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Spirituality in Pedagogy: "A Field of Possibilities"

Cover Page Footnote

Susan A. Schiller is a professor of English at Central Michigan University. She is a former Director of Composition, and her work in spirituality as educational theory and practice dates from 1992.

Spirituality in Pedagogy: “A Field of Possibilities”

Susan A. Schiller

After six years of exploring a spiritual approach to teaching, I finally used all my courage and proposed my dream course: Contemplation in Literature and Writing. As a special topics course for juniors and seniors, English 395 relied on meditation and other sensory experiences as a means to explore contemplation. I wanted students (and myself) to discover why and how contemplation stimulates growth and allows art to manifest itself when applied to writing. I admit to feeling a little like Lewis and Clark traversing the winding rivers, but I knew the possibilities that lay ahead were important to discover. By the end of the semester, I knew, too, that their discovery would have been impossible without experiential learning. This article describes the activities, offers student responses as evidence for combining education and spirituality, and encourages other teachers who are about to enter this exciting field.

A spiritual approach to teaching enhances traditional pedagogy, which we know is based on reason and logic, by adding intuitive and subjective experiences that also improve cognition. Such an approach integrates time for inward growth; it draws on “the unconditioned being that sleeps within” (Moffett 10); and it subverts conditions that work against students’ spiritual development. These elements undoubtedly politicize the pedagogy and come with some risk if activities are not carefully planned and implemented. I will briefly add here that a spiritual approach is not for every teacher, for it takes a certain type of courage that comes from one’s own spiritual development and experiences in the classroom. I have success with it precisely because I have worked a long time at this kind of development, and I am convinced of its worth. I am also committed to designing pedagogy that produces the best possible outcomes for students but which does not compromise standard academic goals the university expects me to meet. As I would with any other theoretical base, I go to the experts to see what they advise. James Moffett, Parker Palmer, John Dewey, and Donald Gallehr have supported the efficacy of this pedagogy.

The theoretical position, for me at least, is not easy to define because it seems to shift each time I add another block of experience to my repertoire. Moffett says a spiritual pedagogy “works through deep feeling,” that “it honors the experiencer, and the range and depth of experience is the key to growth” (14). I currently believe that the theory can best be explained by understanding the degree of experience it elicits. Spiritual pedagogy, as I teach it, provides an experience of practicing awareness, of developing a greater range in our aware-

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ness. It offers a chain reaction of growth. One begins to become mindful, intensely aware of the moment by consistently drawing one's attention to the moment or the activity in the moment. One pays attention to the stillness and to the essence in the moment. With some practice, moments begin linking to each other like railroad cars or atoms in a molecule. Awareness increases. With greater amounts of awareness, there naturally exists greater amounts of attention and greater amounts of patience. This, in turn, stimulates growth in comprehension of subject matter. As one goes inward to focus on the moment, the inner being is projected like an artistic relief against the outer experience. The inner being of self is therefore essential in developing our ability to know and feel. As Parker Palmer explains:

At the deepest reaches, knowing requires us to imagine the inner standpoint of the subject—of that historical moment, of that literary character, of that rock, or of that ear of corn. . . . We must believe in the subject's inner life and enter with empathy into it, an empathy unavailable to us when we neither believe in nor cultivate an inner life of our own. (105-06)

A spiritual approach to teaching opens up a space in which the inner and outer are both recognized and valued. It brings together thought and emotion. It does not distance the knower from the known but integrates each as essential to one another.

In the case of choosing spirituality for the classroom, Jon Kabat-Zinn's words on meditation can easily be transferred as advice about such a selection. He tells us that "it is virtually impossible, and senseless anyway, to commit yourself to a daily meditation practice without some view of why you are doing it, what its value might be in your life, a sense of why this might be *your* way and not just another tilting at imaginary windmills" (75). In other words, we have to know why we choose. It is also quite simple. If teachers are drawn to pedagogy based in spirituality, they need a firm faith in its efficacy as well as courage to use practices that other teachers may question and challenge. Careful preparation and attention to documenting results will determine future classroom practices.

