

CalStar Yoga Syllabus

Performing Yoga/Massage Therapy for and with People Living with disabilities

Fall 2010

2 Units (or Volunteer)

Course Facilitator: Mitzi Yue

Email: mitz_tyue@berkeley.edu

Office hours: e-mail for an appointment

Head Yoga Instructor: Saraswathi Devi

(510) 655-3664

e-mail: info@yogalayam.org

Yoga Instructors: Claire Lavery & Martha Patt

Prerequisites: a positive attitude!

Important Note!!!: In order to receive a passing grade in the course, you may be absent to no more than two classes in total during the semester. Since workshops are mandatory, failure to show up to a workshop counts as an absence (see workshop dates below). If you have extenuating circumstances, please contact the facilitator in advance or provide appropriate documentation.

First Day of Class: Friday September 3, 2010

Course Purpose: The purpose of this course is to provide assistance for people with disabilities through Yoga and massage. We'll learn about disabilities through hands on work; short lectures and handouts will supplement and strengthen our skills and understanding. This is a "real life" class where learning is applied and you learn through doing.

What is CalStar Yoga? CalStar Yoga is a program where Yoga-assistants (that's Us!) assist people with disabilities in an authentic yoga practice. You help by assisting them into various yoga-postures, giving massages, and generally helping their bodies and minds feel really good. They are mostly experienced yoga students and are completely comfortable with and appreciative of the work you do with them.

CalStar Yoga has been going on for several years and has an experienced and professional staff of yoga instructors. Yoga-assistants receive on the job training. You also learn concepts during three workshops in yoga, shiatsu and Thai-massage. Your feedback in these workshops will help determine what we learn and how we organize our class.

As a Yoga-assistant, you will help people get up and exercise for what might be the only time of the week where they aren't either in bed or a wheelchair. Stretching, loosening, and relaxing the body for a few hours eases pain, increases flexibility/coordination, and helps stimulate all the under-stimulated tissues of the body. The potential long-term benefits for people with disabilities are great. Increased energy, stamina, flexibility, appetite, and more are possible.

Who you are helping/working with: The yoga students are a diverse, lively and intelligent group. Their ages range from early 20s into 80s, but mostly in-between. Many are graduates of Berkeley. They're regular people who have disabilities. They're all very

friendly and interesting and would like to get to know you, so feel free to talk them.

The Yoga-students have a range of disabilities such as multiple sclerosis, post-stroke symptoms, and injury-related problems. Most of their disabilities are physical as opposed to mental. Some were born with disabilities and some acquired them later in life. A few have speech impairments, but with no lack of intelligence. Please feel free to politely ask people about their disabilities.

Want to take this class and have a disability? Throughout CalStar's history, many volunteers have had disabilities themselves, although being ambulatory enough to lift, stretch, and hold people into various positions is useful. Feel free to contact me by phone for any questions. If you wish to be a Yoga-student rather than a Yoga-assistant (what we Decal-ers are), please contact Saraswathi Devi at (510) 655-3664, info@yogalayam.org.

Course Format: Throughout the semester, we will receive personal instruction from three experienced and highly skilled Yoga-teachers (Saraswathi, Claire, and Martha) on how to care for others using yoga, shiatsu, and Thai-massage techniques. In addition to the weekly CalStar classes, three *mandatory* workshops will instruct us in these techniques.

Schedule:

Fridays, 1pm – 4pm at the RSF Combatives Room

After setting up, we have announcements, then a breathing-relaxation exercise.

From 2pm – 3:30 we do the actual Yoga and Massage, followed by another relaxation-period before we clean up and go.

Workshops: There are three Saturday workshops, and attendance is absolutely mandatory. Dates will be announced at the beginning of the semester, so please plan accordingly. During a typical workshop, we will be demonstrating a variety of yoga techniques and discussing in depth the benefits for different disabilities. **Workshop dates will be announced on the first day of class.**

Reading: There will be occasional short reading assignments that will facilitate in class discussions and exercises. A reader will be available from Krishna Copy, date TBA.

Papers: There will be a 2-5 page essay due at the end of the term.

Exercise Practice: We will ask that you practice facilitated yoga exercises done in class on a friend or relative for about an hour to an hour and a half each week in order to become more comfortable and skilled in those exercises. The more you practice and become skilled and efficient in the various assisted exercises, the more those individuals living with disabilities will benefit from your participation in the class. The yoga instructors and I will observe your in-class progress and give you tips and suggestions about how to get the most out of each exercise.

Grading/Attendance: Since this is a hands-on class, attendance is **CRUCIAL**. Sign-up sheet will be available in the beginning of each class. **If you miss more than two classes per semester, you will not be able to pass this class. If you are late to this class more than two times, you will not be able to pass this class.**

Completion of the final essay is required. Grading is Pass/Not Pass.

Course Policies: The most important thing about CalStar Yoga is the atmosphere of caring and respect that we have. Please be courteous and respectful, especially with handling people's bodies. We'll all naturally learn how to handle the unique situations of assisted yoga, so don't worry if you feel uncertain. Just ask questions and you'll get the feedback you need.

Feedback: We'll ask for feedback periodically to see how we can improve the course for everyone.

If you have a concern that you cannot resolve with the student facilitators directly, you may contact the instructor of record, Greg Merrill, LCSW, gregmerrill@berkeley.edu, 510/643-6397.

Content of Course

Students in this course will be exposed to yoga and meditation techniques and their adaptation for people with a wide variety of chronic illnesses, disabilities, and/or medical conditions who may not be welcome in other yoga venues. Students will learn from a master yoga instructor, Saraswathi Devi, and will assist disabled community members in participating in the class. Students learn to get more comfortable and familiar with disabled bodies and to have an attitude of approach and accommodation to persons with disabilities.

The Key Learning Outcomes

Students who participate will:

1. Gain an understanding of key yoga exercises and poses and their physiological and psychological benefits;
2. Learn to help adapt yoga techniques to persons with severe medical conditions and disabilities;
3. Increase comfort level with persons with different bodies and abilities;
4. Increase receptive attitude and accommodation to persons with different bodies and abilities.

Methods of Instruction

Students will be asked to complete some advance reading, will receive advance instruction from the head yoga instructor, will be given corrective feedback during the class, and will also write a reflective essay. Discussion and question and answer time will be built into each class.

Evaluation

This is an attendance based course with a strict policy of attendance, preparation, and punctuality. Absences are limited. Students are required to complete the reflective essay at the end of the course.

Supervision of Course

The instructor of record will attend one class per semester and meet with the student leaders two times during the semester in his office and will be available for consultation as needed. If grievances occur, the instructor will get actively involved. End of course evaluations will be completed by all students so the instructor of record can evaluate student perspectives on the course. The lead yoga instructor, Saraswathi Devi, is very experienced and has worked with our students for years and also contacts the instructor of record if she has a concern.