

Contemplating the Effects of Oppression: Integrating Mindfulness into Diversity Classrooms

Beth Berila
St. Cloud State University

This article argues that contemplative practices are particularly important additions to university courses that deal with issues of oppression and diversity. Mindfulness can help students learn how their identity locations shape their reactions to course content; as such, they help participants do the work of unlearning the effects of systems of oppression. Students can then learn to recognize, understand, and be accountable for their responses. The article also argues that faculty who integrate contemplative practices in the classroom (in any discipline) need to be prepared for a myriad of responses from students, including reactions that result from being a member of marginalized groups in society. Contemplative practices can unintentionally trigger disturbing responses for students, so the article concludes with useful principles rooted in feminist pedagogy to help faculty address those unexpected reactions.

Keywords: feminist pedagogy, mindful education, diversity, self-reflection, yoga, diversity education, embodied learning, oppression, anti-oppression education, oppression-based trauma, mindfulness practices

Educating the Whole Student

Over the past ten years, mindfulness initiatives have become more common, more visible, and more coordinated throughout U.S. colleges and universities (Shapiro, Brown, & Austin, 2008, p. 6). Increasingly, higher education is recognizing the value of what the University of Massachusetts calls “integrated student learning.” Others call it holistic education, or the idea of educating the whole student. Mark Nepo, former Program Officer at the Fetzer Institute, uses the term “transformational education,” which is

understood as educating the whole person by integrating the inner and the outer life, by actualizing individual and global awakening, and by participating in compassionate communities—[it] has become a quiet but sturdy movement that encourages the recovery and development of the academy as a liberating and capacity-building environment. (Nepo, 2010, p. vii)

Though each concept has its nuances, all are efforts to develop resiliency and well-being in the whole student. Rather than assuming that a student's personal life is separate from the academic portion of her college experience, this vision of education facilitates the two components working more closely together. As Diana Chapman Walsh, President Emerita of Wellesley College, noted in her 2005 keynote address to the Dalton Institute on College Student Values at Florida State University,

The issues facing the next generation globally demand that we educate our students worldwide to use all of their resources, not just their mind or their heart. The hour is late, the work is hard, and the stakes are high, but few institutions are better positioned to take up this work than our nation's colleges and universities. (qtd. in Nepo, 2010, p. v)

More and more educators are integrating various contemplative practices into the university classroom in order to help students cultivate presence, self-reflection, and what Brown University calls "critical first person inquiry," or the ability to experience something with an open mind and then step back and study the experience ("The Rationale," 2013). This kind of engagement recognizes that learning is not merely intellectual and knowledge is not something "out there," removed from us. Instead, learners engage in the process of knowledge production. Contemplative practices, when integrated into the college classroom, can help students develop this ability to critically self-reflect. It can also offer them tools to remain present—and *embodied*—in the classroom.

This skill is critical, I will argue, for classrooms that teach about diversity issues, such as women's studies, ethnic studies, sociology, LGBT studies, and peace studies. These disciplines teach their subject matter not just as objects of study, but also as social systems in which we all *participate* in various ways. If students are to really reflect on their roles in these systems, they need to cultivate the tools for recognizing and understanding their internal and external reactions to that realization. Moreover, this learning process usually produces some intense discussions, which can flow more effectively if participants are able to recognize, understand, and be accountable for their own reactions. Contemplative practices offer precisely those tools. When learned and practiced effectively, mindfulness also offers more compassionate alternatives to the ways that people often engage the challenging conversations about diversity. As such, I believe they are a necessary addition to diversity classrooms because they enable what bell hooks calls an "engaged pedagogy" that emphasizes well-being through integrated, holistic, and progressive education (hooks, 1994, p. 14).

My experience as a women's studies professor has taught me that students bring a variety of complex histories into the classroom that can deeply shape their experiences of contemplative practices. If, as feminist theory suggests, who we are shapes both how we experience things and what we know, then our histories, our

experiences, and our positionalities in society will shape how we meet contemplative practices. While it is common for meditation teachers to prepare students for our minds to wander and for yoga teachers to warn students that poses will be more challenging for some people than for others, there may be deeper reasons for a student's responses to particular practices. In particular, being a member of a marginalized group means being a survivor of oppression, and that history will likely emerge as we sit and turn inward. Teachers who use these practices in the classroom need to be prepared for what might come up for marginalized students in these practices.

