



COM 2320: Digital Wellness

Instructor Information

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The easiest way to get a hold of me is via email.

Course Information

Catalog Description:

This course explores how our digital lives shape our minds, emotions, and sense of self and how we can return to a more centered, conscious way of living. Students examine the harmful effects of technology on attention, autonomy, and inner peace, while learning practical strategies for sustaining personal and professional well-being in demanding digital environments. Through mindfulness practices, contemplative disciplines, and boundary-setting techniques, students learn to prevent burnout, maintain mental health, and cultivate the inner wholeness necessary for authentic and sustainable digital leadership. This course invites students to engage with technology more intentionally.

Pre-requisites and/or Co-requisites: none

Class Times: Asynchronous

Class Location: Online

Textbooks and Other Required Learning Materials

Em, O. (2025). *The Tao of digital minimalism: Finding peace in the age of digital clutter*. Independently Published.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze the psychological, emotional, and spiritual impacts of digital technology on attention, autonomy, identity formation, and inner peace.
2. Evaluate personal technology use patterns and identify areas where digital habits may be compromising well-being, focus, or authentic self-expression.
3. Apply mindfulness and contemplative practices to cultivate present-moment awareness, reduce digital distraction, and reclaim attentional capacity.

4. Implement digital sabbath practices and intentional technology boundaries to create sustainable rhythms of engagement and rest.
5. Develop personalized strategies for preventing burnout and maintaining mental health while working in high-demand digital environments.
6. Practice spiritual disciplines specifically designed for online creators and digital professionals to foster inner wholeness and vocational integrity.
7. Design a sustainable digital wellness plan that integrates professional goals with personal values, health needs, and relational commitments.
8. Demonstrate the ability to engage with technology intentionally and critically, making conscious choices aligned with long-term well-being rather than reactive habits.

Topics Covered in the Course

This course is a required component of the B.A. in Digital Marketing & Influence at Concordia University Texas. Digital jobs are notoriously stressful. The pressure to be "always on" can lead to burnout, anxiety, and a loss of self. Because CTX is committed to student well-being, we refuse to send our students into this field unprepared for its unique challenges. That's why we have developed this class. The idea is that we're not just training students for social media marketing careers. We're forming them into digital leaders who can sustain this work with resilience, integrity, and purpose.

Nature of Course and Learning Experiences

This is a fully online, asynchronous course delivered over eight weeks, and it asks you to do something unusual for a college class: turn your attention toward your own digital life and study it honestly. Each week is organized around a single essential question rather than a list of topics, and the learning experiences are deliberately experiential as well as intellectual. Alongside readings from *The Tao of Digital Minimalism* and selected essays, you will practice mindfulness techniques drawn from the free Unified Mindfulness CORE training, keep a handwritten contemplative journal, audit your own attention and habits, and undertake a personal digital sabbath.

Because the subject of this course is your own attention, autonomy, and well-being, the work is personal and reflective: you will be asked to notice, to practice, to disconnect, and to write from your own lived experience rather than from generalities. The course moves at your own pace within weekly rhythms, so it depends on steady, self-directed engagement, and it builds cumulatively toward a final project in which you design and defend a sustainable digital wellness plan that integrates your professional goals with your values, health, and relationships. The aim throughout is not to reject technology but to help you engage with it intentionally, critically, and on your own terms.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Attention As An Extracted Resource

Who is competing for my attention, and what do they want from it?

Readings:

- Preface; Introduction; Ch. 1: The Noise Within
- Ch. 3: Craving by Design
- Hayes, "You're Being Alienated From Your Own Attention" (*Atlantic*)

Contemplative Practice:

- Create free UM CORE account
- Complete Lessons 1–2 (the framework)
- Contemplative reading of Ch. 1 and 3, slowly, no scrolling

Assignment:

- Journal entry 1

Week 2: Honest Self-Observation Of Digital Aabits

What are my actual digital habits — and what do they cost me?

