

Psychology 175: Science of Mindfulness
Winter, 2023

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 12:30 – 1:50 pm, SOLIS 105 (and then CENTR 207)

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 8 – 10 am, McGill Hall Rm 5117

Supplementary Text: [Science of Mindfulness, Ronald D. Siegel](#)

Purpose: This course will review the scientific research surrounding the topic of Mindfulness, which has been approached from multiple disciplines including Buddhism, Positive Psychology, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Neuroscience. Mindfulness has an operational definition of “Paying attention, on purpose, to the present experience, without judgment”, and is intricately related to a variety of very human experiences, including those related to *oneself* -- deep emotions (joy and pain), gratitude, challenging our limiting "stories", body awareness, as well as to *others* --- compassion, connection and love.

Because Mindfulness is so multi-faceted, with many variables involved, the scientific study of Mindfulness requires rigorous research methods and statistics to carefully parse out the relationships between different variables. **For this reason, a solid understanding (and appreciation) of research methods and statistics is a large focus of this course.** The mathematical modeling aspect of statistics is profound – it is what we humans use to approximate “the truth”.

Format of Class: The first week will consist of me lecturing on Mindfulness as well as the “ins and outs” of statistical methods used to study Mindfulness. The following weeks will focus on different topics of Mindfulness, with all of us reading and discussing a single research article related to that week’s topic (the other paper(s) that week will be *optional* reading). The format of these weeks is as follows:

Tuesday: I give a lecture on that week’s topic, which has two parts.

A) A broad overview of the topic

B) Explanation of the required-reading research article for the week, with an emphasis on the *statistics*.

Mini-Presentations: Each week, two - four students will create a mini-lecture (5 – 10 minutes) related to that week’s topic (a recapitulation of something we learned on Tuesday). Some of the presentations will be *during* class time (the Thursday of that week), while others will be pre-recorded (and due that Thursday before class). See “*Mini-presentations*”, below.

Thursday: Thursdays will have two parts.

A) *Presentations:* In the first 20 minutes, 1 to 2 students will give LIVE mini-presentations on that week’s topic.

B) *Group Discussion on Article:* The following 60 minutes will consist of a group discussion of the required-reading research article. As an assignment on Canvas (due **Thursday by 10 am**), everyone will submit 1 or 2 **deep*** questions about this article. I will go around the room asking people to share their question with the group, to be answered by me or by others in the group. **Everyone is expected to have read the papers and contribute to the discussion, so I randomly call on people during class. Be prepared!**

* By “deep”, I mean thoughtful questions that show me you are thinking critically (e.g., “In the Gilbert article, they suggest that we prefer things we are “stuck” with rather than things we can change our minds about. Is this because the latter delays gratification and makes us question and think about our choices rather than having immediate satisfaction?”) rather than something superficial (e.g., “I wonder what would happen if they ran this study in another country.”)

Research articles (both required and optional) can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EdJPWVphHsXYXROz8wUPLrFEOwL8yVSh?usp=sharing>

Mini-Presentations: *When it's your week to prepare a presentation (whether it's LIVE or a video), I will meet with you in advance (as a group) to "coach" you! ☺, which will be held some time on Wednesday of that week! You will prepare a mini-lecture on a "bite-size" piece of information from that week (either some statistics issue, one of the papers for that week, or just something from Tuesday's lecture). If you are making a video, I will give you until **Friday at 5 pm, sent to me directly** (you can upload it on a google drive and send me the link).*

Please fill out your presentation preferences here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MOJPvSSNIJ5db-FjjVt33yS9M4xU-RH/edit#gid=1370633674>

- 1) Which week you want to present (1st, 2nd and 3rd choice)
- 2) Whether you prefer to present Live (L), Video (V) or Either (E)
- 3) What time slots you have free on Wednesday to meet for a coaching session

* Don't worry about what you see other people write in as their preferences. I will take all things into consideration as I am assigning people for each week.

Grading: The grade for this class will be based on:

- 1) Class participation (60% of your grade), which is based on your:
 - a) Contribution to class discussions; asking and answering questions, formulating ideas
 - b) Attendance (you will get docked 2% for any time you miss class, unless you have a good reason. For example, if your class participation grade is a 95%, and you missed *two* classes, then your participation grade goes down to 91%)
 - c) Submitting questions about the week's required reading (you will get docked 2% for any time you miss this assignment, unless you have a good reason. Same math as above)
- 2) Your mini-presentation (30% of your grade). *I will give everyone individual feedback on their presentations, with a voice note I make for you!*
- 3) A joint video (10%), which you all work on together that is about 30 - 45 minutes, regarding your experience in the class, which we can all keep as a memento!

There is no final exam.

Weekly Schedule

Yellow highlighted papers are reviews.

NOTE: Each week, I will only pick one paper as required reading. The others will be optional.

Week 1 (Jan 10 and 12): Introduction to Mindfulness and “Basic Statistics”

Week 2 (Jan 17 and 19): Psychological Mechanisms of Mindfulness

- 1) Grabovac et al. 2011. Mechanisms of mindfulness: A Buddhist psychological model.
- 2) Wallace & Shapiro, 2006. Mental balance and well-being - Building bridges between Buddhism and western psychology.

Week 3 (Jan 24 and 26): Measuring the “True Self”

- 1) Schlegel et al, 2009. Thine own self true self-concept accessibility and meaning in life.
- 2) Schlegel et al, 2012. To discover or to create-metaphors and the true self.

Week 4 (Jan 31 and Feb 2): Happiness (and is this different from Mindfulness?)

- 1) Veenhoven, 1988. The utility of happiness.
- 2) Myers & Diener, 1995. Who is happy?
- 3) Gilbert & Ebert, 2002. Decisions and Revisions: The affective forecasting of changeable outcomes.

Week 5 (Feb 7 and 9): Gratitude and Positive Psychology

- 1) Seligman et al, 2005. Positive psychology progress.
- 2) Jamieson et al, 2011. Turning the knots in your stomach into bows.
- 3) Chen et al, 2012. Does gratitude always work?

Week 6 (Feb 14 and 16): Interoception (How does your body feel?)

- 1) Dunn et al, 2010: Listening to your heart: How interoception shapes emotion experience and intuitive decision making.
- 2) Fox et al, 2012: Meditation experience predicts introspective accuracy.
- 3) Sze et al, 2010: Coherence between emotional experience and physiology: Does body awareness training have an impact?

Week 7 (Feb 21 and 23): Compassion

- 1) Goetz et al, 2010. Compassion-An evolutionary analysis and empirical review.
- 2) Lopez et al, 2018. Compassion for others and self-compassion: Levels, correlates and relationship with psychological well-being.
- 3) Neff & Vonk, 2009. Self-compassion versus global self-esteem: Two different ways of relating to oneself.

Week 8 (Feb 28 and March 2): Empathic Accuracy

- 1) Ickes, 1993. Empathic accuracy.
- 2) Cohen et al, 2012. Eye of the beholder- the individual and dyadic contributions of empathic accuracy and perceived empathic effort to relationship satisfaction.
- 3) Zaki et al, 2015. It takes two- the interpersonal nature of empathic accuracy.

Week 9 (March 7 and 9): Oxytocin and the “Tend and Befriend” System

- 1) Kosfeld et al, 2005-Oxytocin increases trust in humans.
- 2) Bartz et al, 2010. Oxytocin selectively improves empathic accuracy.
- 3) Nave et al, 2015. Does oxytocin increase trust in humans? A critical review of research.

Week 10 (Mar 14 and 16): TBD, possibly on Healthy Boundaries and Communication