By women's studies and feminism, I mean an analytical lens that foregrounds issues of gender within its intersectional matrix with race, class, sexual identity, and nation. The form of feminism I invoke here is a way of asking questions and a set of values, rather than a set of foregone conclusions. It does not see women and men as monolithic categories, but instead studies how other aspects of identity (race, religion, sexuality, class, national location, ability) shape the gendered experience. By mindfulness or contemplative practices, I mean activities such as yoga, meditation, *pranayama* (breath work), and others, that are designed to cultivate self-awareness, embodiment, balance, and clarity with compassion.

This article examines two interrelated ideas: 1) that these tools are particularly important for classes that deal with issues of diversity; and 2) that faculty who integrate contemplative practices in the classroom (in any discipline) need to be prepared for reactions that result from being a member of marginalized groups in society. I will offer some useful principles rooted in feminist pedagogy to help faculty address those unexpected reactions.

Why Mindfulness is Critical in Courses that Teach about Diversity

Courses that deal with oppression and diversity can greatly benefit from contemplative practices, because they can help us unlearn the conditioned responses that uphold or result from systems of oppression. Women's studies classes, for instance, teach students to understand socioeconomic power dynamics and their positions within them. Like holding a camera, our positionality frames what we can and cannot see. The critical self-reflection tools cultivated in mindfulness, combined with a feminist analytical understanding, help us see that who we are shapes what we know. And this helps us expand the lens of what we can see.

The classes, then, are not just objective studies of content. They also teach self-reflective processes that invite students to examine how these systems affect them and what their roles might be within those systems. In traditional higher education, learning is often seen as content to be known, rather than as a process in which we engage. Feminist classrooms counter this one-dimensional privileging of cognition to highlight an "embodied reflexivity" in which participants reflect on their ideologies and experiences. Diane Gustofson describes this embodied reflex-

ivity as a “self-conscious, critical, and intense process of gazing inward and outward that results in questioning assumptions, identifying problems, and organizing for change” (1999, p. 249). Feminist pedagogy attends not only to the content that is learned but also to the learning process itself. According to Gustofson,

Embodied learning blends two parallel and complementary ways of knowing: the knowing that is discoverable in and mediated by concrete texts, and the knowing that is discoverable in our experiences as embodied beings.... Because embodied learning recognizes and values embodied experiences, student and teacher can explore the social organization of knowledge and how their identities are ‘created’ by the dominant discourse of ‘power knowledge’ while at the same time they can create themselves in opposition to that discourse. (Ferguson qtd. in Gustofson, 1999, p. 250)

By developing critical first-person inquiry skills through contemplative practices, students learn to see and feel how gendered or racialized power dynamics affect them. They can become more mindful of their reactions to intense discussions and learn to process them rather than merely react to them. They can then more effectively learn the tools to cultivate oppositional, more empowered narratives.

Bringing Mindfulness to Layered Discussions in the Classroom

In order to understand how contemplative practices might be both crucial and complex in the classroom, let’s look at two scenarios that underscore some situations that might arise from incorporating contemplative practices in the classroom. These scenarios are hypothetical composites of my own experiences with students over the years and my research in feminist pedagogy. I will first outline the two scenarios and then analyze how mindfulness can transform these situations into invaluable teaching moments for diversity classrooms.

