

RADICAL QUIET

Honor 3418 – Spring 2020—Mon/Weds
001: 1:25-2:45pm • 002: 3:00-4:20pm • 003: 4:35-5:55pm
Marriott Honors Community, MHC1205
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“If you look at zero you see nothing; but look through it and you will see the world.”
- Mathematician Robert Kaplan, *The Nothing That Is: A Natural History of Zero*

As a counterbalance to the loud and fast modes so predominant in today’s society, **Radical Quiet** proposes, explores and develops vital alternatives: quiet and slow ways of living, learning and appreciating our lives and the world around us.

Our course will dig down to the radical root—the fundamental quality, meaning and aesthetics—of quiet. We will curate and cultivate a quiet that is not small, contained, weak or separate, but rather a quiet that is big, all-embracing, powerful and pervasive.

We seek not the absence of sound but the presence of awareness.

Our awareness will grow through the daily practice of mindfulness. Based on this foundation we will develop critical, creative and interpretive skills through deep listening (to sounds and music), slow looking (at art) and contemplative reading (of literature). Silence will be our teacher; music will include “the space between the notes” (Claude Debussy); and artistic concepts, structures and forms will be the architecture for our learning and experience.

Cross-cutting themes will include: (1) the quiet power of introspection and contemplation; (2) the Japanese concept of *Ma* (respect for pauses in time and emptiness in space); (3) the capability of “being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts” (*Negative Capability*, John Keats); (4) the environmental and social effects of noise; (5) the cultivation of quiet “as an act of political resistance to the attention economy” (*How to Do Nothing*, Jenny Odell); and (6) the skill and practice of listening (to ourselves and others).

Radical Quiet offers a “space both to be and to become” (Parker Palmer), and cultivates a classroom that equally values speaking and listening, so that each student may *know* in deep, profound and valuable ways.

Whether looking at art, dance, landscape or life, whether hearing music, nature or the sounds of the city, our goal is to “see with fresh eyes” and hear with fresh ears, to “turn the everyday flow of perception into an act of discovery” (*Slow Looking*, Shari Tishman), and to become “completely aware of being alive” (*How to Do Nothing*, Jenny Odell).

To help us see with fresh eyes and turn our perceptions into acts of discovery, we will be graced with performances, workshops and presentations from accomplished artists and scholars: Nathaniel Woolley (dancer), Amir Soltani (filmmaker, activist), Charlotte Bell (mindful yoga), Monisha Pasupathi (Honors Associate Dean and Professor of Psychology), Edward Ruddell (Professor, Department of Health, Kinesiology and Recreation: Tranquility and Restorative Environments), Meklit (Ethio-American singer, songwriter and composer), Scott Black (Professor & Chair, Department of English) and Steve Waters (BYU professor, drum circle leader). In addition we will be guided on two custom-designed *slow looking* tours by our generous partner, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

Radical Quiet's primary texts (books you need to buy) are:

- *Silence: How to Find Inner Peace in a Busy World*, by Christina Feldman
- *Silence, In the Age of Noise*, by Erling Kagge
- *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, by Jenny Odell
- *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, by Susan Cain
- *Looking at Mindfulness: Twenty-Five Paintings to Change the Way You Live*, by Christopher André

Plus shorter readings (which will be provided in pdfs on Canvas), including:

- How to Meditate FAQ, by Tara Brach
- Short articles on the neuroscience of mindfulness
- "The Age of Rage" from *In Praise of Slowness*, by Carl Honoré
- The Slow Food Manifesto
- Two chapters from *Mindful Yoga, Mindful Life*, by Charlotte Bell
- "Five Minutes for Life" from *Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise* by Thich Nhat Hanh
- "Lecture on Nothing," from *Silence*, by John Cage (under consideration)
- "A Short History of Silence" from *The Mother of All Questions*, by Rebecca Solnit
- "Solitude," by Ursula K. Le Guin
- "The Most Beautiful Sound in the World," from
The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want: A Book About Noise, by Garret Keizer

Plus videos, audio talks and meditations (links will be provided on Canvas), including:

- 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness, led by Jack Kornfield
- Other guided meditations led by Joseph Goldstein, Tara Brach, Dr. Kristin Neff & David Gandelman
- "Noble Silence," audio talk by Leela Sarti
- "Shh! Sound Health in 8 Steps," TED Talk by Julian Treasure
- "The Voice of the Natural World," TED Talk by Bernie Krause

And two films (shown in class or streamed on Canvas):

- *In Pursuit of Silence* (directed by Patrick Shen)
- *24 Frames* (directed by Abbas Kiarostami)
- *Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present* (directed by Matthew Akers)

Please note that this film includes nudity in the performance of the artist's works (though the nudity is not romantic and there are no sex acts depicted or implied). There is also an element of violence in some of the performances. If either the nudity or the violence would disturb you or conflict with your values, please let me know. While there is not a substitute assignment, a modification in the viewing of this film could possibly be made.

