

Anti-Racist Mindfulness Activities

Hilary Fezzey, University of Wisconsin-Superior

Introduction: These activities can be facilitated in face-to-face, online synchronous, and online asynchronous learning modalities. They are intended to complement course assignments that foster close readings of texts from an anti-racist perspective. They are designed for lower- and upper-level undergraduate literature courses.

Sample learning goal with which these activities can be aligned: “Individual and Social Responsibility: Students will engage in personal development, interpersonal competence, and social responsibility through active learning.” (University of Wisconsin-Superior. “Student Learning Outcome #2: Individual and Social Responsibility.” 2014

https://www.uwsuper.edu/assessment/slo/student-learning-goals.cfm#_2_2016058)

Assessment: These formative activities are part of the engaged learning grade for the course, and as such, students earn full credit by participating in them. The skills that are gained in doing these activities can be assessed more formally in assignments that involve reflection and metacognition, such as written reflections on completed assignments, cover letters to course portfolios, etc. Sample rubrics for assessing what the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) refers to as “Personal and Social Responsibility” can be found in their VALUE rubrics: Terrel Rhodes. *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and Tools for Using Rubrics*. Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2010.

<https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>

Course activity 1:

- **Introduce students to mindfulness:** *Greater Good Magazine*, “What Is Mindfulness?”: <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>
- **Highlight the benefits it offers for students:** *Transcendental Meditation*, “10 Benefits of Mindfulness for Students”
<https://tmhome.com/benefits/10-benefits-of-meditation-for-students/>
- **Practice a mindful breathing exercise as a class** (participation optional and at students’ comfort levels): *Stop, Breathe & Think*, “Mindful Breathing”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEfs5TJZ6Nk>
- **Provide students with a list of free mindfulness apps:** *Mindful.org*, “Free Mindfulness Apps Worthy of Your Attention”
<https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-apps-worthy-of-your-attention/>
- **Discuss insights gained from the activity** in small groups and/or full class discussion, emphasizing that students only need to share that which they are comfortable disclosing.

Course activity 2:

- **Introduce students to mindfulness resources for anti-racism:** University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality and Healing, “Mindfulness for Racial Justice” <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/mindfulness-racial-justice>
- **Share research on how mindfulness can help reduce bias:** *Greater Good Magazine*, “Three Ways Mindfulness Can Make You Less Biased” https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/three_ways_mindfulness_can_make_you_less_biased
- **Practice a mindful breathing exercise as a class** (participation optional and at students’ comfort levels):
 - *Stop, Breathe & Think*, “Kindness” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2EOqFBCmy8>
 - *Stop, Breathe & Think*, “Compassion”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kguvYCmsGM>
- **Discuss insights gained from the activity** in small groups and/or full class discussion, emphasizing that students only need to share that which they are comfortable disclosing.

Course activity 3:

- **Introduce students to journaling as a mindfulness practice:** *Greater Good Magazine*, “How Journaling Can Help You in Hard Times” https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_journaling_can_help_you_in_hard_times
- **Journal Prompts for "nonjudgmental awareness, kindness, and curiosity" to "investigate racial distress"** (King 117):
 - **Directions:** Free write for three minutes for each prompt. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or if what you write makes sense. The goal is to express your thoughts and emotions with no judgment. These prompts and answers are just for you.
 - "What racial views or beliefs are fueling suffering in this moment?" (King 118)
 - "What impact is my experience having on my heart, body, and mind?" (King 118)
 - "What assumptions am I making? Do they support distress or freedom?" (King 118)

Source for Journal Prompts: Ruth King. *Mindful of Race: Transforming Racism from the Inside Out*. Sounds True, 2018.

- **Discuss insights gained from the activity** in small groups and/or full class discussion, emphasizing that students only need to share that which they are comfortable disclosing.

Sample reflective assignments:

1. End-of-Semester Course Reflection: This could be done as a written reflection and/or discussion activity.

- What did you learn about how notions of identity (such as class, gender, nationality, race, religion, and sexuality) impact and connect with many of the prominent themes associated with the literature that we studied this semester?
- How does your answer to the previous question impact your worldview?
- How might your understanding of literature and culture enhance your life as well as your interactions in the community and in your future career?

2. Reflective Cover Letter for Course Portfolio:

Directions: This letter should introduce your portfolio to me, demonstrate what you learned from your reading responses, and explain what each of the two revised reading responses you include illustrates about how you have grown as a burgeoning literary critic. Thus, you should show your comprehension of some major course learning outcomes. Be sure to review the following relevant course learning outcomes from the syllabus as you compose your letter:

- Demonstrate mastery of [insert type of literature on which course is focusing].
- Demonstrate mastery of critical reading, thinking, writing, and research skills to analyze literature.
- Demonstrate mastery of intersectionality, with a particular focus on antiracism, as it applies to writing on [insert course topic].

In your reflective letter, include a brief one- to two-sentence summary of the revisions that you made to each reading response in the portfolio.

Hilary Fezzey is a Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, where she teaches courses in British and world literature and literary theory in the Department of Writing, Language, and Literature. She received her B.A. from Northern Michigan University and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Purdue University. She has essays in *Re-viewing Thomas Holcroft*; the *Adam Smith Review*; and *Big Picture Pedagogy*.