Scenario #1:

Ted is taking an Introduction to Psychology class to fulfill a general education requirement. He is one of two students of color in the class, which is not unusual for his experience at the predominantly white institution that he attends. He often feels either invisible or hypervisible in the class. Sometimes, the teacher will make a comment about African Americans and then look to him to confirm the statement, as though he can speak for the entire African American community. His classmates are friendly enough, but he often overhears comments that he takes to be offensive—statements about Black men in hip hop, for instance, or disparaging remarks about President Barack Obama that imply that he is less capable because he is biracial. Some days, Ted notices halfway through

the class that he has tuned out the lecture as he mulls over a comment that he heard. Today, the professor tells the students that they are going to practice a mindful listening exercise, something Ted has never done before. When he is told to turn to the student to his right and begin the exercise, Ted realizes that he has landed next to a student whom he heard make a racially disparaging comment about Ted's favorite African American professor on campus. Ted was so angry when he heard that comment, and as he turned to the student next to him, he felt that rage and hurt well up again inside him. He wanted to be anywhere but there, but couldn't discreetly move at this point. He determined to push through the exercise, though because he wasn't very open, he got nothing out of it. He left class with no interest in trying contemplative exercises again.

Scenario #2:

John is a white man and a veteran of the Iraq war who comes from a working class background. He has been on two tours and is now taking advantage of the GI Bill to get his education. He feels out of place on campus—he is older than most of the students and no one else in his family has gone to college. The things his classmates talk about before class seem so unimportant to him given the things he has seen and experienced in Iraq. He knows he suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but he thinks he has it pretty under control with his counseling. He makes an effort to engage with his classmates and works hard in class, but he is having a hard time in his ethnic studies class, which studies race relations in the U.S. He understands that racism exists and that whites have done awful things to people of color, but feels that much of that is in the past. His platoon included many men of color and they got each others' backs; he knows he wouldn't have made it back without the bond they all had. So when his teacher tells him that white men have power over everyone else in society, he feels his confusion rising. He doesn't feel like he has much power. He joined the military because it was the only way to escape the town he grew up in, and he never would have been able to afford college without the GI Bill.

His teacher, who is also a yoga teacher, asks them to do a beginning yoga class as part of the ethnic studies class. Maybe he was feeling particularly sensitive that day because he just heard word that one of his buddies was killed by a roadside bomb. On the way to campus, a motorcycle backfired and he had a flashback. His anxiety was high when he came to class, but he figured yoga could maybe be good for him. He tried to settle in.

However, the teacher kept moving around the room, so he never knew where she was and often jumped to find her too close behind him. When she touched him to give an adjustment, he tensed up and had to resist the gut reaction to lash out in self-defense. He couldn't lie still in savasana and hurried out of the room when the class was finished.

These two scenarios are composites of situations that are all too common in the classroom. Students bring these layered experiences to any discussion of oppression, and unless we learn how to reflect upon those reactions, our teachings about diversity will remain on a superficial level. The reactions that both Ted and John exhibited are the rich ground of diversity work—they are what we need to explore. But there are some things the teachers could have done to make the situations more productive and less threatening for the students.

For instance, Ted's situation was partly unsettling to him because it came as a surprise. The professor could have forewarned students that the activity was going to take place, so that students could sit next to students with whom they feel more comfortable. Whether the professor knows it or not, Ted faces incremental racism everyday on campus that shapes his learning experience (“Internalizing Racism,” 2013). He has developed certain survival mechanisms: in this case, shutting down and missing out on the full effect of the activity. Mindful listening requires both trust and openness, neither of which was possible for Ted, given the acts of racism he experiences.

John, too, has very complex histories that shape his experiences on campus. As more and more veterans return to school, universities have to better understand the unique needs of this population of students in order to effectively ensure their success on campus. While contemplative practices such as yoga and meditation can be incredibly effective for working with veterans struggling with PTSD, those practices are often significantly modified in a way that did not happen in John's situation (Emerson, 2011). In addition, most college classrooms consist of people with a variety of experiences, so adapting the practices may be more difficult (particularly if the professor is unaware of the particular situations of each student).

In the next section, I will speak more specifically to how the teachers need to be aware of these types of responses in the students, and I will offer some principles for addressing them. In this section, I want to focus on how these scenarios illustrate the rich ground for integrating contemplative practices in diversity classrooms, if they are done thoughtfully.

