Psychology 193: Science of Mindfulness
Winter, 2017

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11:00 am – 12:20 pm, Mandler 1539

Professor Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1 - 3 pm, Rm. 5117 McGill Hall

Supplementary Text: Science of Mindfulness, Ronald D. Siegel
(available at: Amazon.com as an audible that comes with a downloadable PDF)

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.

Format: The first week will consist of formal lectures on Mindfulness and how to measure it. The following weeks will consist of everyone reading and discussing research articles (2 to 3) on the topic of Mindfulness, with the emphasis on a different topic each week. For each week, the Tuesday session will be more of an overview on the topic and the papers (with the instructor leading the discussion), while Thursday will involve a more detailed discussion of the assigned papers, to be led by one of the students (assigned in advance). Students should prepare about a 10 minute presentation, and provide a 1-page summary of the paper, for all the class to read.

Papers: To get an idea, a list of potential papers for each week is provided along with the weekly schedule, below. The final list of papers will be provided the week before each topic is discussed (with access to a web site for downloading the papers).

Grading: The grade for this class will be a weighted average of class participation (40%) and a final essay exam (60%). The essay exam will be in-class, open book/notes, during finals week. It will require that you integrate your knowledge across the different research articles and topics covered in this course.

Only ONE absence will be allowed, after that, it will affect your grade.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 10 and 12): Introduction to Mindfulness and How to Measure
1) Simmons et al., 2011. False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant.

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

Week 3 (Jan 24 and 26): Measuring the “True Self”
1) Schlegel, 2009- Thine own self true self-concept accessibility and meaning in life
2) Schlegel, 2012-To discover or to create-metaphors and the true self.pdf

Week 4 (Jan 31 and Feb 2): Happiness (and is this different from Mindfulness?)
2) Myers & Diener, 1995. Who is happy?

Week 5 (Feb 7 and 9): Gratitude and Positive Psychology
2) Jamieson, 2011. Turning the knots in your stomach into bows.
3) Chen, 2012. Does gratitude always work?

Week 6 (Feb 14 and 16): Interoception (How does your body feel?)
1) Dunn, 2010: Listening to your Heart: How interoception shapes emotion experience and intuitive decision making.
2) Fox, 2012: Meditation experience predicts introspective accuracy.
3) Sze, 2010: Coherence between emotional experience and physiology: Does body awareness training have an impact?

Week 7 (Feb 21 and 23): Compassion
1) Goetz, 2010. Compassion-An evolutionary analysis and empirical review
2) Condon, 2013. Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering

Week 8 (Feb 28 and Mar 2): Empathic Accuracy
1) Ickes, 1993.Empathic Accuracy Review
2) Waldinger, 2012. Eye of the beholder- the individual and dyadic contributions of empathic accuracy and perceived empathic effort to relationship satisfaction
3) Zaki, 2015. It Takes Two-The interpersonal nature of empathic accuracy

Week 9 (Mar 7 and 9): Oxytocin and the “Tend and Befriend” System
1) Kosfeld 2005-Oxytocin increases trust in humans
2) Bartz, 2010. Oxytocin selectively improves empathic accuracy

Week 10 (Mar 14 and 16): New Movements (Cults?) on the Rise
1) Lalich & Langone- 15 cult criteria
2) Jacobson, 1993-A short review of academic research into cults
3) Rosedale & Langone-On Using the Term Cult
4) Langone, 2017: Cults, Conversion, Science, and Harm - Cultic Studies Association (ICSA)