Additional texts, audio talks, videos and activities may also be assigned.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE COURSE

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

A growing body of neuroscientific research confirms that contemplative practices such as meditation and traditional yoga have measurably positive effects on memory, attention, learning and well-being. Many American universities, medical schools, and research institutes have begun to incorporate forms of contemplative practice into their programs (the Stanford University Center for Compassion and Altruism Research is a notable example here in the PAC 12). As American society struggles with painful internal polarization and world conflicts proliferate, students and faculty alike hunger for a compassionate education of the “whole person” aimed toward making a positive impact locally and globally. (This paragraph is borrowed, with slight modification, from our syllabus for the 2016-17 Praxis Lab, *Opening the Mind’s Eye: Contemplative Practice and Higher Education*, which I co-taught with Joseph Metz)

A central goal of **Radical Quiet** is for each student to develop, deepen and fine tune their awareness. Therefore a key element of this course is a daily practice known as mindfulness meditation. You will be guided in this practice during brief periods of each class session. You will also be given audio links to guided meditations online. Options are available for modifying any of these instructions to suit your individual needs and preferences.

You are expected to commit to a daily practice* at home. Beyond the benefits you receive, your practice experience will also be highly relevant and applicable to class discussions of the assignments—and will provide context, dimension and personal observations and insights for your Think Pieces and paper.

Therefore your daily meditative practice is integral to this course. To help you maintain consistency, to memorialize your steps along the path, and to record your thoughts and experiences for potential use in your Think Pieces and paper, you will keep a daily practice journal at home.

I welcome questions about your practice and will answer them at any time. There will always be an opportunity in class. I will also be happy to meet with you, individually or in small groups, to offer additional guidance, answer questions or address any concerns you may have about your practice.

A very helpful app, not only as a meditation timer with a lovely selection of bells, a motivator, log, possible journal, a place to share comments with meditators around the world, but also because several of our guided meditations are easily accessible there—is the **Insight Timer**, available for free in the App Store and on Google play. You can read about it at <https://insighttimer.com/>.

You could also join the **Radical Quiet** discussion group on the Insight Timer app!

* Please note: this class—and the meditative practices explored in this class—are presented in the spirit of academic inquiry and not for the purpose of promoting or proselytizing for or against any religious, faith, or secular tradition or belief. Participation in the meditative practices does not require students to accept, reject, or alter any personal beliefs or commitments, and a student may opt out of a specific practice that is prohibited by their religious or personal beliefs.

PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

You are expected to engage deeply, thoughtfully and thoroughly with every assignment—whether it is a book, a shorter reading, a work of art or music, a film, video, audio talk, or an activity. I trust you will bring your own perspectives, insights and interpretations to each one—and share them with your classmates and me. Light or superficial engagement will be noted; active and deep engagement will be rewarded.

In addition to the vital ways your engagement will inform and inspire your writing (see below), a valuable and productive way to manifest and express your engagement—and to share your insights with your classmates—is within our class discussions. However, in keeping with this course’s valorization of introspective qualities, if you prefer collecting your thoughts on paper rather than expressing them in class, you may offer your summary, commentary, or response in a few written sentences, print the page out and hand it in. I still ask that you contribute to our in-class discussions when you can, but your printed commentary may help supplement or bolster your in-class participation.

A third way to productively and creatively engage with course assignments and themes is by sharing your comments, perspectives, and insights in the online discussions for this course on Canvas.

WRITING

In resonance with its subject and title, this course’s deepest impacts will be experienced quietly—perhaps radically—personally and within. The discoveries you make, and the most enduring and transformative effects of your study and practice of quiet, will be ineffable and immeasurable. Your internal experiences and personal revelations are indeed the real potential treasure. However, you still must present something to measure. And that will be your writing.

You will write three Think Pieces over the course of the semester, one approximately every month (due dates are posted on Canvas). These will be 1-2 pages (though they can be longer if you feel so guided). They will at times be commentaries on the readings, and sometimes they will be personal explorations of an aspect of quiet that especially intrigues you. In either case, they will be well grounded in our readings, discussions, and presentations.

