

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number 5217S
Date of Senate Approval 05/04/17

Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

APC Document 46 (IST): **Add new course, IST 220, Art and Science of Meditation**

Effective Date: Fall 2017

1. Add: On page 193, new course, **IST 220, Art and Science of Meditation:**

220 Art and Science of Meditation (2)

Though most often associated with spiritual practice, meditation has long played a role not only in many religious traditions but also in disciplinary traditions from philosophy to biology. With the broad goal of cultivating greater understanding of the diverse contexts and histories of meditation, this course will engage students in critical discourse on individual and interdisciplinary perspectives on meditation, as well as in personal practices to enhance academic and personal learning. As part of this course, students will: read texts that inform and challenge us to think and reflect about meditation; discuss how meditative practices can be incorporated into methodologies of various disciplines and sectors; explore disciplinary perspectives on meditation, from current brain function and health sciences to empathy, sympathy, and compassion toward others in the larger world community. As a way to assimilate knowledge with personal experience, we will engage in individual and group meditative practices throughout the semester. Spring.

Impact: Since the course will be taught by a rotating set of instructors who with the support of their department will teach it as part of their schedule, this change will have minimal impact on instructor burden. Similarly, the course is not required for any major, minor, or LAC requirements so it should not have a negative impact on departments. Since the course is a foundational course for a proposed Contemplative Inquiry Cluster, it should be offered once a year.

Rationale: A 1-credit special topics version of this course has been offered in IST twice already (Spring 2015 and Spring 2016) and is being offered again now, Spring 2017. The course was fully enrolled and garnered positive feedback from students. Expanding the course to 2 credit hours will enable the course to include a “lab” component on one of the two meetings each week and a text discussion session at the other meeting. The “lab” component will be the place where the students practice meditation together. Students will also be expected to practice meditation outside of class as part of the course requirements. Students will then have the opportunity to inquire into their own experience to see how it aligns (or not) with theoretical, conceptual readings.

There is growing interest and awareness of contemplative practices generally at UNC Asheville and this course brings both an academic and personal view to meditation, challenging students to connect with the material and each other at multiple levels and in multiple ways. Formalizing the course will ensure that students have access to this material and will form a foundation for future courses in the cluster.