Course Description

One's drawing inward to awaken the being within requires practice *and opportunity* to reflect on the changes that occur as the process evolves. I designed Contemplative Approaches to Literature to do this and turned to mindfulness practice to provide the experiential basis in the course. I wanted to attract juniors and seniors who were interested in developing writing skills while also exploring literature that promoted a spiritual life. To introduce the rich and global aspect of meditation, I used Daniel Goleman's text, *Varieties of the Meditative Experience*. Goleman's overview of a variety of meditative practices (Concentration, Insight, Hindu Bhakti, Jewish Kabbalah, Sufism, Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen, Christianity, and Native American) places meditation into a legitimate historical and global context while also establishing the fact that

people all over the world practice some form of meditation in order to enrich their daily lives. I clearly emphasized that my purpose in presenting this information was not meant to encourage religious conversion, and that any future discussion of the religious would be limited to literary and rhetorical boundaries. This put the students at ease while also arousing their curiosity.

After this short overview, we read Thich Nhat Hanh and Kabat-Zinn. They provided a more detailed view of mindfulness practice, a practice I suspected would attract most of the students. Since our brief overview was insufficient preparation for them to use most of the various practices, students were then asked to develop a personal practice that they could commit to for the next fifteen weeks. I only asked that they attempt to practice at least fifteen minutes daily or if they found that too difficult, to practice three or four times each week. They were also free to simply use their "meditation time" in silence, like a "time out" from everyday activities. Those students that entered the class with an ongoing practice were free to continue or change it in any way they chose.

Thich Nhat Hanh is credited for introducing the gentle practice of "mindfulness" to American audiences. He defines "mindfulness" as "keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality" (11). In other words, one attempts to give full attention to the moment. Kabat-Zinn further popularized the approach in *Wherever You Go There You Are*. His easy-to-follow guidelines for developing a personal practice are cleverly supported by numerous contemplative quotations, many of them from Henry David Thoreau. This rhetorical appeal increases Kabat-Zinn's ethos and encourages an American audience to become "mindful." Indeed, his book title has even become a popular euphemism for being in that "mindful" state. As I suspected, most of my students were immediately attracted to the apparent "ease" with which "mindfulness" may be practiced, and they proceeded to integrate it into their existing practice or begin it for the first time. I joined them and began a practice of "mindfulness" for myself. We began with five minutes of silence in the classroom after which we talked about what our minds and senses experienced during the five minutes. Periodically throughout the semester, we would share silence in this way. Mostly, however, we practiced meditation outside of class and in our own way. Class time was reserved for academic activities like discussion groups and writing workshops. We also regularly discussed aspects or challenges that were brought about by our meditation practice.

To maintain academic standards and meet curricular expectations, I chose to enhance the cognitive domain and move beyond it through experiential learning that integrated mind and body, as well as spirit. I believed John Dewey who tells us that "qualities of sense, those of touch and taste as well as of sight and hearing, have esthetic [sic] quality. But they have it not in isolation but in their connections; as interacting, not as simple and separate entities" (120). This meant I needed to develop activities that relied upon sensory stimulation and which would increase learning retention. During the course we drew mandalas following instructions suggested by Fran Claggett with Joan Brown as outlined in their book *Drawing Your Own Conclusions*. We used standing meditations outdoors with trees and walking meditations in the classroom. Students used an exercise that I learned from Joyce Hancock in a workshop she facilitated at the 1992 AEPL Conference in Colorado. Hancock's exercise asks students to hold eye contact with

one another in order to release endorphins in the brain. They repeatedly ask each other the question "Who are you?" It is an intense activity that breaks the ice as it also draws attention to the inner self. I brought in a crystal bowl for toning and moved back and forth between its rich loud tone with other softer tones from bells, drums and various tapes of ethnic instrumentation. We easily moved out of toning into chanting where we could feel the release of voice and the power of breath as we made meaning with sound. We also used essential oils to understand how the olfactory nerve directly links with the brain and determines much of what we find agreeable or disagreeable. We further explored the connections between scent and memory. All of these exercises were followed with writing assignments either in journals or formal essays.

I also invited two guest speakers who are recognized experts in their field. Dr. Guy Newland, professor of religion and meditation practitioner for many years, came to speak of his personal experience with his practice. Rev. Doug Welsch, Native American Healer, came to speak of alternative healing practices and of using a person's dream state as a way to understand our individual conditions. A third speaker came to us by chance, providence if you will, when we went on a retreat together.

