

Mindfulness for Interpreters **TIAG8520—1st half of Spring Semester**

Professor: Julie Johnson, with Marianne Rowe, MS
Time: Fridays 12-2 p.m.
Dates: August 28 – October 16, 2015
Room: MG215 (formerly MG210)

Contact: jejohnso@miis.edu, Office: 831-647-3089 (W-F)

The primary purpose of this course is to support student interpreters by helping them develop some of the general cognitive and affective abilities that underlie interpreting. These include the ability to focus, sustain, and shift one's attention, to be at once alert and relaxed, and to handle internal distractors like performance anxiety and self-criticism.

The course, however, is open to all MIIS students. It does not involve any interpreting-like tasks, but rather builds these abilities through practice at simply paying attention in the present moment on purpose and non-judgmentally.

The course is not about performing, but simply experiencing. There will be no tests, and the grade is a simple participation-based pass/no pass. Classes will consist of guided mindfulness meditation and discussion. With concentration on the breath, you will learn to focus your attention and develop awareness of your own sensations, thoughts and emotions as they occur, with an attitude of compassion for yourself and for others.

Outside of class, you will be asked to practice on your own 10+ minutes a day, and invited to read key research on the foundations, mechanisms and neuroscience of mindfulness—how it is that the mind can and does change the brain through intentional awareness and acceptance. There will also be one half-day retreat at Asilomar Conference Center on Saturday September 19th (pending confirmation).

Beyond potential benefits for interpreters, mindfulness creates space for insight, fosters a sense of connectedness, and cultivates general wellbeing. In recent decades, Western science has empirically found, for instance, that mindfulness can decrease blood-pressure, cholesterol, cortisol (stress hormone) levels, anxiety and depression, while enhancing immune system functioning, resilience, coping skills, communication, quality of relationships, self-awareness, and self-trust.

By enrolling in this course, you will also be contributing to empirical research on the effects of such mindfulness. For this reason, you will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing that data collected from you during the course (brief surveys, an interview, a focus-group discussion), included under a pseudonym if you prefer, may be used for research purposes.