You will also write a longer and more formal final paper that will thoroughly explore and express what you have gleaned and experienced in this course. More guidelines and suggestions for this paper may emerge from the way your own involvement shapes this course, and will be further articulated later this semester. The paper is due the last day of class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The class schedule, including all assignments, is posted to Canvas and can best be seen chronologically in the Calendar view of the course. You can also view a simple list of the assignments on the Assignments link. The schedule and assignments are subject to modification, in which case advance notice will be given in class and/or by email.

Important note about the assignment load and how to best manage your time

It is generally expected throughout the University that there is at least one hour in class and two hours outside of class per week connected to every credit hour for the appropriately prepared student. That translates into an expectation of six hours of weekly study for each three-hour course—or three hours for each of our two classes a week. I try to keep the load well beneath that, but it still may take 1-2 hours to prepare for each class, depending on your own reading speed and study habits.

Classroom policies

This course is designed to cultivate a community of learning that is productive, hospitable and fair to all. To support our community of learning, all students are expected to abide by the following policies:

The use of cell phones or other communication devices, whether for calling, checking news or messages, texting, social networking or any other purpose, is prohibited during class, except for a medical emergency. Students are expected to turn off such devices during class. Students using such devices will be required to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

Due to the nature of this course and its focus on quiet contemplation without distraction, laptop computers and tablets are also not appropriate in this class and should not be used unless clearly necessary and permission is granted (referring to assigned pdfs during discussion of them is of course permitted). If there is a unique circumstance or situation that requires one, the student may discuss it with me. In any case, students using computers for any purpose not related to our class will be required to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

In any event, out of respect for our guests, no digital device shall be open during their presentations.

iPods or mp3 players and the wearing of headphones are prohibited during class.

Class participation is important and required. Much material is presented only in class, and student participation is key to achieving the course goals. Therefore, all students are expected to attend and participate in all classes. In rare cases where class participation is not possible due to an unavoidable absence (appointments, other class assignments or tests, and vacations are not excused absences; rather they should be scheduled so they do not conflict with class sessions), an explanation is expected (in advance), assignments for that class are still due, and an extra assignment will be given to make up for the missed class presentation and/or discussion. In any case, lack of student participation can affect the final grade.

Students are expected to arrive before class begins and remain until class ends. Coming to class significantly late or leaving significantly early may be factored into attendance.

Late submissions of your paper and Think Pieces may cost one letter grade per day.

Faculty and student responsibilities

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

Names and Personal Pronouns

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class, on papers, exams, group projects, etc. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes (and update CIS) so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun will be respected. If you need assistance getting your preferred name on your UIDcard, please visit the LGBT Resource Center Room 409 in the Olpin Union Building, or email bpeacock@sa.utah.edu to schedule a time to drop by. The LGBT Resource Center hours are M-F 8am-5pm, and 8am-6pm on Tuesdays.

University of Utah Safety Statement

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Sexual Assault and Harassment

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801- 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581- 7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801- 581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) statement

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Prohibition on Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

“Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one’s own without attribution, any individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression (Student Code, p. 3 at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html@SECTIONV>). Plagiarism, using others’ work without proper citation, is a serious offense. Plagiarism cases will be reported to the relevant authorities and may result in severe consequences; including, but not limited to, taking a grade reduction, receiving a failing grade for the course, suspension or dismissal from the program. You need to refer to any source even if it is an internet source. In accordance with University policy (as articulated in the Student Code), academic misconduct—including creating, fabrication of information and plagiarism—is not acceptable. A student found engaging in this behavior may receive a failing grade. If at any time you are unsure whether your actions constitute academic misconduct, please see me in order to clarify the matter. See the following link for more information: <http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>.

Diversity / Inclusivity Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Undocumented Student Support Statement

Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact on those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801.213.3697 or visit dream.utah.edu.

Wellness Statement

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross---cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801.581.7776. I also highly recommend The Mindfulness Center at the University Counseling Center, 201 SOUTH 1460 EAST, ROOM 344 STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING, 801.581.6826, <https://mindfulnesscenter.utah.edu/>

LGBT Resource Center

If you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I want you to know that my classroom is a safe zone. Additionally, please know that the University of Utah has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. You can visit their website to find more information about the support they can offer, a list of events through the center and links to additional resources: <http://lgbt.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if there is any additional support you need in this class.

Changes to Syllabus, Assignments, Schedule

I retain the right to make changes to the course syllabus, course schedule, assignments, due dates and other course requirements. Advance notification will be given.