne (30-day yoga journey)
* Meditation (varying length)

**January 22: Day 1**

**Watch:**

* [adrienne maree brown: Pleasure Activism with sonya shah](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQrWZMUtH8I) (~1.5 hours)

**Agenda:**

* Free write (on pleasure and joy)
* Discuss adrienne maree brown
* Do walking meditation and Haiku

**January 23: Day 2**

**Readings:**

* [Essentials of Autoethnography](https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/essentials-autoethnography-sample-chapter.pdf) (excerpt, start on page 5 of PDF)
* [“Autoethnography” Adams et al.](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011)

**Agenda:**

* Free write on one of the worst days you’ve ever had
* Alternate nostril breathing
* Discuss autoethnography as research practice and writing practice
* Explore examples of autoethnography together in class
* Return to adrienne maree brown interview discussion

**January 24: Day 3**

**Independent work & Conferences with Dr. G about final project, no group class today**

**January 25: Day 4**

**Independent work & Conferences with Dr. G about final project, no group class today**

**By the end of Week 3 (Sunday):**

* Complete and post your final project proposal (1 – 2 pages).

**Week 4**

**Sample Daily Practices Plan (follow yours)**

**January 29: Day 1**

Workshop Day—in-class (yoga class first hour—bring mat and/or blanket and/or towel)

**January 30: Day 2**

**Presentations of final projects**

**January 31: Day 3**

**Presentations of final projects**

**February 1: Day 4 (Final Class)**

**Agenda:**

* Reflection & making a plan for contemplative practices/*sutras* for the future after our time together has ended
* Course evals
* Final mindfulness activity

**Due Friday February 2nd:**

* Complete and post your final project
* Complete and post your pre-and-post daily writing reflections
* Complete and post any presentation slides/materials

**Daily writing topics:**

1. How do I develop contemplative practice?
2. What do we define as suffering?
3. Living a “good/moral” life (what does it look like?)
4. What is your relationship to writing
5. Life
6. Death
7. Joy
8. Write about one of the worst days of your life (you will not be sharing this with others): what happened? How did you respond? How did others respond? What did you take away from this experience.
9. Write to your future self (choose the time period between 1 year, post-college, at 30, at 40, etc.)
10. Explore a paradox (something unsolvable)
11. Transitions and endings
12. Create something and then destroy it
13. **Topics students want to explore/that arise organically in our discussions**

**Looking Towards the Future…**