Readings:

- Ch. 2: The Digital Self
- Ch. 4: Digital Karma
- Ch. 5: The Social Cost of Digital Excess

Contemplative Practice:

- Complete Lessons 3–4 (See-Hear-Feel)
- Note craving: watch the urge to click arise and pass

Assignment:

- Journal entry 2

Week 3: Connection vs. Connectivity

Is being "connected" making us closer or more alone?

Readings:

- Ch. 6 Devices Between Us
- Ch. 7 The Myth of Connectivity

Contemplative Practice:

- Complete Lessons 5–6
- Deep listening — a device-free partner conversation

Assignment:

- Journal entry 3
- Attention Audit

Week 4: Choosing What Deserves Your Attention

How do I decide what gets my attention? What am I afraid I'll miss if I disconnect?

Readings:

- Ch. 8: The Paradox of Choice
- Ch. 9: The Art of Unsubscribing
- Ch. 18: The Joy of Missing Out

Contemplative Practice:

- Complete Lessons 7–8
- Journal entry 4: Discernment journaling on values & attention

Assignment:

- Sabbath plan + 'before' memo (checkpoint)

Week 5: The Effects Of Our Digital Environment

What does the space behind the screen do to my mind?

Readings:

- Ch. 10: Decluttering the Digital Home
- Ch. 11: One Tab at a Time
- Ch. 19: Digital Feng Shui

Contemplative Practice:

- Complete Lessons 9–10 (finish CORE training)
- Mindful declutter / walking meditation

Assignment:

- Journal entry 5
- Digital Sabbath Experiment

Week 6: The Importance Of Rest & Restraint

What do I gain by stepping away? What sustains me, and what depletes me, in 'always-on' work?

Readings:

- Ch. 12: Digital Fasting
- Ch. 13: Less Is More
- Ch. 20: When Presence Is Enough

Contemplative Practice:

- Sustain daily sits
- Digital sabbath / fast

Assignment:

- Journal entry 6

Week 7: Boundaries, Solitude & Presence

How do I stay whole while staying online?

Readings:

- Ch. 14: Tending the Digital Garden
- Ch. 15: Returning to Yourself
- Ch. 16: Loving Boundaries

Contemplative Practice:

- Sustain daily sits

Assignment:

- Contemplative Practice Portfolio
- Defense Warm-Up (ungraded)

Week 8: Vocational Integrity

How do I sustain this across a whole career?

Readings:

- Ch. 17: Digital Essentialism
- Ch. 21: Solitude Is Not Isolation
- Ch. 22: The 7-Day Digital Detox Plan; Epilogue

Contemplative Practice:

- Design your own ongoing practice

Assignment:

- Final Digital Wellness Plan
- Defense (timed test)

Course Policies

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Overview

AI tools, when used responsibly and transparently, can support your learning. This policy outlines what is permitted, what requires disclosure, and what is not allowed. This includes emerging AI-enabled devices.

Permitted uses

- Word processing tools for spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Citation generators for source formatting
- AI chatbots for brainstorming, outlining, exploratory research, and similar preparatory tasks

Disclosure requirements

All AI use in submitted work must be disclosed. Text directly generated by AI must be treated as a direct quote and cited accordingly. All other AI assistance, regardless of tool or device, must be described in a brief note at the end of your assignment. Undisclosed AI use may be treated as an academic integrity violation.

AI-enabled wearable devices

Wearable devices capable of real-time AI assistance, audio or video recording, or live data capture, including but not limited to smart glasses and earbuds, are not permitted during exams or in-class assessments, regardless of outward appearance.

Accommodations

Students who require a wearable or AI-enabled device to meet an approved accommodation (e.g., transcription, live captioning, low-vision support) must register the device with the Office of Accessibility Services prior to using it in class. The use of these devices during assessments will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of the assessment and the individual's access needs. Approval is feature-specific; a device authorized for captioning, for example, is thereby not authorized for AI chat or web search. Students or faculty members with questions about wearable or AI-enabled devices for accommodation purposes should contact the Office of Accessibility Services early in the semester.

Privacy

Recording of class sessions, instructor materials, or fellow students via any device (including wearables) without explicit permission is prohibited. Violations may implicate both this policy and applicable state privacy law.