For extra credit, I suggested that the students select and participate in an off-campus retreat, but the students instead requested that I organize such a retreat and that we go together as a group. I chose Nethercut Woods, a biological site with extensive acreage owned by our university. The lodge house there is used by many groups on campus and is perfectly suited for an all-day retreat. One Saturday, all but two of us left campus in a school van at 6:00 a.m. so we could arrive at sunrise. Upon arrival we discovered the site had been double-booked, but the Native American group already there invited us to share the space until they left after lunch. They also joined us in a drumming circle to welcome the morning and to honor our opportunity to share time and to grow together. Dr. Lloyd Elm, Native American Healer and Elder, had traveled from Minnesota to speak to the Native American group, and he welcomed all of us with great warmth. He did not lecture or have a prepared speech but rather relied on the natural flow of human curiosity to direct our conversation.

The extraordinary generosity which came to us and which we returned by sharing food we had brought set a special tone to our retreat. This is the charm that moved with this class. It happened because we needed it and because we were open to being mindful of the immediate reality. We moved beyond the normal range of a typical college literature class by enhancing it with experiential activity and a careful attention to finding appreciation in all we did as well as in each other.

In addition to the experiential and spiritual activities, we engaged in the more traditional forms of academic assignments. Students were required to read seven books,¹ analyze rhetorical structures used in those books, discuss writing tech-

¹ The required texts were Henry Beston's *The Outermost House*, Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, *A Manual on Meditation*, Bear Heart's *The Wind is My Mother*, Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Wherever You Go There You Are*, Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden: or, Life in the Woods*.

niques and literary choices used by the authors and then select and apply various techniques in their own writing. They used literary and rhetorical techniques when writing that ranged from standard organizational choices and modes to more creative and sophisticated concerns like perspective, voice, metaphor, symbolism, motifs, rhythm and sound. Since I thoroughly explained the objectives for each non-traditional and traditional assignment, students easily accepted both types and blended them without hesitation.

Students' Reflections

Based on self-reported data gathered from end-of-semester reflective essays, the benefits were many and covered a broad range. Students reported improvements in their cognitive abilities, in their daily lifestyles, and in their spiritual lives. Almost all of them wrote about stress management and the way mindfulness taught them to maintain greater awareness in general. This increase in awareness led to other benefits such as increases in creativity, heightened energy levels, greater calmness and patience, and perception shifts. They began to see the world in new ways that helped them cope and which taught them to see their future adult lives as a time of lifelong learning. Their writing took on stylistic elements of writers we were reading. Their willingness to engage in reflective discourse grew as did their attention spans. While all of the students reported important changes in their lives, two in particular, Angie and Susan, experienced dramatic personal growth. Their cases seem striking because their starting points were so starkly polarized; they also are representative of two extreme types of students teachers might expect to be openly critical of, or even hostile to, a spiritual approach.

From a previous course Angie had taken with me, I knew her to be a serious young woman who was mature beyond her years. She was editor of the student newspaper and active in her church. As a charismatic Catholic, Angie openly and frequently spoke of her deep faith in spirit. It served her well; she easily identified herself as a Christian every chance she got. However, Angie also was interested in learning additional ways to develop spiritually. She desired to further improve her writing skills and was motivated to take English 395 because it met both her needs.

Prior to the class, Angie believed she "would not gain anything by nurturing the personal part of her life." As a result, she often worked seven days a week. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays she would work until 11 p.m. She also worked every day at a daycare from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. and was a member of several groups. To top this load, she carried fifteen credit hours of coursework. During English 395, mindfulness initiated a major shift in her worldview. In her words, she came to see herself as "spirit." This large shift compelled her to "unplug" from many of her activities in order to allow more spirit to enter. She wanted to "have time to concentrate on one, solitary task rather than being forced to concentrate on several." She wrote:

It is sort of like electricity. If you have seventeen cords going out of one outlet, you are bound to have a problem. Each time you plug

another thing in, the electricity flickers and more juice is sucked out of the outlet. As a result of one outlet having seventeen plugs, the lights are dim, the iron is warm rather than hot, and the television screen flickers at will. Eventually it blows a fuse and can do nothing. This is the reflection of my spirit. So, as an outlet is only capable of two plugs, my spirit is only capable of tackling one task at a time in a state of mindfulness. . . .

Ever since the song "I'm Every Woman" aired, Angie says she had been "trying to live up to the song's lyrics of being every woman: a mother, a daughter, a worker, a student, a writer, a wife, a learner, an artist, a daycare worker, a counselor and a mentor." She writes,

I was doing five tasks at a time and doing them mediocre. This is not the case any longer. Mindfulness has made me more conscious of my limits and through this I have learned how to achieve my goals. Now I work on being mindful and simply being the best me, the best Angie.

