

Psychology 175: Science of Mindfulness
Winter, 2024

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 12:30 – 1:50 pm, PCYNH 240

Office Hours: Th, 9:30 – 10:50 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 (starting in **week 2**) 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*.

Note that the purpose of the readings is not to end up with a conclusion, but to understand how scientists would even go about asking a research question related to the topic! And to get acquainted with the myriad of methods and statistical analyses people use in the field.

Mini-Presentations: Each week, two - four students will independently 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 three 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.

C) *Required Questions from Students.* As an assignment on Canvas (due that week, **Wednesday by** midnight), everyone will submit 1 or 2 **deep*** questions about this article.

Your question(s) need to be submitted **both** as

a) An Assignment (with 1 pt)

b) On the Discussion board. After you submit your question(s) on the discussion board, you will be able to *view, like* and/or *comment* on every else’s questions.

Each Thursday, I will choose a few questions from the list to start things off. 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](#):

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 Wednesday at 7:30 am 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 **Thursday at 12:30 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](#):

- 1) Which week you want to present (1st, 2nd and 3rd choice) - **please pick weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, noting there are no presentations in weeks 1 or 7.**
- 2) Whether you prefer to present Live (L), Video (V) or Either (E)
- 3) **NOTE:** Remember that the “coaching session” with you (over zoom) is the Wednesday morning (from 7:30 – 8:55 am) before the day you present. That means that if you sign up for week 3 (presenting on Thursday Jan 25th) your coaching session will be Wednesday Jan 24th at 7:30 am!

* 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, and 1% for anytime you are late, 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, and 1% for anytime you are late submitting, 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!* I then expect everyone to send me an updated version of their slides (and a video of it if you want) in response to my feedback.
- 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!

Grading will be as per university standards:

$\geq 96.67 = A+$	$86.67 - 89.99 = B+$	$76.67 - 79.99 = C+$	
$93.33 - 96.66 = A$	$83.33 - 86.66 = B$	$73.33 - 76.66 = C$	$60 - 69.99 = D$
$90.0 - 93.32 = A-$	$80.0 - 83.32 = B-$	$70.0 - 73.32 = C-$	$< 59.99 = F$

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 9 and 11): Introduction to Mindfulness and “Basic Statistics”

Week 2 (Jan 16 and 18): 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 23 and 25): 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 30 and Feb 1: 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 6 and 8): 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 13 and 15): Interoception: Sensing the Body and Your Emotions

- 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?
- 4) Arnold, Winkielman & Dobkins (2019): [Interoception and Social Connection](#). A paper from my lab.
OPTIONAL.

Week 7 (Feb 21 and 23): GENERAL DISCUSSION WEEK. What do we need to understand better?

Week 8 (Feb 27 and Feb 29): Compassion (Others and Self)

- 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 9 (March 5 and March 7): Empathic Accuracy

- 1) Ickes, 1993. Empathic accuracy.
- 2) Sened et al (2017) Empathic Accuracy and Relationship Satisfaction: A Meta-Analytic Review
- 3) Zaki et al, 2015. It takes two- the interpersonal nature of empathic accuracy.

Week 10 (March 12 and 14): Oxytocin and Trust

- 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.

