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# The Facts Extra

## THE FIRST CONTEMPLATIVE CLASSROOM IN THE COUNTRY

The Meditation Room is open for private  
practice, academic courses, and free,  
non-academic community classes.

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JENNIFER CAPPUCCIO MAHER — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fran Grace, professor of religious studies, leads a class on Compassion in the Meditation Room at the University of Redlands in Redlands on Monday.



## HIGHER EDUCATION

# Lessons in serenity at the University of Redlands

By Kristina Hernandez

khernandez@scng.com  
@TheFactsKris on Twitter

For a decade, a room designed to bring serenity to University of Redlands students has provided a place for those looking to take a breather from the hustle and bustle of college life.

The Meditation Room on campus looks to help students find their center through three primary uses: private practice, academic courses and free, non-academic community classes.

When the room opened in Lasen Hall in the fall of 2007, the space became the first “contemplative classroom” in the country as it is open for various uses throughout the day. U of R professors, such as Fran Grace, lead weekly courses there.

“In this class we are working to see people in a new day, as most of the people we see every day we don’t pay much attention to,” Grace said of her class, Cultivation of Compassion, Joy, Love, Forgiveness and Peace. “We are so wrapped up in our stress and anxiety and issues we may pass hundreds of human beings a day without actually seeing them.”



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER CAPPUCCIO MAHER — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Students attend a class on Compassion in the Meditation Room at the University of Redlands.

Dozens of students are registered for Grace’s course, which meets for three hours once a week.

The course encourages students to journal their thoughts and read literature from meditation practices and figures throughout history, such as Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama.

Along with flowing curtains, high ceilings and what U of R officials describe as “soothing colors,” the room is equipped with 28 zabutons (square

meditation cushions) and 28 zafus (round meditation cushions), 28 yoga mats, kneeling benches, folding chairs and a cubbyhole at the door for storing shoes and backpacks.

At a recent lecture, Grace’s students settled in to the dimly lit room. Light from Larsen Hall’s hallway provided a touch of additional lighting.

Many students covered themselves with blankets or heavy jackets, while others took out books to read during scheduled

breaks or journals to write their thoughts.

Grace starts each class by reflecting on a student assignment and thoughts expressed in papers, from a bout of sadness due to a series of deaths to every day college stress. It’s a lesson that shows students they aren’t the only ones dealing with anger or sorrow.

“What we’re doing in this class is cultivate a feeling of caring,” Grace said. “And compassion begins with the transforma-



Fran Grace, professor of religious studies, leads a class on Compassion in the Meditation Room at the University of Redlands on Monday. Grace is also the faculty steward of the Meditation Room.

tion of the heart.”

Alexis Maldonado, a U of R junior, said she hopes the class helps her build a greater sense of compassion as she continues her studies to become a physician.

“We are learning ways to handle difficult things in life here,” Grace said. “A healthy mind and body, and the want to give love to others as well is what is

going to help you succeed. I like to say, the greatest resource on the planet is the human capacity to love.”

To learn more about the meditation room — which celebrated its 10th anniversary on Wednesday — and classes offered, go to [redlands.edu/study/explore-academic-resources/meditation-room](http://redlands.edu/study/explore-academic-resources/meditation-room) or call 909-748-8345.