GOVT 490  
CREATING WELL-BEING  
Fall 2020  

Draft Syllabus, version 07/26/2020  

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  

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Class Meetings:  
Wednesdays 4:30pm-7:10pm, on Zoom. Link will be provided in our Blackboard (BBD) class site.  

OVERVIEW  
This course aims to equip participants with perspectives, tools, approaches, practices and experiences they can immediately begin applying in their own lives and work in order to create greater well-being for themselves, and, thereby, for others. Participants are invited to step into their capacities for self-awareness and growth not just as an abstract endeavor but as an active practice in and through the lived contexts of their day to day lives.  

The course is designed so that participants reap as much richness as depth as they are willing to contribute and engage. If you are not finding what you need for your growth, transformation, and self-actualization, reach out one-on-one so we can discover what will support you to live into this potential.  

This course honors the Gandhian invitation to “Be the Change You Want To See in the World”. In other words, creating well-being within ourselves not only enhances our capacity to experience joy, peace, and personal wellness in all dimensions of our own lives, but also nourishes the soil from which we become more capable of creating well-being in our professional and personal relationships, in our organizations, and in the wider systems we inhabit at all levels of scale. As Otto Scharmer writes, quoting CEO Bill O’Brien, “the success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor.”  

At the individual level, the course supports each participant to develop their capacity to access well-being and resilience as an inner well-spring that is independent of the nature or intensity of the circumstances in which they may find themselves. Participants will read the classic work of Victor Frankl, who discovered and lived from inalienable human freedom while imprisoned in a concentration camp.  

At the collective level, participants will directly practice core competencies of collective healing and awareness based systems change, including holding space for each other, deep listening, and compassionate presence (non-judgmental awareness). Participants will also learn to identify symptoms and expressions of collective trauma and systems of domination/oppression (including the distinction between liberation logic and domination logic), as well as approaches to healing and transforming collective trauma and social fields/systems.  

The course encourages participants to connect with their own core and to put theory into practice by engaging in experiential learning focused on implementing well-being in their lived environments, synergistically for themselves and others.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

I. Knowledge and Understanding
- Theories of and approaches to well-being
- Systems thinking
- Theories of and approaches to change in complex adaptive systems
- Perspective agility

II. Professional Development
- Emotional intelligence
- Discernment and wisdom
- Self-awareness and self-transformation
- Conflict transformation
- Healing systems and social fields

III. Skills
- Use of Self / self-awareness
- Holding space for self and others
- Listening and conversational skills
- Systems seeing, feeling and sensing
- Supporting and inspiring systemic change
- Conflict transformation

READINGS

Books: (NOTE: Feel free to get any edition, or a digital format, of the books below to save money)

Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*
Eisenstein, *Sacred Economics*
Langshur & Klemp. *Start Here: Mastering the Lifelong Habit of Wellbeing.*
Menakem, R. (2017) *My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies* (Kindle edition is available; physical copies are all backordered)

Additional book or practices of your choice (that you haven’t yet read/initiated) to support your wellbeing

Additional articles, book chapters, and other materials:
Articles, book chapters and other materials to be assigned. Please see below for a draft list by class date and topic.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

The course requirements include the following (fuller descriptions of assignments will be handed out in class at appropriate times)

1) Engagement in class, preparation, mutual support of classmates, and preparation/delivery of in-class activities: 15%
   a. Well-being teams
   b. Rotating presentations / sharing
      o Main takeaways from the readings for that week
      o How you have applied your insights from the week’s readings in your work, school and life

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c. Find, share and lead a well-being practice/activity for the class

d. Hosting self and the whole

2) Blackboard discussions: 10%
   
a. Within a few days after Class 1, please post on BBD whatever wellbeing practice you have chosen to commit to as a daily practice (your practice can be just 20 seconds, but regardless of how long, commit to daily practice – you can also allow yourself to choose from among a specific range of timings/options depending on your day)

b. From Class 2 onward, by 5pm on the day before class (Tuesdays at 5pm), please upload to the BBD discussion thread an entry with the following elements:
   
   o For EACH chapter of the assigned book, please share one insight you had. Total number of insights shared should equal total number of readings plus total book chapters.
   
   o Please share a concrete way in which you might apply one or more of these insights in your life.
   
   o Please offer a ‘coaching question’ (e.g. a question that opens up deeper insight and/or inquiry) to a classmate on their post. Please distribute responses so that everyone has a response to their post, vs some having multiple and some having none. If you would like to reply to a post that already has a response, feel free, and then please ALSO respond to a post that does not have one so that everyone ends up with a reply.
   
   o Please examine your insights and application intention from the previous week, and share what you learned from applying this insight in your life over the previous week. (For Class 2, please share how your wellbeing practice from Class 1 post is going)

c. Please keep a note of your insights and application plan so that you can pair share in class

3) Two short mid-term papers (20% each):
   
   a. “Triggers” paper (1.5 - 2 single spaced pages)
   
   b. From Drama to Compassion (1.5-2 single spaced pages)

4) Final Synthesis Paper: Creating well-being, 3-4 single spaced pages (25%). Note: For full credit you must make substantive use of at least 4 books and at least 2 articles from the course.