Policy review

Given the pace of change in AI technology, this policy is reviewed each semester. Students are encouraged to raise questions or concerns directly with the Dean of Teaching & Learning or me.

My AI Philosophy

*My goal is to help you use AI in a responsible, ethical, and academically honest way. AI cannot do the interior work the assignments in this class require. AI has no access to your formation, your convictions, or your feelings. **Submitting AI-generated content is not just academically dishonest; it is a way of missing the entire point of the course.***

Late Work

All assignments must be turned in on time. Late work will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day it is late. Please note that I don't accept emailed assignments. I will use the timestamp on the Blackboard server to determine whether the assignment was handed in on time. Please note that you are responsible for uploading the correct file to Blackboard and making sure the upload was successful. I do not accept work more than 7 days late.

Transparency and mutual expectations

I try to be transparent about my expectations and grading practices. Below you will find a list of my expectations for both you & me:

I will provide you with all deadlines, grading rubrics and assignment descriptions on the first day of class.

From day 1, you will know:

- How many assignments there are
- When each of your assignments is due
- What exactly each of your assignments entails (you'll find a detailed assignment description on the back of your syllabus)
- What you need to do to succeed for each assignment (you'll find the grading criteria for each assignment listed on the back of your syllabus). I will use those exact criteria to grade your work.

In turn, I expect you to:

- Turn in your assignments in class on the exact day they are due
- Carefully read the assignment description and ask questions well BEFORE the due date
- Check to ensure that your assignments follow all grading criteria listed on the assignment description

I will come to every class well prepared.

In turn, I expect you to:

- Have completed all readings before class
- Be ready to ask questions about the readings when you come to class
- Pay attention in class. No texting, or playing on the computer.

Courtesy

Cell phones: As a courtesy to your teacher and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones are silenced. Any texting during class will result in you being counted absent for the day.

Laptops: Laptops and tablets may only be used in class to take notes or work on course-related activities and exercises. I personally recommend that you to take notes by hand. Studies show¹ that students who take notes by hand remember more and have a deeper understanding of the material than students who use a computer to take notes.

Participation and Professionalism: In most professional situations, as in class, you will likely find yourself working with a variety of people coming from different experiences: socio-economic, geographical locations, and/or having different religious, ethnic, age, gender, or sexual orientations. Since participation is crucial to learning, it is important that everyone feel free to participate in class by contributing their perspectives openly and regularly. There may be times you will find shared interests with others regardless of differing experiences and there may be occasions when you do not. Regardless, it is expected that you will treat your class colleagues and instructor with respect and maturity even when your interests and opinions differ.

Email Policy

I respond to email once per day, usually in the afternoon, and I will get back with you as soon as possible. Please note that I do not return email over the weekend.

Grades

My hope is that you will focus on learning rather than grades in this class. If you are not doing as well as you had anticipated, please don't hesitate to come talk to me so that we can discuss how you might improve your performance on the remaining assignments. I am happy to discuss study tips, explain assignments and grading criteria, or simply help you understand key course concepts. In order to make the grading process transparent, I share my grading criteria for each assignment with you. If you feel you met all the criteria and received too low a grade, I'll be happy to meet with you to discuss your grade. My goal is to be fair to everyone in the class, which means I will hold everyone to the same standards. But what I would like to do in that case is discuss what you can do to meet those criteria on your next assignment. So please come see me!

¹ Psychological Science, June 2014, 25(6), 1159-1168

Grading Scale

A+ = 100 (97-100)	A = 95 (94-96.9)	A- = 92 (90-93.9)
B+ = 88 (87-89.9)	B = 85 (84-86.9)	B- = 82 (80-83.9)
C+ = 78 (77-79.9)	C = 75 (74-76.9)	C- = 72 (70-73.9)
D+ = 68 (67-69.9)	D = 65 (64-66.9)	D- = 62 (60-63.9)
F = 50 (0-59.9)		

Academic Policies

Academic Honesty

Academic integrity stands at the heart of intellectual life and is a core principle that underpins how we live and learn in a community of inquiry. Concordia University Texas is committed to the development of each student to become a productive and responsible citizen who embraces the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. The community at Concordia University strives to instill values that uphold academic integrity and promotes an ethical standard that does not condone academic misconduct.