According to Angie, these changes led to a number of benefits: improved relations with her husband, friends and family; better decision-making abilities; a heightened awareness of those around her; stronger listening skills, particularly during college lectures; additional time for prayer; a new awareness of nature; fewer distractions during study time; changes in her writing process; and an increase of patience with the multiple and simultaneous tasks newspaper editors face in their everyday routine. While Angie's profile may be considered extreme by some, it cannot be denied that Angie changed in dramatic ways as a result of the contemplative and spiritual base in English 395. Were these long lasting results?

Four months after the course ended, I conducted telephone surveys (see Appendix A). At that time, I found that Angie was still meditating twice each day (morning and night). She reported benefits such as decreased stress, more focus, better sleep, a higher quality in her work, and an ability to settle into a calm state that assists her concentration during classes. She particularly valued the multiple forms of meditation we had studied at the onset of the course and appreciated the broader knowledge of other cultures and the religions within which many contemplative practices are founded. It is not surprising in her case to note that she disliked the lack of depth in our discussion of various religions. She considered these discussions to be too superficial, citing them as the least useful part of the course. Even so, she was determined to state that everything in the course had a purpose and was beneficial on some level.

A second example, nearly as extreme as Angie, comes from Susan, a non-traditional student with a family. Susan quickly established herself as the "class skeptic who was nearly an atheist." Of herself she writes:

I have a strong image of myself as a practical person, without religious superstitions or any need for them. I feel somewhat superior

to those people who depend on the 'crutch' of religion—often just a cop-out for personal responsibility—and I have resisted the idea of accepting contemplative practice into my life in any permanent way. Why should I? I am not looking for God. But there is something I'd like to find, something already in me. I recognize some elusive part of me that has yet to emerge, like a shadow which can't be seen until I step into a light. I know it's there. I'm looking for that.

Many adult students who return to school are motivated by the element of "elusive self" that Susan describes. Already established in a hectic life, balancing family, work and school, Susan's questions reflected her need to filter out non-essential information and activity that would most likely compound her overly packed life. Resistant to contemplative practices and teachings, her critical eye and voice caused all of us to sift carefully through the course material in order to harvest the essential. Mindfulness practice became an "essential" for Susan and led her to develop new personal habits that also supported her academic demands.

Due to employment responsibilities, Susan was one of the students who could not attend the day-long retreat at Nethercut Woods. To compensate, she decided to create her own retreat, a day of silence at her parents' home during a time they would be absent. She arrived at their home just after six a.m. During the first four hours, she occupied herself with breathing exercises, watching the sky, taking out the garbage, raking leaves, and browsing through several books about contemplative practices. She considered the nature of her "wandering mind" Dinty Moore describes in *The Accidental Buddhist*. He tells readers not to be discouraged by the wandering mind for it is "very normal." In response to this she says:

I haven't become discouraged. Instead, I have developed a sincere commitment to the contemplative process that surprises me. Maybe it is the influence of others in my Contemplative Practice course that has affected me. In *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "If in one class, one student lives in mindfulness, the entire class is influenced." (64)

After reaching these conclusions, she spent time at her mother's computer where she felt "something close to relief at allowing [herself] to communicate again." She began a list of words to "indicate what was important" to her. A list of questions came to mind about life goals, jobs, aspirations. Thoreau's words "Simplify, simplify, simplify!" arose in her mind. She tried a breathing meditation, "but missed the motion of [her] walking meditations and began to move through the house" resisting various temptations to distract herself from the silence she was attempting to live. She went back to the list, and finally "I am a writer" came to her mind as "a typed image, white courier type against a black background. Period. Like this: I am a writer."

Susan treated this image as an epiphany. When she left her silent retreat, she believed she had reached a new life goal to become the writer she had always

postponed.² At the end of the term, four weeks later, this new goal was still strongly in place. She concludes the course (and her reflective essay) by writing:

By conscious endeavor, I have been able to admit to myself a life-long longing I had suppressed for “practical” reasons. By conscious endeavor, I will work to realize the dream. Through contemplative practice, I not only broke down my prejudices about what is essentially prayer but was able to gain personal insight. If I never write—I will, of that I am newly confident, but even if I never did—the realization that it is all I ever really wanted to do is reason enough to consider this class experience successful. It turns out I just wanted to get to know the Self who lives in my innermost house.³

Even though these realizations may seem monumental and staggering in terms of life changes, they weren’t the most useful to come out of the class for Susan. She came to value the “half smile” as the most useful because it was simple, easy, and accessible moment by moment.

