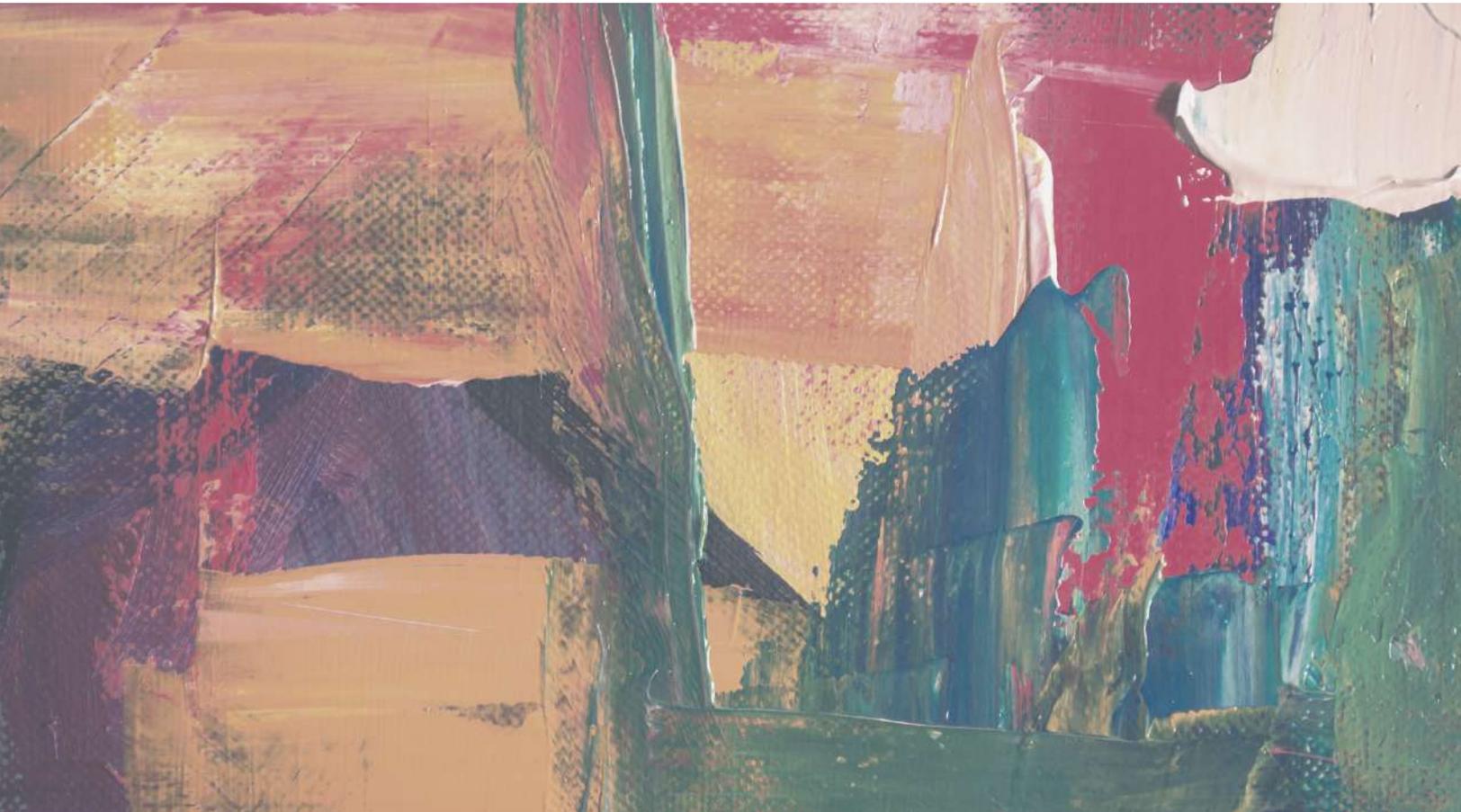


THE ARTS & HEALTH



GLOBAL HEALTH IN
ACTION NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 8
MERCER UNIVERSITY



EXPLORING OUR NATURE

a collection of updates on how Mercerians are using the arts to
expand their physical abilities, keep physically an mentally healthy,
and explore academia

2019-2020

THE ART OF YOGA IN MACON: JUST A TREND?

By: Jen Jones



Yoga has been around for centuries as it fundamental to many meditation-based forms of worship in major global religions. Modern, mainstream yoga, however, started becoming popular in the 1930s. You don't have to look far to find amateur yogis - athletes and health enthusiasts alike. What are the actual benefits of yoga in a community such as Macon or for the person themselves? Or is it just another passing health fad in our community?