Attendance

Concordia University Texas expects students to attend class regularly in order to maximize their educational experience. Individual programs and/or instructors establish an attendance policy for courses and that policy is communicated to the student. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with this policy at the beginning of each course. Students receiving any form of financial assistance (including VA benefits) must maintain regular attendance to be eligible for assistance. Below is my attendance policy for this class:

Number of absences. Attendance at each class is required. Each time you are absent from class counts as one absence. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that day. After your second absence, your final grade will be reduced by three (3) percentage points for each additional absence.

Excused absences. If you have a valid and unavoidable reason for missing class (i.e. you are involved in athletics or another school-sanctioned activity that requires you to miss this class) you may submit a completed Excused Absence Request along with a two page (at least 500 words) chapter summary / discussion for the material you missed. Your excused absence request and chapter summary must be turned in within a week after your return to class. The request form is available on Blackboard. A separate request form and additional chapter summary / discussion must be submitted for each absence. You will

also need to provide me with proper documentation for your absence (such as a doctor's note, a hospitalization record, a university excuse, or an athletic excuse). All documentation must be turned in by the last day of class for the excuses to be considered. After review of your request I will determine whether the excuse will be granted.

Accommodation requests. If you have an accommodation letter which calls for flexibility with attendance, you will need to follow the instructions listed under the excused absence section, except that you do not need to provide documentation each time you miss class for a 504-related disability.

Special Needs / Accommodations

Concordia University Texas provides accommodations and other services to students with disabilities who have been approved to receive them. Visit [the Services for Students with Disabilities webpage](#) for more information on receiving accommodations.

Title IX

Concordia University Texas is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment that is free from inappropriate conduct based on gender. As required by Title IX, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex/gender in its programs and activities, and it encourages any student who thinks that he or she has been subjected to sexual misconduct (i.e. sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking) by another student, member of the faculty or staff, campus visitor or contractor, to immediately report the incident to [the Title IX Coordinator](#).

Student Success Resources

Success Center

When you need support whether it be for academic coaching, personal counseling or academic accommodations, the [Success Center](#) is available to help you. The Success Center helps you reach your academic goals by providing resources such as the Writing Center, the Speaking Center, Peer Tutoring, and numerous other resources.

Vocation & Professional Development

Find more information and make an appointment with a career advisor regarding career planning, majors to careers advising, internship programs, and job searches on our [website](#).

Personal Support Center – encountering a technical challenge?

Make sure to enroll in the [Student Password Reset](#) service while your account is working so you can reset it when needed.

You can get support by:

- Phone 24/7 Support: 512.313.4357
- Email the PSC: CTXhelp@personalsupportcenter.com (may be delayed until next business day)

Important Websites

[Concordia University Texas Main Website](#)

[CTX Course Calendar, Schedules, and Catalog](#)

[MyInfo Login Page](#)

[CTX Webmail \(also use this to access your Microsoft Office 365 apps\)](#)

Speaking Center

Find out more about CTX's speaking center at:

<https://www.concordia.edu/resources/success-center/the-speaking-center.html>

Assignments

All of the following assignments, projects, exams and activities have been developed to help you accomplish the learning outcomes listed on your syllabus. Some directly address one of the learning objectives, others address several of them. Together, they assure that at the end of the semester you will have completed all learning objectives I set for this course. In order to do well in this class, please read the assignment instructions and grading criteria carefully. **Since the assignments are deeply reflective and personal, no AI use is allowed.**

Because this is a required course and the practices are personal, all contemplative work is graded on **engagement, honesty, and reflection — never on "success" at meditating, on the content of private experience, or on disclosure of anything a student would rather keep to themselves.** Each of the eight weeks opens with one essential question. The questions move through a deliberate arc: diagnose the landscape, audit the self, train attention, practice rest, examine identity, protect against depletion, clarify values, and build a durable plan.

