COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this interdisciplinary course, we will explore the complex relationships between mindfulness, technology, and well-being in the digital age. Through a blend of theoretical and experiential components, we will investigate the effects of technology on our lives and develop practical strategies for cultivating self-awareness and balance in a hyper-connected world. We will engage in a series of mindfulness exercises and contemplative photography projects, experimenting with fresh ways of seeing the world while cultivating a more intentional approach to smartphone use and social connection. The course will culminate in students designing and implementing their own critical social mindfulness initiatives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Practice respectful listening and dialogue through mindfulness, cultivating openness, empathy, and diverse perspectives.
• Develop a toolkit of mindfulness practices and critical reflection skills for personal, social, and professional applications.
• Critically analyze the impact of technology on mental well-being and strategies for mindful technology use.
• Understand and critically assess the theoretical foundations and practical applications of mindfulness.
• Develop mindfulness skills through meditation, contemplative photography, and reflective writing.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

This course employs a student-centered, experiential learning approach that combines seminar-style discussion with immersive, hands-on activities, workshops, and field experiences in Siena, Italy. The instructional methodology is designed to foster deep engagement with the course themes of mindfulness and technology, while promoting cultural understanding, personal growth, and social connection.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Evaluation and Grading
- Discussion Question Prep and Participation: 15%
- Reflective Practice Journals: 15%
- Photo Assignments and Essays: 25%
- Personal Mindful Living Plan: 20%
- Final Project and Presentation: 25%

For the final project, students will conduct comprehensive research on a mindfulness or digital wellbeing topic of their choice. This assignment has two main components: a research presentation and an experiential practice demonstration. Students will explore the historical context, key principles, and social impact of their chosen topic, and develop a related experiential practice that embodies their core values.

Required Course Materials

Pdfs of all required readings are available on Canvas. Holly Rogers's *The Mindful Twenty-Something* is available as a free e-book through the UO library. I've provided pdf copies of readings in Andy Karr and Michael Wood's *The Practice of Contemplative Photography*; should you prefer to purchase or check out a hard copy of the book, you're encouraged to do so.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS (Draft)

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS AND BELONGING

- Course overview
- Introduction to mindfulness and its benefits; introduction to contemplative photography
- Guided mindfulness meditation session in a historic Sienese location; Guided walking tour of Siena, focusing on historical sites and cultural landmarks
- The role of mindfulness in enhancing study abroad experiences, personal well-being, and belonging
- Telling our social media stories

WEEK 2: THE SOCIAL DILEMMA

- Analysis of "The Social Dilemma" documentary on Netflix
- Exploration of the impact of social media on personal identity and well-being

- Discussion of digital detox practices and their pros and cons
- Examination of strategies for mindful technology use
- Investigation of the ethical implications of technology in our daily lives

WEEK 3: DATA FOR LIFE AND HUMANE TECHNOLOGY

- The impact of technology on mindfulness and well-being
- Understanding smartphone apps
- Digital detox challenge and guided walk in the Tuscan countryside
- Visit to a local organic farm or winery, focusing on mindful appreciation of the natural environment
- Strategies for mindful technology use and digital well-being

WEEK 4: MINDFUL LIVING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: INTEGRATION, APPLICATION, AND PRESENTATIONS

- Integration activities
- Challenges and opportunities for integrating mindfulness and belonging into daily life
- Final project workshops and presentations
- Assignment: personal action plan for integrating mindfulness and technology

FINAL EXAM PERIOD

- Student presentations
- Personal Mindful Living Plan due

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Haidt, Jonathan. The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness. Basic Books, 2024.

Harris, Dan. 10% Happier: How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works—A True Story. Dey Street Books, 2019.

Karr, Andy, and Michael Wood. The Practice of Contemplative Photography: Seeing the World with Fresh Eyes. Shambhala, 2011.

Magee, Rhonda V. The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness. TarcherPerigee, 2019.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. The Art of Mindful Living: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions. Parallax Press, 2015.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation. Beacon Press, 2016.

Odell, Jenny. Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond Productivity Culture. Random House, 2023.

Orsillo, Susan M., and Lizabeth Roemer. The Mindful Way through Anxiety: Break Free from Chronic Worry and Reclaim Your Life. Guilford Press, 2011.

Powell, John. Belonging without Othering. Orbis Books, 2024.

Rogers, Holly B. The Mindful Twenty-Something: Life Skills to Handle Stress...and Everything Else. New Harbinger Publications, 2016.

Samuel, Kim. "Belonging: The Power of Connection in an Age of Isolation." Stanford Social Innovation Review, vol. 19, no. 3, 2021, pp. 26-33.

Selassie, Sebene. You Belong: A Call for Connection. HarperOne, 2020.

Sharma, Sarah. In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics. Duke, 2014.

Treleaven, David. Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing. W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Videos and Podcasts:

Center for Humane Technology. Your Undivided Attention. Podcast series. https://www.humanetech.com/podcast
Technology for Mindfulness. Technology for Mindfulness. Podcast series. https://technologyformindfulness.com/
Kornfield, J., & Perez, D. Leveraging Technology to Maximize Mindful Awareness. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIDEO_ID
Avanth, A. (n.d.). Navigating Digital Mindfulness. TED Talk. https://www.ted.com/talks/alexander_avanth_navigating_digital_mindfulness
The Social Dilemma. (2020). Netflix. https://www.netflix.com/title/81254224
Mindful.technology. https://mindful.technology/
Digital Wellness Institute. https://www.digitalwellnessinstitute.com/

Accessible Education Statement
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there areaspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are alsoencouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Academic Misconduct Statement
The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that

constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

Reporting Obligations

I am an Assisting Employee under the University's Prohibited Discrimination and Retaliation Policy. As an Assisting Employees, I will direct students who disclose prohibited discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment or violence, to resources that can help and will only report the information shared to the university administration if the student requests that the information be reported (unless someone is in imminent risk of serious harm or a minor). Students experiencing sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence should call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE [7244] or visit safe.uoregon.edu for help. Students experiencing all forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment may contact the Dean of Students Office at 5411-346-3216 or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator/OICRC at 541-346-3123. Additional resources are available at UO's How to Get Support webpage. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect.

My SSP Application

Mental health is as important as physical health. Traveling to/living in another country can sometimes bring about new issues or exacerbate existing conditions. Symptoms of culture shock can also manifest as anxiety or depression. All students studying abroad with GEO have access to My SSP, a mental health and wellness resource application. It is a free app that provides 24/7 access to professionally licensed therapists via chat, call, or video call. There are also a variety of other resources in the app including podcasts, self-assessments, articles, and fitness videos. It is a fully confidential resources to help students be successful during their study abroad experience.

Download the My SSP app or visit myssp.app for support