5) Final presentations – well-being topic of your choice, or connecting class materials, concepts etc. to your own life and/or contexts/issues you are passionate about: 10%

6) Remember to do your daily well-being practice of your choice (not graded, no submissions)

7) Remember to check in with your well-being buddy (this is just between you, no submissions)

8) Recommended – Journaling. This will not be handed in or checked – it is just for your personal use, and is not a requirement for the course. You might develop a journaling practice, for example, taking 3 minutes to reflect on the day and write down 3 things you are grateful for, and any insights from your reflection.

Please note that full attendance and engagement in the synchronous online class meetings is essential. **Missing more than two class periods lowers your final overall course grade** by 1/3 for EACH missed class after the first two (e.g., for three missed classes an A- becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B, etc.; for four missed classes, an A- becomes a B, etc.). Two instances of coming substantively late or leaving early count as a missed class. In special cases as appropriate, mutually agreed, additional assignments may be able to function as make-up work for some of the point deductions. **If you foresee issues or problems with attendance/engagement please reach out so we can co-create a viable alternative learning plan for you.**

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CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN OUR CLASSROOM

As part of creating a valuable learning experience for everyone in the classroom and also living the essence and spirit of the course through our everyday interactions in and through it together, let’s attend to the quality of how we talk with each other, support our own and each other’s learning, and help each other (including helping me!) when we forget. This includes: An emphasis on inquiry rather than advocacy in class conversations, support for multiple different forms of interaction and participation guided by a foundation of mutual valuing and respect, and practicing ways of being in class that are less well developed for you. For example, let’s go beyond the content of what we want to contribute, by attending actively to how we are listening to and conversing with each other in class. Let’s focus on the quality of listening, efforts to build on the contributions of others and on the substance of the readings, asking questions, reflection, thoughtfulness of comments, and other contributions made to the creation of a mutual learning space. Let’s all try to work on whatever is hardest for us: For those who speak up often, try focusing on receptive listening; for those who rarely speak, try to add your voice even when it’s not comfortable. Most of all, let’s each of us take responsibility for creating a caring and respectful space where everyone is truly heard and valued. From this foundation, class discussions will promote your ability to understand, contextualize and interpret class materials and the world around you.

ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

It is my hope that we will be creating community in the class rather than a collection of individuals. In support of this, it will be very helpful for class members to be able to see each other. If you are willing to have your video on during class it will make a significant difference to everyone’s experience. At the same time, please attend to your self-care and do what is needed for your well-being in each moment.

We will be using Zoom for our synchronous class sessions, and the link will be posted in BBD. If your connection is weak, you can use your computer to connect with the video portion of class, and dial into the phone number to connect with the audio portion of class. That can help conserve bandwidth while still enabling you to see and hear.

AN INVITATION:
I will provide up to 3 individual or group coaching sessions for anyone who would like this.

WEEKLY READINGS AND CLASS SESSIONS:

Class 1: Wednesday, August 26, 2020
Topics: Introduction to the course, connecting with yourself, connecting with each other (co-creating community), and exploring your learning goals. Discuss course syllabus. Finding your STAND.

Learning Objectives:
- Creating and holding sacred space together
- Introduction to Circle Practices
- Understanding and practicing self-care and self-hosting
- Trauma-informed care for self and others
- Connecting from the heart
- Pathways of repair
- Clarifying your individual learning goals, your Stand, and how to create a personal well-being practice
- Wellbeing buddies

Readings:
- Langshur & Klemp. Start Here: Mastering the Lifelong Habit of Wellbeing -- please use this as a reference (we will not discuss in class unless someone chooses to; Please use this book to help you create your personal wellbeing practices throughout the semester….and beyond!).

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Class 2: Wednesday, September 2, 2020
Topics: NVC Part I, and Strengths

Learning Objectives:
- Understanding and taking responsibility for our feelings
- Distinguishing observations from judgments/evaluations
- Distinguishing trauma-infused communication from life-enhancing communication
- Listening to ourselves and others with wisdom and compassion
- Understanding and practicing levels of listening and conversation
- Learning with and from each other in sacred space
- Discovering what is alive for us and attending there
- Seeing from Strengths

Readings:
- Rosenberg, M. Nonviolent Communication, Chs 1-6

Assignment:
- Find your STRENGTHS – www.strengths.gmu.edu and print out the report of your top 5 strengths and bring to class
- Complete the exercises in Nonviolent Communication, Chs 1-6

