**The Mindful Elite Teaching Guide**

I am grateful to my 2018 Hamilton College Sociology of Religion course for helping me brainstorm these questions. My goal in sharing them is to help unpack the many dimensions of this complex case study.

***General Discussion Questions:***

What impressions did you have about mindfulness before reading the book? In what ways did the book challenge “common knowledge” about mindfulness?

Is the title an oxymoron? After reading the book, what contradictions does it illuminate?

***Social Movements/Organizations***

Are the mindful leaders activists? Why or why not?

If you were the leaders of a mindfulness organization, what would you do? Would you do what the leaders did or not? Why?

Has the mindfulness movement fulfilled its goals? Which?

Is teaching mindfulness in secular organizations worthwhile? For what purpose(s) does it seem useful, and where may it fall short?

Is the mindfulness movement an example of top-down and/or bottom up change?

***Cultural Change***

What is the difference between cultural appreciation/adaption and appropriation? To what extent are the mindful critics right? Has mindfulness been watered down and appropriated by Americans in a problematic way? Or do the ends justify the means?

How does capitalism shape mindfulness? In what ways do American meditators impose capitalistic doctrine on Buddhist practice? How do such changes alter meditation?

***Elite Influence and Inequality***

What forms of privilege do the mindful elite benefit from?

How do they exercise power?

What blindspots do the mindful elite have due to their position in society and their networks?

In what ways might the case of mindfulness reveal a new kind of elite identity? How/why could this be problematic?

If you have meditated before, do you fit into the picture portrayed by this book? If so, how? If not, how does your experience complicate, or shed light on this book?

***Authenticity***

Based on the social psychological conceptualizations of authenticity defined in Chapter 8, do you think the mindfulness advocates exhibit authenticity? In what ways do they do so, and where might they fall short?

Does authenticity, or rather a perception of authenticity, matter most to an individual or group? Might this change with varying conditions?

***Broader Connections, Implications, and Projections***

What other practices have been adapted from other cultures for capitalistic gain (Hint: See Andrea Jain’s (2014) book *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture*)?

In what ways is the meditation movement unique? What similarities does it share with other movements or collective efforts for social change?

Can you think of other groups or movements that enact collective authenticity?

What does this movement ultimately teach us about the efficacy of unobtrusive, consensus-based collective approaches to social change? What are its strengths and what are its drawbacks?

How can a dramatic national event, such as the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner, and the conflicts that followed their deaths, lead to openings for further cultural change? How can they affect other movements?

How can the mindfulness movement be more inclusive in the future?