Nhat Hanh writes of the half smile in *The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation*. It is one of several exercises he recommends that form the foundation of meditation. The half smile serves as a reminder to take hold of breath, to refocus on the moment, and to grow calm again (79). Since we read Nhat Hanh during the second week of the course, Susan had nearly the entire semester to use the half smile, and use it she did. She used it to relax herself, to ward off irritation, to lead her into patience and tolerance, to prevent stress, to facilitate better human relations with co-workers, to increase mental focus, and to ease her into the day upon waking. The innocuous little half smile, seemingly innocent and insignificant, burrowed itself into Susan’s daily habits, causing self development that she never expected. Being of a skeptical but reflective nature, Susan was careful to observe it and record the outcomes at the end of the term.

Four months later, Susan was meditating three to four times weekly, but she indicated that she would like to do it more. She said her meditation practice calmed her down, helped her to slow the pace and keep things in perspective. It helped her organize thoughts, especially when writing. She found it easier to juggle multiple thoughts and actions without getting tense. It helped her stay focused. She did not notice any direct increase in creativity, but said she had more confidence in what she did express. Meditating also allowed her to ignore the clutter in her mind, and thus she was able to focus on the things that are really important

² Susan has written short stories. *Playboy* published a joke she wrote. A magazine indicated it would publish a story after revisions, but she was working overtime and never revised it. One of her instructors contacted her parents to ask that they encourage her writing ability, but she was pregnant at the time and financial concerns kept her from developing her talent. At the time she took the silent retreat, her life provided her with sufficient income and time to pursue writing.

³ Here Susan alludes to Henry Beston’s *The Outermost House*, required reading. In her final essay she refers to Beston’s style of contemplative living, likening it to her own, as a method of meditation that asks for one to simply “pay attention.”

to her. She still did not consider herself spiritual in the religious sense, but the class helped her develop her own spiritual acts without being religious. Time taken for meditation helped her be more confident in her creativity and in her intelligence. She was able to organize priorities and was not bothered by small things she called "the daily irritations." In fact, she said meditation helps her enjoy and appreciate daily chores. She thought the reflective essay at the end of the course was the most important part of the class, because it "provided cohesiveness to the meditative life." Surprised by the development of a long term practice, she said "the class changed [her], and [her] husband agrees."

Outcomes reported by the other students, while not so extreme in terms of whole life changes, are similar to outcomes described by Angie and Susan. Other students reported the following:

- a growing ability to stay focused, particularly during lectures;
- a new calmness and patience when coping with stressful situations and people;
- a new appreciation for education that went beyond "learning just for the grade";
- a greater value for nature and environmental issues;
- increases in cognitive skills such as creativity, listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- an ability to clear the mind of chatter.

For example, Andy said that, prior to this course, he couldn't access his creativity on demand, but now after meditation he could. John said that the course had been a unique experience because it allowed an opportunity to develop wisdom rather than just acquire knowledge. Craig reported a "liberation of the mind," a stronger sense of curiosity and a new attentiveness in other classes. These ideas became refrains that repeated in the students' assessment essays. Annie and Courtney said that the static in their minds was the primary distraction that prevented focus. Annie reported that she did not even realize her mind was "full of static" until she had read Kabat-Zinn. Then she learned how to clear it out through mindfulness practice. Like Annie, Courtney said she "felt almost as if [she were] doing mind-cleaning by getting rid of unnecessary thoughts and making room for the thoughts that really mattered." Greg became more "focused on the moment at hand and thought about that moment, considered the significance of that moment, and tried to get enjoyment out of that moment." Before he had considered everything to be a burden on his time. Mindfulness taught him to see everything as an opportunity for something good to happen. He had begun to develop a major shift in the way he saw action that affected his life. Dillon, who had a similar reversal in perspective, phrased it more metaphorically and with a bit of humor. He wrote about a dog and a person playing fetch:

I believe that oftentimes a person thinks that the dog is quite stupid, for every time the master throws a stick, the idiot dog runs and retrieves it. This pattern occurs over and over again throughout the world. Now what if every time a person throws a stick and the dog goes and fetches it, the dog is thinking to himself how stupid the human is, every time I go and get this stick he goes and throws it again.

These are profound changes, to be sure, and while the course can account for stimulating them, the students themselves deserve special recognition because they were ready for and open to change.

