

NCLC 475-007
**“Cultivating the Spirit: Self-Care Practices to
Support Student Well-Being”**

Spring 2013

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This course will explore the ground-breaking work of UCLA scholars Alexander and Helen Astin which was published as *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (Jossey-Bass, 2011). We will explore the science and application of the five dimension of “spirituality” that they identified in their extensive research investigation with tens of thousands of college students: meaning, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview. Students will learn specific practices that have the potential to support personal well-being – practices which could cultivate some or all five of these dimensions of spirituality. This is a hybrid course with 75% as classroom activity and 25% as distance-learning modules. The classroom sessions are mornings and afternoons Tuesday, January 15 through Saturday the 19th, plus a three-hour mid-semester class meeting on Saturday, March 23, plus a three-hour session during final exams on Saturday, May 11.

CLASSROOM SESSIONS – DATES AND TIMES:

Tuesday, January 15, 2013 through Saturday, January 19, 2013: Daily from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm (with a one-hour lunch break).

Course Location: Day 1 only (Tuesday, January 15) will be held in the Johnson Center, Room G (on the third floor). Days 2 through 5 (Wednesday, January 16 through Saturday, January 19) will be held in Room 215-G of Innovation Hall. This will also be the location for the sessions on March 23 and May 11 (both of which run from 10 am to 1 pm)

PLEASE NOTE: There is a short reading assignment to be done BEFORE class on January 15. Read page 1 through 11 of *Cultivating the Spirit* by Alexander and Helen Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm. (It is the only book you are required to purchase for this course.) If you want to get started on this reading assignment before you have obtained your book, you can use the pdf of these pages which was sent to you as a file attachment along with the welcome and orientation email in early January.

LEARNING COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Formulate and apply a personal life-style that includes a set of self-chosen practices that have the potential to support personal well-being
- Describe research evidence that gives credence to well-being practices
- Write clearly about your own experiences from personal experimentation with a wide variety of well-being practices

COURSE RESOURCES AND TEXTS:

1) Astin, Alexander and Helen, and Lindholm, Jennifer (2011). *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Live*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is widely available from online booksellers, but has **not** been ordered by the Mason bookstore.

2) A selection of articles, book segments, and audio/video-streaming material that is available a) at designated web pages on-line, and b) posted on the course web site.

INSTRUCTORS

Mary Elizabeth Lynch, M.A., J.D. is an attorney/mediator, educator and conflict transformation specialist. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia Law School and practiced employment and family law for many years before transforming her professional work into mediation. In 2000 she co-founded the Personal Transformation and Courage Institute, a non-profit educational organization conducting small group course intensives related to deeper self-awareness for personal growth and transformation. She now serves as president of the Institute and is one of its principal course leaders. More about Mary Elizabeth's work outside of Mason can be found at www.transformationANDcourage.org This is Mary Elizabeth's third newly-developed course for New Century College and the Center for Consciousness and Transformation. Previous courses have been "Personal Transformation: Identity and Conflict" and "Intuitive Reasoning."

Mark Thurston, Ph.D. is Senior Fellow at George Mason University's Center for Consciousness and Transformation. His academic background is psychology, with specializations in positive psychology, transpersonal psychology, and stress management. Before coming to Mason four years ago, Mark worked for thirty-five years in adult education related to consciousness, holistic health, and personal transformation. Mark is the coordinator of Mason's undergraduate minor in consciousness and transformation.

COMPETENCIES FOR THIS LEARNING COMMUNITY

Using active and collaborative learning strategies and reflective practices, we shall address several of the New Century College competency areas. Most prominent among the learning community competencies are:

- **Group Interaction:** The classroom sessions will be highly experiential and require that students demonstrate mutual respect, supportive interaction, and collaborative efforts.
- **Critical Thinking:** We will explore a wide variety of practices that support well-being, along with research findings related to them. Students will need to employ critical thinking to assess the relative merits of these practices, including self-assessments of the results from personal application of the practices.
- **Well-being:** This competency is the centerpiece of the course. Students will learn about theory, research and practices that have the potential to support personal well-being.

NCC COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

New Century College is an *intentionally* inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff, and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

LEARNING COMMUNITY ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING (500 points)

CLASSROOM LEARNING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 50% of course grade – 250 pts

There are five full-day class sessions plus two short sessions (one at mid-semester and one during exams week). These sessions form the heart of this learning community. Up to 45 points can be earned for each day of the January classroom intensive. The remaining 25 possible points are linked to attendance and participation in the March and May short meetings. It is essential that class members attend scheduled classes and participate in class discussions and activities. Remember that you and your fellow students benefit from your active participation. Meaningful classroom discussion depends on the development of openness, trust and a sense of safety among participants. The instructors will maintain a classroom setting in which these qualities are emphasized.

PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE LEARNING MODULES 25% of course grade – 125 pts

There will be a series of online learning modules with distinct time periods for each module. Each of these distance-learning modules will have a START and an END DATE, and earning points depends on your timely work with these important parts of the course.

Each module will have some combination of the following elements:

- readings assignments from the Astin book
- reading assignments from online sources or pdf files posted on the course web site
- listening or viewing assignments from streaming online media
- writing assignments to be done as postings on the web site comments board or on a small group discussion blog

FINAL PAPER

25% of course grade – 125 points

The course will examine an array of theories and practices that have the potential to support personal well-being. You will be writing a final paper that summarizes what you have learned in the course. This paper of 2,000 words (plus or minus 100) will be based on Rubric that will be distributed and discussed at our March 23 mid-semester two-hour meeting of the class. The final paper will be due as an electronic submission to the instructor by May 1. There will NOT be a final exam for this course, but we WILL be meeting for a final discussion session on May 11.