The learning process in courses that teach about diversity often invokes a variety of intense emotions. People whose identities are marginalized by the systems may feel frustration, anger, sadness, or powerlessness. Sometimes, oppression works through significant acts of violence, such as hate crimes. More often, it works through daily micro-aggressions that accumulate over time with significant effect,

often resulting in what can arguably be called oppression-based trauma (Williams, 2013; “Internalizing Racism,” 2013). The effects of this trauma can be very similar to PTSD, and so any activity that asks participants to turn inward and reflect is likely to bring these reactions to the surface.

Students from marginalized groups may also experience internalized oppression, such as when a gay man struggles accepting his own gay identity. Internalized oppression results when a person believes the negative messages about his group that pervade dominant culture. The result can be denial of the identity, self-hatred, negative body image, depression, low self-esteem, and/or a disconnection from one’s emotions. I have, for instance, had a lesbian student, who performed more masculine gender performance, skip a class in which we were going to do meditation because she was so uncomfortable in her body that fifteen minutes of a body scan seemed unbearable to her. This kind of reaction is not uncommon. The usual guidance from meditation teachers to “accept your reactions without judgment” or to “drop the storyline” or to “let them pass” will likely not be enough if we don’t give the students a language with which to make sense of the overwhelming feelings that might arise. This student’s reaction, like Ted and John’s, are not just the run-of-the-mill mind-wandering that is normal for meditation. They are actually deeply-embedded coping mechanisms and wounds from oppression.

Ultimately, the meditation tools can become a compassionate way of sitting with and even healing those responses, but not before the student has learned to recognize that the overwhelming reactions that arise are the result of living in an oppressive society. That lesbian student’s response to contemplative activities will likely be different from the student sitting next to her who does not have the same marginalized identity location, and it is likely that the coping mechanisms that she has developed to survive will kick in (as they did—she avoided the situation by skipping class). This moment offers an invaluable teaching opportunity *if* the classroom is a safe enough space to discuss these reactions. The teacher has the opportunity to help students frame their reactions, learn to sit with them, and develop alternatives to them. This analysis is crucial if we are to understand how deeply oppression works, but can be tricky to get at since the classroom is often not considered a fully safe place for members of marginalized groups.

Alternatively, like John, students who are characterized as members of the dominant group may feel frustration, anger, or resistance to the idea that they have privilege in a society, especially if they do not feel that they have benefited much in their lifetimes. Women’s studies classrooms often talk about how members of the dominant group (white, heterosexual, male, upper class, Western) often receive benefits that are denied members of marginalized groups. Not only are people taught not to see those benefits if they receive them, but they may not be very tangible to people, especially if they are marginalized in some ways. Moreover, intersections of oppression mean that someone may gain privilege in some ways but be

marginalized in others. John, remember, is white and male, but he is also working class and a veteran. The feelings of confusion he experiences are pretty common among the students I teach who are privileged in some ways.

Rather than characterizing their reactions as merely “resistance” that must be overcome or as a kind of clinging to oppressive systems (as their reactions are sometimes framed), I argue that these reactions are precisely the complex terrain that must be explored if we are truly to learn the self-reflection that is critical to un-learning the effects of oppression. Too often, students’ reactions are talked about in terms of “resistance,” but it would be a much more productive strategy to offer the students ways to learn to meet and process their reactions as *inevitable byproducts of systems of oppression*. Contemplative practices offer valuable tools for moving the study of oppression from a mere object of study to a deeper process that is both internal and external. They offer the tools through which to recognize, understand, and come to terms with the layered reactions students often feel when learning about these subjects. Mindfulness can help students learn to understand their own reactions and see why theirs might differ from others in the room, which is a critical step toward learning more compassionate ways to relate to one another.

Students are so often disconnected from their bodies that it is not easy to reverse the messages that we have learned from childhood. Mindfulness practices can become a valuable tool to help students more fully cultivate a sense of embodiment. This embodied learning adds another angle to what Elizabeth Ellsworth calls “new pedagogies of sensations.” She writes:

Pedagogy as ‘sensation construction’ is no longer merely representational. It is no longer a model that teachers use to set the terms in which already-known ideas, curriculums, or knowledges are put into relation; rather to the extent that sensations are ‘conditions of possible experience,’ pedagogy as sensation is a condition of possible experiences of thinking. (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 27)

