

# 5 Things: Learning About Contemplative Pedagogy

## THE SERIES

The resources recommended in this series are intended to be eclectic and thought-provoking. They may be journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, interviews, reports, or just about anything else that we think is important to read, watch, or hear about this topic. For the general concept, this series is deeply indebted to the EDUCAUSE “7 Things You Should Know About...” reports.

## THE TOPIC

Contemplative pedagogy has become a more thoroughly discussed topic in recent years. When searching the literature, early works first appear around the late 2000s (Bai, Scott, and Donald 2009), with some of the most-cited works published after 2010 (Grace 2011; Zajonc 2013). While it is not a concept that began in the library field, like many types of pedagogy, it has since found relevance in library instruction (Mourer and Karadjova 2018).

There has been a surge in interest in types of pedagogy that are more mindful, respectful, and cognizant of the needs of both instructors and learners in the classroom. Previously, this committee has covered trauma-responsive pedagogy and inclusive pedagogy. Our newest topic, contemplative pedagogy, dovetails nicely with these. While some of its practices do have religious or spiritual undertones, there are ways in which instructors can use contemplative pedagogy techniques in more secular ways.

Librarians can find many ways to apply the various movements and techniques contained within this framework into their teaching. Each method generally incorporates an idea of being present and allowing grace within instruction. Colleges and universities are increasingly concerned with students’ mental health. As the current climate has only made good mental health harder to achieve for everyone, contemplative pedagogy considers both students and instructors’ needs.

The resources on this list are only a small sampling of the rich bodies of literature on this topic in library and information sciences, education, psychology, and other fields. The [ACRL Contemplative Pedagogy Interest Group](#) is also a helpful resource.

1. **Baughner, John Eric, and Dorothe Juliane Bach. "Contemplative practices in higher education: powerful methods to transform teaching and learning." (2015): 105-108.**

Barbezat and Bush’s book is a foundational text on the understanding of contemplative practice, its place in pedagogy, and its application within higher education. Although the authors do not address libraries, instruction librarians interested in learning about types of contemplative practices, their integrations into teaching, and research about their impacts on learning would benefit from reading sections of this book. The book follows a

logical flow, with Part One establishing a theoretical and practical background. The four chapters in this section provide a broad overview of the rationale for incorporating contemplative practices within the university and college classroom, research concerning specific practices, examples of two different courses that include contemplative principles, and a discussion on how instructors can prepare themselves to be contemplative teachers. The chapters in Part Two provide a deep dive into an array of contemplative practices, including mindfulness, contemplative reading, sensing, contemplative movement, and compassion and loving kindness, and their uses in different higher education courses. A librarian new to this topic might begin their reading with Part One followed by the more library-focused resources found in the rest of this guide. This book would then provide further reading about specific contemplative practices that a library instructor could incorporate into their own practices and their teaching.

**Approximate reading time: Chapter One, 30 minutes**

2. **Duffy, Brooke, Lisa M. Rose-Wiles, and Martha M. Loesch. "Contemplating library instruction: Integrating contemplative practices in a mid-sized academic library." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 47, no. 3 (2021): 102329. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102329>**

Duffy, Rose-Wiles, and Loesch's article is particularly valuable for its literature review and concrete examples of integrating contemplative practices (CP) into the main library at Seton Hall University. The meticulously thorough literature review addresses the growth and benefits of CP in higher education, alongside the increase in student reports of mental health difficulties; potential hindrances to incorporating CP at colleges and universities; and the small but growing body of literature on CP in academic libraries. The authors then describe the infusion of contemplative practices into their library's instruction program at the institutional, departmental, librarian, and classroom levels. The many examples they describe offer clear models for other libraries interested in similar programs. Reflections on the intersection of CP with critical librarianship and social justice are woven throughout the article.