FINAL GRADE ASSIGNMENTS WILL FOLLOW THIS FORMULA:

A+	(495-500 points)
A	(460-494)
A-	(450-459)
B+	(440-449)
B	(410-439)
B-	(400-409)
C+	(390-399)
C	(360-389)
C-	(350-359)
D	(349-300)
F	less than 300 points
IN	see below

IMPORTANT NOTE IN REGARD TO “INCOMPLETE” GRADE. In most cases a grade of “IN” or “incomplete” is not available. Work that does not get submitted will earn no points, and that will be reflected in the point tabulation by the instructors at the end of the semester. Please do not move through the semester with an expectation that you can simply “take an incomplete” if you cannot get everything done by the end of the semester. A grade of incomplete is possible in cases of illness or other severe circumstances, but only if you have stayed in communication with the instructor and have negotiated an extension on specific assignments.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION

LEARNING DIFFERENCES

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Disability Resource Center. If you qualify for accommodation, the DRC staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor.

In addition to providing your professor with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with her at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Disability Resource Center and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell one of your instructors or the GTA.

POLICY FOR LATE AND MISSING ASSIGNMENTS

You are responsible for completing assignments on time. This includes postings on the course web site as part of the online learning modules. All assignments are due on the dates listed on the course web site and must be submitted electronically on time. **Late assignments may be marked down as much as 10% per day of the possible points for that assignment.**

FORMAT FOR ASSIGNMENTS:

The final paper must be typed and saved as a “doc” or “rtf” file and submitted electronically to the instructor. The file name should include your own last name – for example, Smith-FinalEssay.doc. Please use 11- or 12-point standard font, one-inch margins, and all papers should include a title, your name and course number. Accurate spelling, clarity, and correct use of grammar and punctuation are expected and their absence can negatively affect your grade. Be sure to follow the Rubric for this paper.

ATTENDANCE:

As noted in the description of how points will be earned and grades assigned: you are expected to be present (both body *and* mind) at all classes and actively participate in discussion and other experiential learning activities in the classroom. This includes not only speaking, but also listening carefully to others’ opinions and experiences with an open mind. You do not need to adopt another’s viewpoint, but you do need to extend to them the courtesy of trying to hear what they have to say.

Please plan to have cell phones, Blackberries, iPhones, etc. turned off during class. We will be taking breaks, and you can check for messages then.

Much of the value you will receive from this course will come from your reactions to course materials and your interactions with your fellow students, including the online postings for the distance-learning modules.

Since we have a very limited number of class sessions for this “hybrid” course, attendance is very important. **Please make it a priority to be at all five classroom days for the full time as well as the mid-semester meeting on March 23 and the final meeting on May 11.** Mason’s policy on attendance is as follows: “Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation.”

E-MAIL AND WEB-BASED COMMUNICATIONS:

As faculty, we are allowed to communicate with you only via your GMU e-mail account. This is a means of protecting your privacy and academic confidentiality. If you wish to automatically forward mail from your GMU mail account to another account (e.g., cox, aol, yahoo, gmail, etc.) see the Mason Online Student Technology Guide <http://itusupport.gmu.edu/STG/STGfrontpage.asp>.

We will have a course web site at PBworks.com, an online learning platform for which Mason has a license. **You will get an email inviting you to join the learning community on our private workspace at PBworks.** The online learning modules will be posted here and we will make use of the PBworks comments board for sharing thoughts and reflections.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND COLLABORATION:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. According to the University catalog, plagiarism includes the following:

- Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
- Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

Be particularly careful to credit work through citations. In addition to direct quotations, you must also provide an in-text citation and an entry in your list of works cited for paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information not formerly known to the writer. If you decide to use another person's ideas you must either quote the idea verbatim or completely rephrase the ideas in your own words and voice. Even when you paraphrase information, you still must cite the original source of the information (in-text and in your bibliography). Please give credit where credit is due, even in our class discussions. For example, if you have had an interesting conversation about a text or your learning with a friend, family, or group member, then acknowledge their contribution to your learning.

Postings for the distance-learning modules can be in conversational language, unless otherwise noted. But even with these kinds of writing assignments, you are expected to put time and energy into well-structured sentences that clearly articulate your points.

Instructions regarding format and style for the final paper will be contained in the Rubric.

In general, keep in mind that assignments are designed to be undertaken independently. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If your name appears on a posting or a paper, the instructor expects that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently. Especially in regard to your final paper, you can certainly get feedback and critique from fellow students or from the Writing Center. But the work of creating the paper is your own.

Remember: please carefully read the University's Honor Policy. It is your responsibility to understand it, and abide by its provisions.

STUDENT LEARNING RESOURCES

WRITING RESOURCES

Writing is an important component of this learning community and represents one facet of effective communication. You may wish to use the Writing Center to assist you with an assignment. Tutors at the Writing Center can help you brainstorm, structure, and revise your written work. The Writing Center has multiple locations on campus. See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu> or call 703-993-1200.

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

The staff members of the DRC assist students with learning differences or any other conditions that may impact academic performance. DRC is located in SUB I, Room 2500; 703-993-2474; <http://ods.gmu.edu/>

COUNSELING SERVICES

Professional counselors provide individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. Counseling Services are located in SUB I, Room 3129; 703-993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu/> In addition, the Learning Services Program (703-993-2999) offers academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service.