While Ellsworth focuses her work on architecture and media, the argument could also apply to our embodied experiences in a diversity classroom. Embodied learning is generative: students become co-creators of knowledge by recognizing the body as a dynamic epistemological site. Thus, as the various reactions emerge during meditation or yoga, teachers can help students make sense of them in the context of oppressive systems that have helped produce them. We can begin to see the reactions as more than just the typical “monkey mind,” but instead as inevitable byproducts of living a particular identity in an inequitable society. The combination of students with differently positioned identities and bodies in any given classroom is a vibrant and dialectical opportunity for co-creation (if a classroom is safe enough for them to have an open and honest discussion about such intense subjects—more on that in the next section). Students can then take the next step to befriend that

experience and begin to unlearn the harmful cultural messages that so often barrage them. Contemplative practices can offer invaluable tools for learning, not merely intellectually, but also in an embodied way, how oppression works, what its effects are, and, ultimately, how to work toward dismantling them.

When Contemplative Practices Trigger

As valuable as these tools can be to a classroom that teaches about diversity, the scenarios of Ted and John also illustrate that they are not so simply integrated. Indeed, regardless of the discipline, educators need to incorporate contemplative practices carefully. We do not know what histories our students have, nor can we predict their responses to various exercises, so we need to be prepared. My experience teaching women's studies has taught me that certain subject matters will hit very close to home for some students, and those responses will likely become more visceral if we ask students to sink into their embodied, emotional experiences with meditation, yoga, or other mindfulness practices.

Consider the following scenarios, which again are composites of various students with whom I have worked over the years, both in academic and yoga classes. Imagine how we, as teachers who are integrating contemplative practices into our classrooms, would have to adapt our practices to more effectively and safely meet their needs. I will discuss how I integrate feminist pedagogy and mindfulness practices after I trace out the scenarios.

Scenario #3:

Bethany is a white woman who enrolled in a women's studies course to fulfill a diversity requirement. She was unfamiliar with gender studies and with the teacher, and had no idea that contemplative practices would be a part of the curriculum until the first week of class. She felt some discomfort, though she wasn't sure why. Still, this class was the only one that fit into her schedule, so she stayed in the class. In the third week, she came to class expecting to talk about the readings for that day, and was surprised to find out that the class was going to do a mindful eating practice in class that day. Immediately, Bethany's anxiety rose, because she doesn't eat in front of people and carefully monitors her calorie intake. She already has to go to the gym for an extra hour to make up for the yogurt she ate that morning. She doesn't feel like she can leave the class without making a scene, but she feels waves of fear, self-hatred (though she doesn't yet know to call it that) and powerlessness overwhelm her as the teacher explains the mindful eating exercise. She decides that since she is trapped in the classroom, she will just numb herself to get through the activity and will go purge in the bathroom after. It will be months before Bethany acknowledges that she has an eating disorder and begins to heal from it.

Scenario #4:

Jennifer is an Asian American woman who was recently sexually assaulted by a male student with whom she went out on a date her second week on campus. She has not told anyone about it because she feels so ashamed. No one notices that she has gotten more withdrawn and quiet since the event, because few people on campus knew her before the incident. She has simply shut down, keeping her eyes downcast and wearing baggy clothing. In the seventh week of her sociology class, the teacher begins to lead them through a body scan, saying that this meditation practice can be a helpful way of handling the stress of the upcoming midterms. The professor turns out the lights, which makes Jennifer suddenly feel afraid. But she decides to give it a try, figuring she could use some help with stress. As she listens to the professor's voice and begins to drop into her body, the fear gets stronger. Her heart rate increases, she begins fidgeting, and her body tenses up. By the time the professor has moved to the hip and pelvic area, Jennifer wants to crawl out of her skin. His voice grates on her and she wants to run from the room. When the exercise is over, she is shaking, and though the professor says goodbye to her when she leaves, he doesn't notice that she shies away from him and doesn't come to class the next day. She spends the rest of the day in her darkened dorm room.

