

Silent Retreat (Above)

Assignment:

Complete a 12-hour silent retreat and write a reflection of your experience.

Rationale:

Silent retreat is a common practice in many religious/spiritual traditions, both in the West and the East (e.g., in the Catholic faith and in Buddhism). The idea here is to not only remain silent for the day, but to spend the day in meditation/contemplation.

This may seem like a strange option for a class like this. However, there are many benefits, including the following:

1. It provides time for you to step away from your busy life and just “be” in the moment for awhile;
2. It relates to our focus on mindfulness and slowing things down;
3. It can lead to deeper reflection on course materials;
4. It can lead to deeper reflection on your personal goals for this class and beyond;
5. It can lead to better emotional balance and stress tolerance;
6. It can give you a much-needed tech break.

Note: If you are experiencing a current bout of depression, I recommend against this practice as one of your extras at this time.

Details:

While most traditional silent retreats are for three or more days and usually at a retreat center or monastery, this option requests that you practice for only a full 12 hours and at home (unless you want to do more or go somewhere!). I’ve provided below a suggested schedule for this practice but you are welcome to use other models that are more personal to you and your beliefs or preferences.

You will see that my recommended schedule includes focus on course texts. The idea here is to not only remain silent for the day, but to spend the day in meditation/contemplation, and it may be of benefit for the class to use the course texts as some of your focus materials. This, however, is not a requirement. With this in mind, it also requires you to step away from technology (with the possible exception of access to course texts and the schedule) for that 12 hours.

Suggested Schedule

Full Day of Silent Retreat

8:00-8:30 a.m.	Wake Up, Get Ready for Day, Stretching
8:30-9:00 a.m.	Meditation/Contemplation
9:00-10:00 a.m.	Breakfast
10:00-10:30 a.m.	Reading
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Movement
11:30-12:00	Meditation/Contemplation
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Writing
1:00-2:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00-3:30:	Practice of Immediacy (art, writing, dance, music, cleaning)
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Reading
4:30-5:00 p.m.	Writing
5:00-5:30 p.m.	Meditation/Contemplation
5:30-6:30 p.m.	Dinner
6:30-7:00 p.m.	Light Movement, Stretching
7:00-7:30 p.m.	Meditation/Contemplation
7:30-8:00:	Writing (Reflection)
8:00:	End of Retreat

Explanation of Schedule and Its Elements

The entire 12 hours should be electronics-free (except for accessing course materials, the schedule, meditation apps, or timers, if necessary). This means no t.v., no phone, and no computer use beyond that which is necessary for the retreat. This will be hard. If possible, I recommend printing out anything you'd like to use for the retreat that is online ahead of time, including schedule, and not using your computer or phone, though I do recommend some apps that might be helpful for meditation. If you use apps, I recommend at least shutting off social media notifications and avoiding using tech to check into social media, email, or other typical distractions.

Meditations/Contemplations: For these, you may either engage in formal meditation or contemplation practices (e.g., prayer, sitting meditation, finger labyrinths, body scan meditations), or use this time to contemplate course materials or personal/spiritual concerns. If you choose to focus on course text contemplation, I recommend using practices like *lectio divina* on passages from course texts or other Inquiry practices from the Inquiry Practices document. The purpose of these times is to sit, lie down, or stand/move in silent thought and mindfulness of the present moment. The following page includes some possible mindfulness activities you might try: [https:// positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities/](https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities/). A good app for guided meditations is [Insight Timer](#), which has a variety of both secular and spiritual practices from a variety of faith traditions. If you find that

30 minutes is too long, I recommend breaking up that time into two or more activities, including taking some time to reflect on your meditation/contemplation, perhaps by journaling.

Movement: This is time for you to stretch, walk, do yoga, work out. Move your body! Try to do so mindfully, being aware of your movements and how they feel and to be curious about the processes that allow you to move in this way.

Practice of Immediacy: The idea here is to engage creatively in the present moment. Draw, write, dance, sculpt: anything silently creative! Listening to music is fine. Whatever you choose, allow yourself to be in the moment and really notice the process of what you're doing. If you listen to music, really pay attention to how the sounds come together and/or to the lyrics. Alternatively, you could take this time to do some mindful cleaning.

Reading: If you want to focus on the course, this is a great time to engage in the course reading for a half an hour (twice!), uninterrupted. Otherwise, you can choose something to read that is meaningful to this retreat time.

Writing: There are three writing times in this schedule. You might use them to work on course assignments, to journal, to do some creative writing, or to work on writing for other classes. The final writing time would likely best be used to write up your reflection of this experience. Use the full time. Write whatever comes to mind. If you wish to edit before submitting, that's okay.

Meals: Try to eat mindfully. Really notice the food you're eating (see the Raisin Meditation in the link above on mindfulness activities). What does it smell like? Feel like? Taste like? Pay attention to the process of preparing it. Chewing and swallowing it. Cleaning up. Consider what went into growing and making that food. Again, avoid technology. Just prepare the food, eat, and clean up, becoming aware of those experiences in the moment.

Completing the Assignment:

To complete this assignment, participate in a 12-hour silent retreat, perhaps using the schedule above, and submit a reflection on your experience. There is no page minimum for the reflection, but it should thoroughly address your experience. You may also opt to reflect verbally either in a recording or in a meeting with me.

Due Date:

Reflection: By 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, May 10 (Canvas or in a meeting).

Note: You can do this at any point during the semester!