Recommended reading (not required) – for those who want to see how liberation logic vs domination logic applies in larger contexts such as social justice: Zine by Aaron Goggins (BBD)

Class 3: Wednesday, September 9, 2020
Topics: NVC Part II; Sharing from experience

Learning Objectives:
- Understanding and taking responsibility for our feelings (continued)
- Bringing self-compassion, including to our anger
- Being present
- Expressing appreciation
- Sharing experiences and experiments with NVC in your lives

Readings:
- Rosenberg, M. Nonviolent Communication, Chs 7-14

Assignment:
- Complete the exercises in Nonviolent Communication, Ex 5 in Ch 7 and “Translating Have to to Choose to” in Ch 9. Come to class with your insights from these exercises.

Class 4: Wednesday, September 16, 2020
Topics: From Drama Triangles to Compassion Cycles

Learning Objectives:
- Understand Regier’s definition of conflict – and what that opens up for you
- Understand the drama triangle and be able to identify when you have entered it
- Understand the compassion cycle and practice entering and moving through it
- Experiment with new ways of being in and with conflict
- Practice identifying and exiting drama roles and entering compassion cycle
- Learn to access self-compassion when you are not able to exit the drama triangle

Assignment:
- Reflect: What is the drama triangle? What is the compassion cycle? How can you recognize when you are in one or the other? What is your easiest first step to access the compassion cycle?
- Experiment with and try out the compassion cycle this week in your life. On BBD, post any insights/experiences you’d like to share. Come to class prepared to discuss your experiences with your real-life experiments.

Class 5: Wednesday, September 23, 2020
Topics: Distinguishing and hearkening your inner truth. Alignment and dis-alignment. Recognizing your patterns and finding your center.


Assignment: Reflect on what ‘boxes’ you tend to inhabit, begin noticing without trying to ‘fix’ or change, and begin listening for your inner voice (the one that, when you betray it, you start creating justifications). Begin discerning your deep truth/inner voice from the chattering monkey. Just notice and continue to release/let go of judgment and of trying to ‘fix’ anything.

Class 6: Wednesday, September 30, 2020
Topics: Accessing and spreading well-being in the face of violence and suffering

Readings:
- Frankl, V. *Man’s Search for Meaning,* pp. 54 to end including all appendices

Assignment:
- Come to class with your 5 favorite quotations from Frankl readily accessible to share
- Come to class prepared to articulate: What is the philosophy of nonviolence? What distinguishes nonviolence from complacency or passivity? What is agape love? Where and how might you apply these concepts in your own life and contexts?

Class 7: Wednesday, October 7, 2020
Topics: Collective Trauma and Embodiment. Healing from collective trauma of systemic racism.

Readings: Menakem, R. (2017). *My Grandmother’s Hands.* Read the general sections and then the sections relevant to you or that you feel you can adapt to be relevant to you.

Assignment: Engage with the exercises in the book as you read. Write BBD post incorporating your experiences and insights of engaging with the practices and material.

Class 8: Wednesday, October 14, 2020
Topics: Pause, sharing material from our real lives, and integration of learning and practice.

Readings: No new readings for this week.

Assignment: Midterm Paper #1 due today by 10am on BBD.

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Class 9: Wednesday, October 21, 2020  
Topics: Self-directed readings and exploration  
Readings: Explore new (to you) well-being resources to read, practice & present in class

Class 10: Wednesday, October 28, 2020  
Topics: Healing ourselves and our systems from structural violence  
Readings: TBD

Class 11: Wednesday, November 4, 2020  
Topics: Re-designing Systems for Well-being, measurements and paradigms to support well-being  
Readings:  
• Eisenstein, Sacred Economics  
Recommended:  
• Halstead & Cobb, “The Need for New Measurements of Progress”

Class 12: Wednesday, November 11, 2020  
Topics: Pause, integrate, share  
Readings: No new readings  
Assignment: Midterm Paper #2 due today by 10am on BBD.

Class 13: Wednesday, November 18, 2020  
Final presentations: Creating well-being: Your journey, discoveries and paths forward

BREAK: NOVEMBER 25 - 29

Class 14: Wednesday, December 2, 2020  
Final presentations: Creating well-being: Your journey, discoveries and paths forward  
Course Wrap-up  
Course Evaluations  
Assignment: Final papers due by noon, Monday December 7 on BBD.

