

SSCS 400
MINDFULNESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE PART II

Instructor: Hiro Saito
Office: SOSS 04-065
Office Hours: by appointment
Email: hirosaito@smu.edu.sg
Website: <https://www.mindfulsocialscience.com/>

Class: Mon 8:15–11:30am
SIS Class Rm B1-1

LOGISTICS

After taking attendance, we will start class with a short mindfulness discussion and exercise. By the time I finish taking attendance, please put away your electronic devices (e.g., cellphones, laptops) and mentally get ready for mindfulness practice.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In recent years, mindfulness has become very popular in business and society, as research findings have been compiled to show its positive effects on physical and mental health. But what exactly are the benefits, as well as the challenges, of mindfulness? In this capstone seminar, we examine this question mainly in the secular-scientific tradition developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues, while learning about various academic research on mindfulness as well as practicing mindfulness on our own. This practice-oriented capstone seminar is also the second part in a multi-year series of capstone projects that aim to produce a website and other materials for the well-being of the SOSS community and beyond.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As Jon Kabat-Zinn put it, **mindfulness is “awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”** By the end of this course, you will acquire (a) basic knowledge of academic research on mindfulness, especially its effects on physical and mental health; (b) analytical skills to critically examine the potential negative effects of mindfulness on society from interdisciplinary perspectives; (c) how to practice mindfulness through body scan and other forms of meditation as well as through your daily activities; and (d) collaboration and project-management skills to produce contents that contribute to the well-being of society.

METHODS OF EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

To help you achieve the aforesaid learning objectives, the following assignments have been designed. These are meant to evaluate your performance and provide feedback to facilitate your progress toward the objectives.

Attendance & Participation	10%
Weekly Journal	20%
Critical and Interdisciplinary Paper	20%
Group Presentation & Report	30%
Final Reflection Paper	20%

Attendance & Participation

By attending every class session, you will automatically earn attendance and participation points. This is because of the arrangement I have adopted: we will have small-group discussion in every class session, so that everyone will participate equally at least to some extent. The purpose of this arrangement is to encourage “deep learning,” i.e. the intrinsically motivated and most effective form of learning.

With proper documentation (regarding your medical conditions, family situations, etc.), I will make an arrangement for you to make up your absence.

Weekly Journal

From Week 1 onward, you will start journaling weekly. **Your weekly journal entry is due at 8:15am on the morning of class meeting for the week.** This weekly journal assignment aims to help you maintain consistent mindfulness practice and reflections, and it consists of the following three components.

(i) Questions about the assigned readings (from Week 1 onward): after you finish the assigned readings, come up with at least one question for each of them in preparation for small-group discussions in class. For example, if there are three assigned readings for the week, you will have at least three questions. **When there is no assigned reading for the week, you won’t have to complete this component.**

(ii) Post-class reflections (from Week 2 onward): write down your questions/comments expanding on short lectures and in-class discussions and practices for the week. **When there is no class meeting for the week, you won’t have to complete this component.**

(iii) Daily practices and observations (from Week 2 onward): record your daily practices of mindfulness and your own observations on their effects for the week. You can also record – non-judgmentally – various challenges you faced in practicing mindfulness. **This is the component that you will complete every week (except for Recess Week) from Week 2 to Week 13.**

Critical and Interdisciplinary Response Paper (900 words maximum, double spaced, Times New Roman 12, and 2.54 cm margin)

In Week 7, we are going to watch the documentary film *Walk With Me* (2017). After watching the film, you will write a paper on the potential of mindfulness practice to transform the world for “better” by drawing on various theories and research findings that you have learned in psychology, political science, sociology, and core-curriculum modules since Year 1. **For this assignment, you are required to use at least two disciplines.** In Week 7, you will receive more detailed instructions for this assignment.

Group Presentation (20-minute presentation, 15-minute Q&A) and Report (1,200 words maximum, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12, and 2.54 cm margin)

You will be divided into eight pre-assigned groups to create blog entries for the web site [“Mindfulness and Social Science”](#) corresponding to the following eight moments of life. Your blog entries will include (i) a summary of available writings on mindfulness and (ii) observations of your practices with regard to the chosen moment.