Though this is a hypothetical composite of many students with whom I have worked over the years, the experience is all too common. In the United States, an estimated 20 million women and 10 million men have eating disorders (National Eating Disorders Association, 2011). One in four college women report surviving rape or attempted rape (One in Four, n.d.). Often, students who struggle with both situations suffer for some time before they seek out help. Each semester, students in my women's studies classes tell me that they have an eating disorder or have been assaulted and ask me for help. Whether or not these students talk to their other professors about their situations, they are in classes throughout campus. Their struggles can negatively affect their coursework and their overall health. They might also be unexpectedly highlighted by certain contemplative practices.

A student like Bethany would obviously have a complex response to a mindful eating exercise. As the scenario suggests, having to work with food unexpectedly in front of her peers might trigger multiple responses. At best, she may not be able to get the desired effect from the exercise. At worst, the activity can provoke overwhelming emotions and physical responses of which the professor may remain unaware. Similarly, a student like Jennifer has likely survived the sexual assault by disassociating, so it may be impossible for her to experience her body in a body scan meditation. If she does manage to reconnect with her body, the result might

be intense trauma recollections that she is not yet ready to handle. In the case of both students, these deeply unsettling responses might occur unbeknownst to the professor, who likely thinks the contemplative practices are safe and beneficial. To the students, however, the practices might have the opposite effect.

Of course, mindfulness practices can be a powerful healing tool and many treatment centers and counselors are integrating them into their programs. But to encounter an exercise unexpectedly in an academic setting when the professor has no idea that the student is struggling with disordered eating or sexual assault makes the situation much more loaded. Moreover, the professor may very well be unaware of the responses the activity triggered and wouldn't feel qualified to deal with them anyway. Nevertheless, statistically, there is a strong likelihood that an average-sized college classroom is likely to have such a student in it.

Tips for More Intentionally Integrating Contemplative Practices

This does not mean that contemplative practices should be avoided. In fact, as I have already argued, they can be deeply valuable additions to many different classrooms. But we do need to be more mindful about how we use them. So what could the professor have done in these situations? Here are five principles I follow whenever I teach contemplative practices in the classroom. All of them are informed by feminist pedagogy.

1. *Assume that someone in the room has suffered from trauma.* I have worked with college students for over ten years, and in any given group, it is almost inevitable that there will be survivors in the room. Rather than assume these are anomalies, I start with the assumption that they *will* be in the room and behave with the requisite compassion and calm. I always hope I am wrong about that assumption, but unfortunately, I rarely am.

2. *Prepare the students for these possible reactions beforehand.* Preface the exercises with some introductory remarks that let students know that if they have histories of any of these issues, they may experience some aftereffects of those issues in their meditation or yoga practice. Even a simple warning can help prepare students for their reactions—which can be far more distressing if they arrive unannounced.

Obviously, in-depth discussions of these sorts of issues may be more appropriate in a women's studies classroom than they would be in an economics or engineering classroom. But remember, the students who are talking about these experiences of violence in my classroom are also in other classes across campus; it's just that in women's studies, we offer a language for it. These students might be manifesting these experiences in other classes by sudden plummets in grades, excessive absences, sullen behavior, or unusual withdrawn isolation. My point is that

these experiences *do* affect their performance in *all* of their classes; we just might not be attributing the proper reason for the behavior. One doesn't have to go into a lengthy diatribe about the possible reactions to historical trauma that can arise in mindfulness, but it can be helpful to briefly name them so that students are not totally taken by surprise.

3. *Offer the option of opting out.* People heal at their own paces. It is important to allow students to self-select out of a mindfulness activity if it is necessary for them to do so. I offer an alternative assignment if the student chooses not to participate. I typically let them know before the class period where we will be doing yoga or meditation so that they can make other arrangements inconspicuously. If it's an activity that we will be doing regularly throughout the semester, or even everyday, I let them know the first week of classes and ask them to talk with me if they need to make alternative arrangements. I am a firm believer that meditation and yoga can be healing activities, but students need to be ready to do so. They may not feel comfortable doing so in an academic classroom. I prefer to let students be informed and active agents in their lives and make the choice about when it is healthy for them to participate in these activities.