INFORMATION ON ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS: GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS  
The quality of your work will be evaluated on the following:  
• Engagement with the materials and the course, including scope and depth of use of materials and sources  
• Depth of reflection, especially self-reflection  
• Depth of insight, analysis and understanding

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• Clarity and richness of expression
• Demonstration of your personal learning and your effort to stretch yourself beyond previous experiences and underlying assumptions

Please single space all papers, submit by email at least 3 hrs. before class begins if due on class days, and please bring hard copies to class (please don’t make special trips to drop off hard copies on days we do not have class – emailing by the deadline and bringing hardcopies to the next class period will be fine)

Hygiene factors that are assumed and that will detract from your grade if not fulfilled:
• Writing quality: Your writing should be at a quality appropriate to higher education, so please leave enough time for multiple rounds of editing and crafting, as well as final proof-reading. I recommend the Writing Center for help in taking your writing to the next level. Please proof-read all of your submissions and make liberal use of the Writing Center. I reserve the right to return papers unread if they do not meet appropriate standards of writing and editing quality.
• Citing sources: Be sure to cite all of your sources appropriately. Include a bibliography in your papers. Please read the sections on plagiarism (below and on the GMU website), and if you are at all unclear or uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism please talk with me.
• If you anticipate needing more time for assignments please discuss with me in advance.
• Thoughtfulness and engagement: Accurate and thoughtful use of course readings and concepts; conceptual coherence, grounding and clarity of posited relationships; accuracy and relevance of evidence.

ASSIGNMENTS: Details to be provided in the BBD site (assignments section)
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

GMU Writing Center. I would encourage you to make use of the GMU Writing Center while you’re here (regardless of how well you write), since getting feedback on writing is often a great learning opportunity and one that’s harder to come by once you leave school. The writing center info can be found online at [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/). For updated information please check for their hours on their website.

*New Voices in Public Policy* is a journal designed to disseminate student work in SPGIA to a broader audience. It is reviewed by a combined panel of students and faculty. You may self-submit online at: [http://journals.gmu.edu/index.php/newvoices](http://journals.gmu.edu/index.php/newvoices) If you would like me to consider nominating your course paper for publication in *New Voices in Public Policy* you may let me know.

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you are a student with special needs that require academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 993-2474 or [www.ds.gmu.edu](http://www.ds.gmu.edu) as early as possible. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services and must be prospective rather than retrospective.

Class Meetings and Missed Classes. If you find you have to miss class, please communicate with me immediately. Please see the missed class policy above. Missing more than two classes during the semester will lower your grade by 1/3 for each missed class after the first two, except under exceptional circumstances, in which case you will need to complete additional assignments designed to help you assimilate the information and classroom experiences you have missed. Missing substantial portions of two classes counts as one missed class (arriving very late or leaving substantively early). I am willing to work with you through difficult situations, especially when you can alert me in advance or as soon as possible, to make it possible to complete the course successfully.

Honor Code: GMU has an honor code and all students are required to know and abide by it. The information is located at: [http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/](http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/)

PLAGIARISM: All submitted work must be your own, and it is imperative that you accurately cite all sources in your work.

- GMU has an official university policy on plagiarism that can be found at: [http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/](http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/)
- Please note that violations of plagiarism policies can result in expulsion from the university.
- Note that ignorance of the policies is not a defense, so please familiarize yourself with what plagiarism is and how to ensure that you don’t commit it. If you have any questions about what constitutes the appropriate use and citation of sources, please talk with me.
- *To quote from GMU’s policy as emailed to me on 3/20/08 by the SPP office:*

> “The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

> “Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

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“Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

“The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero-tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

“To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.”

Note that most cases of plagiarism are unintentional, but are plagiarism nonetheless and carry all the consequences. Here are a few tips to help you avoid making such a serious mistake:

- As a rough guide, if you use three or more consecutive words from a source, use direct quotation marks around the text and cite it (see a style manual for citation guidelines). Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks, with references to the corresponding source and page number(s). Images, data and charts must also be cited and referenced.
- If you use ideas, data, or other material from a source but put it in your own words (paraphrasing), then you must reference the source materials with in-text citations.
- All direct quotations and all paraphrased ideas and data need to be cited in the text where they appear (can be with footnotes, endnotes, or in-text parentheses depending on your manual of style), with a bibliographic entry at the end.
- These requirements apply to all forms of submission or presentations (including oral presentations), and all kinds of sources, including material drawn from the internet.
- IN YOUR NOTES AND ALL WRITING/PRESENTATIONS, to protect yourself from unintentional plagiarism, ALWAYS 1) take the time when copying notes to put quotation marks around direct quotations (and then copy the quoted material accurately – you can use ellipses (…) to skip parts of the quotation and brackets ([ ])) to change specific words such as replacing “He” with “[The informant]” to clarify references, etc.; 2) clearly distinguish direct quotations from paraphrases in your notes so that it’s clear what is your language and what isn’t; 3) clearly distinguish paraphrases of others’ ideas and data from your own original ideas and data so it’s clear in your notes what are your original ideas and what is drawn from others – this is easy to forget over time.
- In sum, always make clear which language and ideas come from which sources, vs. which are your own original ideas, & cite all direct quotations & all paraphrases clearly, fully & appropriately.