Moment of life	Literature to be reviewed	Practice to be examined
Starting the day	Academic writings on formal mindfulness (meditation)	Relevant practices after getting up
Getting to school & going home	Academic and popular writings of informal mindfulness	Relevant practices while commuting
Classroom	Academic writings on mindfulness and learning	Relevant practices while in the classroom
Study and break	Academic writings on mindfulness and student well-being	Relevant practices while on campus
Family and friends	Academic writings on mindfulness, family life, friendship, and intimacy	Relevant practices while spending time with your family, friends, and partners
Work and service	Academic writings on mindfulness in the workplace	Relevant practices while working (e.g. part-time, internship, volunteer)
Caring for yourself	Academic writings on self-compassion	Relevant practices when/after encountering difficult situations
Ending the day	Academic writings on mindfulness and sleep	Relevant practices before going to bed

Given pre-assigned grouping, you will maximally improve your collaboration and project-management skill – to build a team with new people and harness synergy among group members to synthesize different perspectives and co-produce an insightful presentation and report. By presenting your research results in speech and writing, you will also learn how to communicate your thoughts effectively to your audience.

A group presentation and report will be evaluated in terms of (a) overall group presentation and report (20%), (b) individual performance (5%), and (c) teamwork evaluation (5%). The last component of evaluation is meant to give you a chance to improve a part of your collaboration and project-management skills, to fairly evaluate your teammates' performances and, if necessary, offer constructive feedback.

Final Reflection Paper (900 words maximum, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12, and 2.54 cm margin)

Based on your weekly journal entries, you will write a reflection paper examining how your mindfulness practices have evolved over time, and whether/how they have changed the patterns of your thinking, feeling, and acting.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- In-class practices, such as body scan, are guided by audio-recordings used in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program available from [UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness](#) and [Dr. Kristin Neff](#).
- Informal practice can be anything you do on a daily basis, such as riding the bus/MRT, studying, and eating.
- “Breathing space” can be summarized as “STOP”: (1) stop to interrupt automatic pilot, (2) take a breath; (3) observe your bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts, and (4) proceed with awareness.

Week 1: 11 Jan: What is Mindfulness?

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. 2013. “Introduction to the Second Edition.” Pp. xxv–xlvi in *Full Catastrophe Living Revised and Updated Edition*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks.

Levine, Stephen. 1989. “Awareness.” Pp. 1–6 in *A Gradual Awakening*. New York: Anchor Books.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 1976. “The Essential Discipline.” Pp. 1–10 in *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

In-class practice: sitting, walking, and eating meditations

Home practice: informal practice of your own choice

Week 2: 18 Jan: Scientific Research on Mindfulness

Creswell, J. David. 2017. “Mindfulness Interventions.” *Annual Review of Psychology* 68: 491–516.

Tang, Yi-Yuan, Britta K. Hölzel, and Michael I. Posner. 2015. “The Neuroscience of Mindfulness Meditation.” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 16 (4): 213–225.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 2012. “Original Fear.” Pp. 15–20 in *Fear: Essential Wisdom for Getting Through the Storm*. New York: HarperOne.

In-class practice: sitting meditation + body scan

Home practice: informal practice of your own choice + breathing space

Week 3: 25 Jan: Mindfulness in Education

Meiklejohn, John, et al. 2012. “Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students.” *Mindfulness* 3(4): 291–307.

Cannon, Jennifer. 2016. “Education as the Practice of Freedom: A Social Justice Proposal for Mindfulness Educators.” Pp. 397–409 in *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context, and Social Engagement*, edited by R. Purser, D. Forbes, and A. Burke. Springer.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 2013. “Communicating with Yourself.” Pp. 13–35 in *The Art of Communicating*. New York: HarperOne.

In-class practice: sitting meditation + movement practice 1

Home practice: informal practice of your own choice + breathing space

Week 4: 1 Feb: Mindfulness in Business

Purser, Ronald. 2019. “Neoliberal Mindfulness.” Pp. 25–47 in *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*. London: Repeater Books.