**Approximate reading time: 30 minutes**

3. **Aytac, Selenay, and Diane Mizrachi. "The Mindfulness Framework for Implementing Mindfulness into Information Literacy Instruction." *The Reference Librarian* 63, no. 1-2 (2022): 43-61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2022.2030273>**

In this timely publication, Aytac and Mizrachi describe a Mindfulness Framework and "discuss how librarians can use familiar strategies to integrate mindfulness into information literacy instruction" (43). Drawing on relevant literature on mindfulness and its applications, the proposed Framework consists of three pillars of mindfulness—paying attention, present moment, and non-judgmental—and their associated attributes, including concentration/focus, open to experience, clear mind, mindful stretching, and judgment-free zone. Each of the nine attributes is linked to four of the

twelve common teaching strategies employed by librarians that the authors identified through a survey. By connecting these common teaching strategies with the mindfulness concepts, Aytac and Mizrachi illustrate how librarians can utilize their current pedagogical practices to incorporate mindfulness in order to transform their teaching and the information literacy classroom. Since this article is not a case study, any example discussing the actual implementation of mindful teaching in a concrete instruction setting would be a nice follow-up read.

**Approximate reading time: 30-45 minutes**

4. **Lang, Kristina S. "Staying Grounded In & Out of the Library Classroom: Practical Applications of Contemplative Practices for Instruction Librarians." GLITR Conference, uploaded June 25, 2021, YouTube video, 33:17, <https://youtu.be/NekOTTOpfW8>**

After beginning with a breathing exercise, Lang discusses previous mindfulness movements in American culture including transcendentalism. She also covers types of mindfulness therapies. She explains there are many techniques learners can use to avoid maladaptive coping skills. How does contemplative pedagogy relate to library instruction? Lang explains that by being more reflective, we can better help our students. Additionally, it increases capacity for empathy, personal skills, and self-awareness. It can also help anxiety surrounding public speaking. She suggests some actionable practices, including meditation, journaling, yoga, and guided breathing. Finally, she discusses ways she has incorporated these practices into de-stress programming. She acquired funding to support investments in these areas and was able to implement some new practices at her library.

This recording includes only automatic captions, so it is not fully accessible.

**Approximate viewing time: 30 minutes**

5. **Oliver, Steven T. "Contemplative Pedagogy & the Journey of Becoming." TEDx Talks, uploaded November 12, 2019, YouTube video, 16:16, <https://youtu.be/UepRKOOKANA>**

Steven Thurston Oliver, an Associate Professor of secondary and higher education at Salem State University and a sociologist of education, delivers this TEDx talk titled *Contemplative Pedagogy & the Journey of Becoming*. He opens with a story of a ritual shared with his father as a young child. His father would ask him to visualize his future self and the work that he might be doing in that future. He describes the activity as one that permitted introspection and an articulation of personal aspirations, which he has since come to recognize as an essential practice for pursuing joy. Mindfulness and contemplative practices, like this one, encourage dedicated space, time, and attention to the present moment and what it means to be human, according to Oliver. He describes how he brings contemplative practice into his teaching and learning, through contemplative writing and other techniques. Recalling his dislike of the rigidity of his

schooling experiences, he shares how he pursued a career in education with the purpose of giving a different experience for students. He is committed to attending to the whole learner, their identities, and their sense of purpose in connected and meaningful ways. For him, contemplative pedagogy does just that by providing moments of stillness in the classroom when students are able to discern what matters to oneself and one's community.

**Approximate viewing time: 15 minutes**

### **Bibliography**

- Bai, Heesoon, Charles Scott, and Beatrice Donald. 2009. "Contemplative Pedagogy and Revitalization of Teacher Education." *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 55 (3).
- Grace, Fran. 2011. "Learning as a Path, Not a Goal: Contemplative Pedagogy—Its Principles and Practices." *Teaching Theology & Religion* 14 (2): 99–124.
- Mourer, Marissa M., and Katia G. Karadjova. 2017. "Dare to Share the Silence: Tools and Practices of Contemplative Pedagogy in a Library Brain Booth." In *European Conference on Information Literacy*, 781–90. Springer.
- Zajonc, Arthur. 2013. "Contemplative Pedagogy: A Quiet Revolution in Higher Education." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 134: 83–94.

This publication was compiled and created in Spring 2022 by members of the 2021-2022 ACRL Instruction Section Research and Scholarship Committee: Stefanie Bluemle, Caroline Sinkinson, April Schweikhard, Elena Soltau, Lijuan Xu, and Alyssa Denneler.

If you have comments or questions about the "5 Things" publications, please contact the current IS Research and Scholarship Committee Chair: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/is/acr-insressch>.