CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE IN SUSTAINABLE FOOD & FARMING

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INSPIRATION
Fostering **Connection** through Contemplative Practices

- Embody what I teach
- Ask myself “Why?”
- **Connection** at the heart of my teaching philosophy
Connection to Values

- Clarity around my personal values
- SMART GOALS
  - Barbezat pilot
- Teaching Philosophy
- Dialogue
Connection to Nature

- Start each class with BREATH
- Visualization
- “Sit” assignments
- What would your letter to a tree say?
Connection to Body
My 3 Objectives of Contemplative Practices

1. I know that I am here in this room, not lost in my thoughts.
2. I feel that I am here, not only in my minds but also in my body.
3. We are here together, in community
Practices: Centering Breath
Stepping up to step back: Students lead breath

- Model at least 4-5 times before opening it up
- Setting a standard – expectations
- Giving guidelines- no “right” way AND we must honor safety of students
- “Fire breath” – best ones “out of the box”
- Great way to learn new breaths and get inspiration
- Prefer their peer’s perspective
- Encourages each other
- Step in when / if needed to honor safety
Practices: Poems, Stories, Quotes + Silence

• Inspired from THIS GROUP!

“Stories help us to connect to a world beyond the self.”

• Building community through sharing the centering exercise

“One of the ways we become a learning community is by sharing and receiving one another’s stories; it is a ritual of communion that opens our minds and hearts. Sharing in ways that help us connect we come to know each other better.”

*(Teaching Critical Thinking p. 51-53) by bell hooks*
Practices: Mindful Movement
Practices: Transparency

• Sharing WHY we are doing something before we do it

Wellness for Farmers: ↑  Mindful  ↓  Injury Risk
Ag Leadership: ↑  Mindful  ↑  Inclusive
Botany for Gardeners ↑  Mindful  ↑  Connected to Nature

• Asking WHY we might be doing something- students see connection - Brainstorm
• Connect to topic- not some random thing
• Remind them not every breath or stretch may be their favorite
Practices: Pre & Post Course Assessment

Fostering **Transformative Learning** through Contemplative Practice: Capturing students’ shift in perspectives

“**My definition of Wellness is...**”

- Student A Pre-Assessment:
  “Feeling physically fit and overall good about my health”

- Student A Post-Assessment:
  “An ongoing process of balance. Cultivating physical and mental health and managing your time well.”
Practices: Dialogue

• Introduce Practice with Guidelines
• Contemplatively Reflective
• Awareness of “parallel thoughts”, feelings and bodily sensations, reactions
• PAUSE- RELAX – OPEN
• All 3 objectives- here in body, mind, together
• Bringing Contemplative Practice to help answer BIG & DIFFICULT Questions
My approach

“We want to present material in a way that supports students in having their own agency... an active opportunity for them to find meaning and develop intellectually... The divide between talking at students and disconnected authoritative role, remaining their teachers and still providing ownership of their learning experiences is difficult to navigate. (p.3)

• Practicing what I preach/teach

“There is no effective way to teach contemplative practices without practicing them yourself.” (p.67)

(Contemplative Practices in Higher Education by D. Barbezat & M. Bush)
RESULTS: “What do you think of the centering breath exercise I conduct at the beginning of each class?” (Botany For Gardeners-100 students)

- I really enjoy starting my day with a breath (3)
- I enjoy the breathing exercise at the beginning of class (10)
- The breath at the beginning of class is really relaxing and makes me be able to arrive to class
- Moment of silence is good/nice start to class (4)
- Love the breath each morning (4)
- Moment of mindfulness rocks. So amazing that you do it. There is a different feeling in this lecture than any other I’ve been in; it feels like a safe space.
**RESULTS:** “What do you think of the centering breath exercise I conduct at the beginning of each class?”

- I definitely like the breath before each class and it helps relax me. Me and my friends look forward to it every MWF.
- I enjoy the breath at the beginning of class; it helps me to settle in and get ready to learn.
- I enjoy the breath at the beginning of each class and appreciate the teacher’s open-minded perspective.
- I like the breath at the beginning of class but it makes me sleepy (2)
- *I enjoy this course because it teaches me about what I can do to help make the world a better place.*
Pause. Breathe. What do you think?

- Open and eager for feedback
- Excited to co-create the path with you all
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- THANK YOU!