The birthplace of yoga is believed to be India. The Sanskrit translation of yoga is "to be yoked." When a person did yoga it was to become one with oneself. Or in other words, to connect the mental to the physical body in order to bring harmony throughout a person. Throughout history, yoga has evolved into many forms, but there are four main types of yoga that can be found in studios today that work towards helping students recharge mentally and physically. Hatha yoga, which is the entry-level, Kundalini yoga, which focuses on the mind and spirit, Ashtanga yoga that is more physically challenging, and Bikram or Hot yoga. While each of these types of yoga offers a different discipline to focus on, each works towards aligning the body with the mind.

Having difficulty playing the video? Try this QR code:



THE ART OF YOGA: JUST A TREND?

By: Jen Jones

Does practicing yoga actually repair and refresh your body or is it just a mental break from our busy lives? I think it is both. The American Osteopathic Association released an article on the physical and mental benefits that yoga has. Some of the physical benefits included increased flexibility and energy, improved cardio and circulatory health, and protection from further injury. The article further discussed how the practice of yoga benefited mental health through the reduction of stress. It found that a person could better manage and cope with their stress through the practice.



In Macon, there are seven yoga studios and Mercer even offers yoga classes through the University Center. Sparks Yoga, located on Washington Avenue, has been in Macon for a couple of years now. I attended one of the classes that focused on Hatha yoga. The movements throughout the class were slow and the main focus was on breathing and stretching. The area of the shoulders that hold the most amount of stress was a main focus of our practice on that day. Though I struggled through most of the class, the feeling of relief and rejuvenation after the class was incredible. The teacher of the class is a professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies at Mercer University. Dr. Bourdon has studied yoga and is knowledgeable about the human body and its functions.

"We neglect our bodies a lot and it is easy to kinda forget we have them, but the practice is that hour and half a day when I can just be with my body on the mat and take note what is going on."

The art of yoga is something that has not only helped her, but it is something she thinks could help the community. "I really felt that I had to give back to the community that I live in."

A Harvard Medical Journal found that even if a person is new to yoga it can help someone's mental, physical, and overall well-being. So if all this is true is it time to get more people in the community involved in yoga? Should it be required in schools where stress levels in students are higher than ever? Is a simple class enough to change the overall well being of a community for the better? These are just some of the questions that seem to be answered with "yes, yoga can help the community."

GLOBAL HEALTH WEEK FALL 2019

Mercer University



MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

catching attention

students use artistic expression to teach other Mercerians about rates of maternal mortality globally

pictured (from left): Jourdan Harper, Moriah Roycroft, and Brianna Leven



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

student art exhibit

students created an exhibition of artistic projects that highlighted the importance of environmental activism

pictured: Alyson Speshock



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The Intersection of Arts and Mental Health

AT MERCER UNIVERSITY

By: Parneeta Mohapatra

College is said to be the best four years of your life. Newly found independence allows students to mature, learn to manage their time, and take care of themselves, all while building strong relationships with the people around them.

Nevertheless, the stress of academics and extracurriculars can exacerbate the already worsening mental health of many college students. Mercer University can be seen as a university that has competition around academics and extracurriculars. Emma Smith, a sophomore double majoring in psychology and political science with a minor in art, says “Mercer has normalized stress, “hustle culture,” and unhealthy habits such as pulling all-nighters and being over-caffeinated to get work done which can be harmful to mental health.” Although this is true, she affirms there is an open dialogue about mental health among students.

“Mercer’s environment helps mental health with an overall accepting and helping the community,” says Mira Patel, a sophomore marketing major. Ivy Clarke, a sophomore creative writing and English literature double major says, “Most professors on campus are understanding and supportive of students’ mental health, often readjusting syllabi or helping in other ways.”

“Art is my cure to all this madness, sadness and loss of belonging in the world & through it I'll walk myself home.”

- Nikki Rowe, author of *Once a Girl, Now a Woman*

Mercer’s Counseling and Psychological Services is a great university resource to use if dealing with mental health issues. However, as Clarke pointed out, “because of the lack of counselors and funding, it is extremely hard to set up consistent appointments with CAPS” which can be detrimental to students’ mental health.



Many students deal with stress by carving out time for themselves during the day. Eduardo Rubio, a senior computational science and economics double major, says that art is “key” to his mental health. Taking time during the day to play the guitar and sing is his way of decompressing. Art is also a way to express feelings that one may not be able to express verbally. Patel says when she dances, she can feel less anxious by being able to express in this way and it makes her feel better prepared to tackle any of the things she has to do.