Assignment	Weight
Weekly Journal Entries (8)	30%
The Attention Audit	10%
The Digital Sabbath Experiment	20%
Contemplative Practice Portfolio & Reflection	20%

Digital Wellness Plan (10%) + Recorded Defense (10%)	20%
TOTAL:	100%

Contemplative Practice Journal

You cannot reclaim attention you never observe. Each week you will do one short contemplative practice and write, by hand, what actually happened in your attention. This is designed to help you evaluate personal technology use and learn to cultivate present-moment awareness. Each week you will link your contemplative practice to the week's driving question and to that week's reading, building a first-person record of how the ideas land in your own life.

Instructions:

1. Complete the week's assigned practice using the technique from the course's Unified Mindfulness CORE training (e.g., a 10-minute silent sit, a single-task meal, a 20-minute walk with no phone, a body scan, or an evening 'examen' reviewing where your attention went that day). The "required readings" Blackboard section will tell you which CORE skill to practice each week. The course's techniques come from Unified Mindfulness CORE, a 100% free, research-backed program of ten short video lessons used by institutions including Harvard Medical School and Carnegie Mellon. To set this up during week 1, create a free account and work through the lessons in Week 1 ([Lesson 1: Welcome](#)). Once you've done that, each weekly practice will apply one of CORE's three trainable skills. Overview and free sign-up: unifiedmindfulness.com/core
2. Immediately afterward, **handwrite** (yes, you read that correctly!) a page in a dedicated paper notebook: what you noticed, where your mind went, what was uncomfortable, what shifted. Date and time every entry, and note which CORE technique you practiced. Each entry should briefly note what you practiced and what you noticed (i.e. distraction, resistance, ease, anything else) without judging it as good or bad; and then **connect that experience to the week's driving question and at least one idea from the week's reading**. You are never required to share interior experience you'd rather keep private. The practice is the assignment; the writing is a record of it. Handwriting is required because it slows attention.
3. Photograph the page and upload it to the assignment dropbox. Make sure it's legible. Add two typed sentences naming one specific moment from the practice you want to carry into the following week.

Grading Criteria:

- Practice engagement: Clear evidence the practice was actually done, dated and timed, including specific observations and the hard or boring parts.
- Connection to course: Thoughtfully links experience to the week's question and reading.
- Reflective honesty: Specific, first-person observation of attention rather than general statements about technology. Candid, self-aware, non-performative.

The Attention Audit

Driving question: What are my actual digital habits and what do they cost me?

1. Collect one week of real device data. Include screen-time dashboards, pickup counts and app breakdowns and screenshot it.
2. Keep a handwritten parallel 'friction log': Each day, note three moments you reached for a device and what feeling preceded the reach (boredom, anxiety, a lull, avoidance). The friction log serves as a practice of mindful noticing: catching the impulse before the scroll, without judgment.
3. Write a 1,000–1,200 word analysis answering: Where does my attention actually go? Which habits are serving me, and which are quietly costing me focus, mood, sleep, or relationships? Use Hayes's framing of attention (as an extracted resource (week 1 reading) and the week's reading from the book to interpret — not just describe — your data.
4. End with one hypothesis you will test in the Digital Sabbath Experiment. This hypothesis should flow out of your own Attention Audit from Weeks 2–3, where you spotted a pattern. Now I am asking you to predict what will happen if you remove that pattern. A good hypothesis is specific, personal, and falsifiable (it could turn out wrong), and it predicts an observable change in mood, focus, sleep, behavior, or relationships. Here are two examples (please don't use these):
 - When I remove the phone, I'll just substitute another comfort behavior (snacking, TV), proving the urge isn't really about the phone.
 - If I stop checking my phone after 9pm, I'll fall asleep faster and wake less groggy.
5. Upload a PDF or doc with embedded screenshots + a photo of the handwritten friction log.

Grading Criteria:

- Evidence: Real, dated personal data and friction log are present and clearly the student's own.
- Analysis over description: Interprets patterns using course concepts; distinguishes costs from mere usage.
- Self-honesty: Names uncomfortable patterns rather than producing a flattering summary.
- Personal hypothesis: Proposes a specific, testable change for the sabbath experiment.