4. *Provide support resources.* When I do mindfulness activities or when I teach about sexual assault, eating disorders, or other sensitive topics in my women's studies classes, I always warn students that these are sensitive topics that may hit close to home. I ask them to pay attention to their responses during the class session (itself a mindfulness exercise) and to take care of themselves. Connecting them with campus resources is a crucial part of this process. While we, as professors in the classroom, often do not have the skills to help students with the psychological responses that might arise from mindfulness exercises, we can and should connect them with those who can, including campus counseling services, women's centers, multicultural student services, LGBT resource centers, veteran's centers and/or health centers.

5. *Hold the space.* As professors, we probably know how to claim students' attention when we want to start class and how to hold our authority as we teach. But when engaging in mindfulness practices that might create unintended triggers, we need to also hold the space with compassion, kindness, and nonjudgmentalness. Students might be startled by what can arise in mindfulness reflections, so it's particularly important for us as teachers to remain grounded and to meet students' reactions—whatever they may be—with a calm compassion and to guide the student to the proper resources on campus. Holding the

space means doing our own work to maintain our center, so that we can respond as wisely as possible. Like mindfulness itself, this gets both simpler and deeper with practice.

I don't want to suggest that incorporating any meditation or yoga in the classroom will result in psychological breakdowns of our students. Of course they won't. For many of our students, it will be a new and interesting experience, notable only by its difference from traditional college lectures. But our students lead complex lives that do not stop when they walk into a college classroom. Asking them to become more present and aware is also inviting them to more fully integrate, rather than compartmentalize, their experiences. Ultimately, integrating these practices in thoughtful and intentional ways into college classrooms, particularly those that address topics of diversity and oppression, can allow for a deeper, more embodied, and transformative learning process.

REFERENCES

- Brown University Contemplative Studies Initiative. (2013). "The Rationale Behind Contemplative Studies." Retrieved from <http://www.brown.edu/academics/contemplative-studies/about/rationale>.
- Ellsworth, E. (2005). *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, and Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Emerson, D., & Hopper, E. (2011). *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Gustofson, D. (1999). "Embodied learning: The body as an epistemological site." In Mayberry, M. & Rose, E.C. (Eds.). *Meeting the Challenge: Innovative Feminist Pedagogies in Action*, 249-274. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- "Internalizing Racism" [video]. (May 28, 2013). *HuffPost Live*. Retrieved from <http://live.huffingtonpost.com/r/segment/can-racism-cause-ptsd/519d084c2b8c2a4ebc00010d>.
- National Eating Disorders Association. (2011). "Get the Facts on Eating Disorders." Retrieved from <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/get-facts-eating-disorders>.
- Nepo, M. (2010). Foreword. In Palmer, P.J., Zajonc, A., & Scribner, M., *The Heart Of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal, Transforming the Academy through Collegial Conversations* (v-xvii). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

One in Four. (n.d.) "Sexual Assault Statistics." Retrieved from <http://www.onein-fourusa.org/statistics.php>.

Shapiro, S., Brown, K., Astin, J., & Duerr, M. (2008). "Toward the Integration of Meditation into Higher Education: A Review of Research." *The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society*. Retrieved from <http://www.contemplativemind.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/MedandHigherEd.pdf>.

Williams, M.T. (May 20, 2013). "Can racism cause PTSD? Implications for DSM-5." *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/culturally-speaking/201305/can-racism-cause-ptsd-implications-dsm-5>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BETH BERILA is the Director of the Women's Studies Program and a Professor in the Ethnic and Women's Studies Department at St. Cloud State University. She earned her 200-hour yoga certification with Senior Anusara instructors and is completing her 340-hour yoga teacher certification with Devanadi School of Yoga and Wellness in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her work addresses intersections of embodiment, feminism, yoga, and mindful education. She is particularly interested in how contemplative practices such as yoga and meditation offer students an embodied empowerment that deeply compliments other kinds of empowerment found in Women's Studies disciplines. Her current writings focus on how college students can learn to use contemplative practices to live healthier, more balanced lives, and how teachers can effectively integrate contemplative practices to help students unlearn the effects of systems of oppression. More information can be found at <http://www.bethberila.com>.