“Drawing also helps boost my confidence,” says Smith, “by allowing me to create something beautiful.” For Clarke, photography is a way to interact with people in a non-academic setting. Being able to control her artistic vision helps when she stressed about school as well.

“The idea that people produce better creative content when they are depressed or stressed or anxious is largely a myth—I and many other artists hardly write when we’re severely low,” says Clarke. However, the writing is also how she gets her mind off of things. She says, “I’m a perfectionist, so I like diving into the language and art until the world disappears except for that one perfect metaphor.”

Overall, participating in art is an excellent way to deal with stress and decompress. According to Psychology Today, many therapists are making moves towards art therapy, which is founded on the belief that “self-expression through artistic creation has therapeutic value for those who are healing or seeking deeper understanding of themselves and their personalities,” for helping people improve self-esteem, manage addictions, relieve stress, improve symptoms anxiety and depression, and cope with disability.



If You Are Struggling with Mental Health:

- Mercer Counseling and Psychological Services
(478-301-2862)
- Suicide Prevention Hotline
(1-800-273-8255)
- River Edge Behavioral Health
(478-803-7600)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

student art exhibit cont.

Matthew Paschall, Mackenzie Pfaff, and Jenna Oldja displaying their work



ART AND DEVELOPMENT

by Shreya Kanukunta

Fall 2019, Global Development students were able to take IGS 380: The Arts and Global Development, a new innovative class that combines Professor Dr. Lisa Vu's love for the arts and her expertise in the field of global development.

This art and development course builds on a previous course that Dr. Vu taught on social entrepreneurship. Students in her social entrepreneurship class were able to express their creativity while presenting topics in IGS. One of her students made a display of cardboard boxes covered in denim to showcase the social costs of producing a pair of jeans. "Teaching that class got me interested in the topic of how the creative community can be leveraged to promote development," said Dr. Vu. "I encouraged students to nurture their creativity and become involved in the local community by creating exhibits that taught the public about global development issues."

There is a clear link between art and development. The arts boost the local economy through museums and theaters. The arts help students find meaning in the school day. Art helps veterans heal from trauma, and artists can express themselves and showcase issues through art. Dr. Vu's class specifically learned about a rug-hooking artist who helped Mayan women in Guatemala use their textile-making skills to make rugs for the global market, which resulted in economic and personal transformations for these women.

This class explores how art is a tool for development. Class assignments included analyzing artistic products, and writing an op-ed discussing whether students support or oppose government spending for the arts. One guest speaker was Jim Crisp, the founder of Theatre Macon who challenged the conservative nature of Macon's theaters by using non-white actors for the first time.

It is evident that art has a transformative effect on individuals within a community, including the students of Dr. Vu's class. "This class has made me aware of how important art is to all cultures and why it is integral to continue to integrate and appreciate art in our culture," said junior Sally Deitchman. "One of the books we studied was Rug Money. It showed how art paired with the mentality of care and growth can lead to independence and freedom for women in low-income countries. It demonstrated that art truly is a way for vulnerable or under appreciated populations to find a voice."



I enjoy consuming art whether it is going to the theater, watching movies, and reading literature," said Dr. Vu. "I am interested in how the creativity within the arts can be helpful for development."

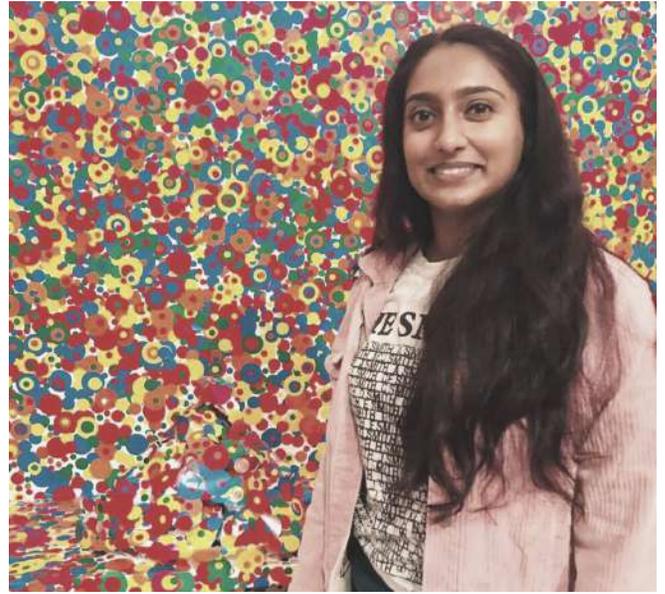
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