Students' responses to the telephone survey further support the efficacy of a spiritual pedagogy and suggest that long-term benefits are a reasonable expectation. Dillon was the only student to stop meditating, but he said his practice had never been firmly established during the course. He also told me that the *notion* of mindfulness was the longest lasting benefit because he developed a greater awareness of being "rooted in the now" and that he still does things with greater attention as a result.⁴ Andy, Greg, and Craig reported that they meditated occasionally, perhaps three times a month or whenever stress became too unmanageable. All the other students were meditating several times each week, if not daily. The long-term benefits were much like those they had experienced at the end of fifteen weeks. In hindsight, they especially valued the overview and exposure to various forms of meditation as well as being part of a group who could openly talk to each other; the readings from Thoreau emerged as the least favorite part of the course.

These results were gathered at the four- and eight-month junctures of the students' experience with contemplative living. The results seem to bear out what Nhat Hanh tells us to expect. He advises:

In the first six months, try only to build up your power of concentration, to create an inner calmness and serene joy. You will shake off anxiety, enjoy total rest, and quiet your mind. You will be refreshed and gain a broader, clearer view of things, and deepen and strengthen the love in yourself and you will be able to respond more helpfully to all around you. (42)

The basic nature of spirituality is rooted in mystery, grace, and altruism. On the surface, as such, it seems far removed from education. Yet I believe that we educate and become educated for the same reasons, for in education, mystery is answered by the accumulation of knowledge, grace is received every time we reach insight, and altruism is practiced when our knowledge is applied in our communities. Therefore, it seems only natural to blend spirituality and education.

Teachers using a spiritual approach need to shape carefully their pedagogy from a well-informed basis and to identify clear objectives. A spiritual approach is an extremely political act and as such may be risky if not well thought out. At every conference where I have spoken to audiences about the spiritual approach to pedagogy, there has been at least one strong voice of opposition. Some people have called this voice, "the heckler," for this voice demands accountability and

⁴ As a philosophy major not far from graduation, Dillon demonstrated a great affinity for ideas rather than for experience. While willing to participate in class activities, he struggled with developing a personal meditation practice. I respected his natural tendencies, never pushed him into a practice, and waited to see how the course might affect him. Of all the students, he strongly held on to ideas and challenged all of us with intellectual argument as a means of persuasion.

believes that the spirit of our students is better left to the church(es), to the priests, rabbis and ministers. Rather than fear this voice, I try to listen and to respond with evidence from a solid information base. Often, several if not many people in the audience are aroused by the opposition and defend the spiritual approach along with me. However, most times this strong form of opposition cannot be appeased, for people in this camp seem unable to broaden their working definition of what it means to be a spiritual person in education. I've come to expect such resistance and my final answer to the hardline naysayers repeats what I wrote earlier in this article: a spiritual approach is not for every teacher (just as deconstruction is not for every teacher). To those I always say, leave it alone, but give me the professional courtesy to develop and practice my own teaching theories.

To those who are drawn to a spiritual approach, I say start the same way you do for other approaches. Use a working definition of the theory, select specific and concrete objectives, devise ways to assess your success, be prepared with reasons and answers when skeptics challenge you. Expect your working definition to change and grow, expect your practices to shift in demand to the definition as it changes. Know that your way is part of your professional integrity and capability. Be certain you are not just tilting at imaginary windmills. And, like in any situation of risk (academic and nonacademic), document, document, document. Data, such as I present here, can be very persuasive, as well as encouraging. It can inform you about what works in your course and about what should be dropped. A well planned course is defensible to all those who might question it, whether they be friends, members of promotion and hiring committees, your department chair, your dean, your students, or your hecklers. After six years of teaching this way, I have explained it to many different interest groups and have been able to do so because the planning and the outcomes were carefully shaped and documented. Attitude helps a lot, too. I answer the opposition with confidence and facts, rather than with fear and platitudes.

A spiritual approach is really very much like what we have been doing for years already. It includes the same mechanisms, the same processes, the same content. The difference lies in addition. When we add non-cognitive experiences, we meet innate needs in our students, needs that have been too long neglected by isolating learning to cognitive regions. By adding to a firm cognitive base, we do not leave this base behind. We simply enhance it. And when we are successful, we help students find the Self who lives in their innermost house. We establish a field of possibilities. ☺

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Appendix A: Telephone Survey Questions (Administered 15 weeks after ENG 395 ended)

1. Are you now meditating?
2. If so, what are the benefits?
3. If not, at what point did you stop?
4. What did you consider to be the most important part of the course?
5. What did you consider to be the least important part of the course?

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