The Digital Sabbath Experiment

Driving question: What am I afraid I'll miss if I disconnect and what happens when I do?

For this assignment you will design a personal digital sabbath: a defined period of digital disconnection (e.g., a 24-hour window, or daily 7–10pm screen-free) with explicit boundaries and a plan for what to do with the freed time. You will design this week 4, enact your experiment weeks 4–5, and report on it at the end of week five.

1. **Before** starting, record a 2-minute voice memo naming what you expect to feel and what you're afraid you'll miss.
2. **Enact it across the two weeks** and keep a brief log of each session:
 - What you did instead with the freed time
 - what withdrawal felt like
 - what surprised you.

The log is a handwritten record you will keep **during** the experiment. Make an entry each time you do a sabbath session (whether that's a 24-hour window or a nightly 7–10pm screen-free block). Like the Contemplative Practice Journal, it should be handwritten and then photographed and uploaded rather than typed.

3. **Afterward**, record a second 2-minute voice memo comparing prediction to reality, then write a 800-1,000 word reflection connecting the experience to burnout, rest, and sustainable rhythms from the readings.
4. Upload your two voice memos (audio upload) + session log photo + your reflection.

Your "before" memo states your hypothesis out loud, the session log records what actually happened, and the "after" memo and reflection is where you honestly judge whether you were right.

Grading Criteria:

- Real enactment: Concrete, specific account of an experiment actually carried out, including failures.
- Prediction vs. reality: Thoughtfully compares the 'before' memo to what happened.
- Connection to course: Links the lived experience to rest, burnout, and sustainable rhythm from the texts.
- Voice: Audio reflections are present, unscripted, and clearly the student's own engagement.

Contemplative Practice Portfolio & Reflection

Driving question: How has my attention changed, and which practices actually sustain me?

1. Start by revisiting your entire practice journal and select five entries that mark turning points, struggles, or shifts in attention across the term.
2. For each, write a short annotation: what was happening then, what you'd tell your earlier self now.
3. Write a 800–1,000 word reflection tracing how your attention and inner life changed from Week 1 to Week 7, naming which practices proved durable for you as a future digital professional and which didn't. Be sure to explain why. Engage the book's treatment of practice and inner wholeness directly.
4. Upload the portfolio as a PDF or Word document: seven annotated journal photos + reflection.

Grading Criteria:

- Grounded selection: Chosen entries are real, specific, and genuinely significant to the student.
- Change over time: Traces concrete change in attention over time, not a generic before/after.
- Discernment: Honestly distinguishes practices that worked from those that didn't, with reasons.
- Integration: Connects personal practice to the course texts and themes.

Digital Wellness Plan + Recorded Defense

Driving question. What digital life do I want to build — and how will I protect it under pressure?

Part 1: The Plan (1,200–1,500 words):

For this final assignment, you will create a personal, sustainable digital wellness plan that integrates professional goals with personal values, health, and relationships. It must include: (1) a short statement of values; (2) specific boundaries and rhythms (sabbath, notification rules, working hours); (3) a personal burnout early-warning system. Think of this as the signals that tell you you're depleting, and then devise a response plan; (4) the contemplative practices you'll keep; and (5) an honest account of where this will be hard in a digital-marketing career and how you'll hold the line. Every section must cite specific evidence from your own audit, sabbath experiment, and portfolio.

Part 2: The Defense (5–7 minute recorded video).

Speaking to your camera, unscripted (notes allowed, reading strongly discouraged), present your plan and answer three prompts revealed at the time of recording. Prompts will look something like this: "Which part of this plan will

collapse first under deadline pressure, and what's your backup?" Spontaneous, specific answers that reference your own experience over the course of the past 8 weeks are what earn credit.

Upload your plan as PDF/doc + 5–7 minute video upload.

Grading Criteria:

- Integration: Genuinely integrates values, profession, health, and relationships into one coherent plan.
- Evidence-based: Each section is grounded in the student's own prior coursework, cited specifically.
- Realism: Anticipates real career pressures and offers credible, specific responses.
- Defense: Speaks fluently and specifically about their own plan; answers live prompts authentically.