Forbes, David. 2019. “The Mindfulness Industrial Complex: The Happy Self.” Pp. 35–42 in *Mindfulness and Its Discontents: Education, Self, and Social Transformation*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 2017. “A New Way of Working.” Pp. 35–42 in *Work: How to Find Joy and Meaning in Each Hour of the Day*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company.

In-class practice: sitting meditation + movement practice 2

Home practice: informal practice of your own choice + breathing space

Week 5: 8 Feb: Mindfulness in Personal Relationships

Neff, Kristin D. and Elizabeth Pommier. 2013. “The Relationship between Self-compassion and Other-focused Concern among College Undergraduates, Community Adults, and Practicing Meditators.” *Self and Identity* 12(2): 160–176.

Kabat-Zinn, Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn. 2014. “Epilogue.” Pp. 379–389 in *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*. New York: Hachette Books.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 2002. “Putting Out the Fire of Anger.” Pp. 25–48 in *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*. New York: Riverhead Books.

In-class practice: sitting meditation + self-compassion

Home practice: informal practice of your own choice + breathing space

Week 6: 15 Feb: Implications of Mindfulness for Social Science + Getting Started with Group Projects

Nichols, Tom. 2017. “How Conversation Became Exhausting.” Pp. 40–69 in *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 1993. “If You Want Peace, Peace Is With You Immediately.” Pp. 101–106 in *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

In-class practice: sitting meditation + open awareness

Home practice: practice of your group + breathing space

Week 7: 22 Feb: Mindfulness in Action [EPTL lesson via Zoom]

Berrigan, Daniel. 1993. “Forward: Their Speech Is Full of Forgiveness.” Pp. 3–8 in *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 2016. “Call Me By My True Names.” Pp. 79–81 in *At Home in the World: Stories and Essential Teachings from a Monk’s Life*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Movie: *Walk With Me* (2017)

Home practice: informal practice of your group + breathing space

Week 8: 1 Mar: Recess [No Class]

Critical and Interdisciplinary Paper Due on 7 Mar (23:59)

Home practice: practice of your group + breathing space

Week 9: 8 Mar: Group work and consultation [No Class]

Home practice: practice of your group + breathing space

Week 10: 15 Mar: Group work and consultation [No Class]

Home practice: practice of your group + breathing space

Week 11: 22 Mar: Presentation

In-class practice: sitting meditation

Home practice: informal practice of your choice/group + breathing space

Week 12: 29 Mar: Presentation

In-class practice: sitting meditation

Home practice: informal practice of your choice/group + breathing space

Week 13: 5 Apr: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Levine, Stephen. 1989. "Daily Practice." Pp. 127–133 in *A Gradual Awakening*. New York: Anchor Books.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. 2013. "The Foundations of Mindfulness Practice: Attitudes and Commitment." Pp. 19–38 in *Full Catastrophe Living Revised and Updated Edition*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks.

In-class practice: sitting meditation

Home practice: practice of your choice + breathing space

Week 14: 12 Apr: Revision Week [No Class]

Group report and final reflection paper due on 18 Apr (23:59)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

See "Codes of Academic Integrity"

(http://smuscd.org/uploads/2013/11/code_of_academic_integrity.pdf) available at the web site of SMU Student Council of Discipline (<http://smuscd.org/>). The web site also explains disciplinary procedures for violations of academic integrity.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let me know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's disability support team if you have questions or concerns about academic accommodations: included@smu.edu.sg. Please be aware that the accessible tables in our seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (EPTL)

As part of emergency preparedness, I may conduct lessons online via the Zoom platform during the term to prepare you for online learning. During an actual emergency, you will be notified to access the Zoom platform for your online lessons. The class schedule will mirror the current face-to-face class timetable unless otherwise stated.

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Please note that only copyright holders are entitled to reproduce their work, publish their work, perform their work in public, communicate their work to the public and make an adaptation of their work. Hence, making course materials (owned by the faculty) available for sale or posting such works on websites for gain, is strictly prohibited. Disciplinary action will be taken against those found infringing copyright.