

***Learning Sustainable Well-Being (Psych 88):
“Compassion for Self and Others”
Fall Quarter, 2025***

Professor: Dr. Karen Dobkins, Ph.D.
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Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 12:30 – 1:50pm. McGill Hall, Rm 1350
My Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 – 3 pm. In Person. McGill Hall 5117

Purpose: The principles taught in this class are based on Mindfulness, Positive Psychology and Cognitive Therapy (as well as Buddhism and Neuroscience). The focus is on how to live a life where our actions are aligned with our core values, get straight to the heart of a matter, identify the issues, discriminate between real threats vs. the “stories” we tell ourselves, move away from “shoulds”, take responsibility for our choices, not go into “victim mentality”, communicate needs effectively, bring love, mindfulness and compassion to all situations, and live wholeheartedly, without apology. *The goal is to give you the tools you need to feel empowered and to live a life you love, with purpose and clarity.*

Format: Each week, there is a short lecture on a given topic, combined with workshop style exercises. The exercises include: 1) private reflection, 2) group discussion, 3) didactic discourse between the instructor and students, 4) partnering up, students taking turns facilitating each other on an exercise. After each class, I usually send a follow-up email with some videos, readings, etc., if you are interested. **Please have a small notebook and writing utensil ready for class for different exercises and your own note-taking.**

Grading: Grading is Pass/Not Pass, and is based on

- 1) **Class attendance:** In person attendance is required and will be monitored through a Canvas assignment (*type in a passcode*) that is opened from 12:30 – 12:40pm. You will be allowed to miss only *one* class for the quarter (no excuse needed). **If you miss an additional lecture**, you need to be **excused** (for a good reason, please email me or the PLAs). Then, to make up that missed lecture, *you will have to watch the podcast (and type in the passcode, by Sunday at 11:59 that week) and attend an office hour of one of the PLAs that week, and let the PLA know in advance*, and they will be prepared to give a mini-lecture (overview) for that week (*See Bottom Line for Passing, below*).
- 2) **Weekly Reflection Essay:** You will turn in a weekly essay (please write at least 5 on-topic, thoughtful, sentences)) describing what you got most out of the class for *that week's lecture* (this is a type of “journaling” exercise). **The assignment is due by Sunday, 11:59 pm each week.** (So, the first one is due **Sunday, Oct 5th**). You will be allowed to miss only *one* of these reflection essays for the quarter. You will *not* be graded on this, you just have to show that you put in an effort! *If you miss an essay, you can still submit it late, but then you must ALSO attend an office hour of one of the PLAs that week, and let the PLA know in advance (See Bottom Line for Passing, below).*
- 3) **Final Video Reflection Piece:** At the end of the quarter, by the last day of *finals week* you will be asked to turn in a short video reflection piece, where you can be playful and creative, and even work together on it (*See below*).

Bottom Line for PASSING the class:

- ***You can miss 1 class and 1 essay without any explanation to us, and you will still pass.***
- ***If you miss more than 1 class, you can make it up by 1- watching the podcast AND 2- going to a PLA office hour that week***
- ***If you miss more than 1 essay, you can make it up by going to a PLA office hour that week, and submitting the essay late.***
- ***In every office hour you come to, you can make up two missing things (e.g., missing the lecture and the essay for a given week)***

Note 1: Turning in late submissions overburdens the PLA who have just the same amount of coursework as you. Do everything you can to attend every lecture and turn in assignments on time.

Note 2: I understand that emergencies happen that make it impossible to attend class. If an emergency is getting in the way of you being able to pass the class, please reach out to me so I can help you pass the class!

PLAs: We will often break into smaller groups, each one led by a PLA or myself. The PLAs will also hold 1 hour of office hours/week to go over the concepts discussed during class time. *This can be thought of as a peer-to-peer discussion group, however, it should not be used for private counseling sessions, as PLAs are not qualified for this.*

PLAs

e-mail

Office Hours (by Zoom or in person)

In addition to these PLAs, there is a “Lead Assistant” (Nurry Duong, nuduong@ucsd.edu, who was a past UGIA), who is responsible for helping the PLAs with administrative and logistical aspects of this course, but will not be holding office hours.

Topics by Week

1) Sept 30th: **Practicing Psychological Well-Being: Insights from Eastern and Western Philosophies**

SELF-COMPASSION: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF

2) Oct 7th: **Exploration of the Self, and How to Live a Life with Heart**

3) Oct 14th: **Accepting All of Your Personality Traits: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

4) Oct 21st: **Building Emotional Resilience by Challenging Your Thoughts and Changing Behaviors**

5) Oct 28th: **Building Emotional Resilience by Accepting All of Your Emotions**

COMPASSION FOR OTHERS: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

6) Nov 4th: **Compassion for Others alongside Healthy Boundaries**

7) Nov 11th: **Putting Compassion for Others into Practice**

8) Nov 18th: **Approaching Conflict with Others from a “Needs” Perspective**

9) Nov 25th: **Taking Responsibility for Conflict with Others**

10) Dec 2nd: **Summary, Tips for Practicing**

NOTE about your emotions: This class is, in part, about learning how to be open and truthful. It can therefore get emotional sometimes, with people sharing stories and/or issues. Please know that you are *never required* to share anything in this class, but you should be prepared that others will. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. Please also know that if you have experienced traumatic events or have mental health concerns, a course like this will not fix mental health concerns that require a therapeutic approach.

Note about mental health concerns: This course is not designed to address mental health disorders or acute concerns. As such, some discussions are never permitted in this course in discussions with your peers, including details of traumatic events, means of self-harm, and an intent to hurt yourself or others. If you would benefit from talking to a mental health professional, please go to the counseling center ([CAPS](#)) on the UCSD campus. If you are thinking about harming yourself or others, please go to [Urgent Care at CAPS](#) immediately (they are open from 8AM to 4PM and can be reached at 858-534-3755; if afterhours, please call the suicide hotline at 800-273-TALK [8255]).

NOTE about the teachings: Everything taught in this class is just *suggestions* for ways to live life openly and wholeheartedly, while mitigating stress, depression and loneliness. You are free to adopt which of these teachings work for you, as everyone is different ☺

REFLECTION VIDEO: By the end of finals week (**Friday, Dec 12th at 11:59 pm**) you will be required to turn in a 1 – 2 minute reflection video, filmed on any device. This video should be of you talking about a breakthrough or pivotal moment (either positive or negative) you *experienced from the class* (either during class itself or outside the class). You can make this video anytime during the quarter, but it has to be turned in by finals week, uploaded on Canvas. *Note: You don't have to film YOURSELF in the video, you can instead do a voice-over if you'd like. And, you can work together with other students to make a video together, if you prefer!* Just have fun with it!! If you are uncomfortable making a video, please talk to me about an alternative written assignment.

Documentary: There is a possibility we may want to use your video for a documentary about the LSW initiative at UCSD. As a way of getting your permission, when you upload your videos, please write in “YES” or “NO” in the title of your video (e.g., “Jane Doe-YES” means we CAN use your video). To play it really safe, we will also have a quiz question asking whether we can use your video (Yes or No). *Bottom Line: Unless you either 1) say NO in the title of your uploaded video or 2) choose NO in the quiz question, we will assume we can use your video in a documentary. Still, if your video is chosen for the documentary, we will get your permission in a separate release form.*