



GG101x: The Science of Happiness

Course Syllabus, Fall 2016

Instructors

Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., Founding Faculty Director, Greater Good Science Center, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Berkeley Social Interaction Laboratory, UC Berkeley

Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Ph.D., Science Director, Greater Good Science Center, UC Berkeley

Course Description

The Science of Happiness is the first MOOC to scientifically explore the roots of a happy and meaningful life. Students will engage with some of the most provocative and practical lessons from the trailblazing science of positive psychology, and discover how to apply research-backed insights to their own lives. Created by UC Berkeley's [Greater Good Science Center](#), the course will zero in on a key finding: that true happiness is inextricably linked to having authentic, meaningful social ties, and contributing to something bigger than yourself—the greater good. Students will learn about research that supports this view from multiple disciplines including social, developmental, evolutionary, and positive psychology, alongside neuroscience, economics, and more.

The Science of Happiness will also offer students practical strategies for tapping into and nurturing their own happiness, including weekly activities that foster social and emotional well-being, and enable students to observe a measure of their own happiness along the way. Health professionals can earn [continuing education credit](#) hours for participating.

The course's co-instructors, Dacher Keltner and Emiliana Simon-Thomas, are not only leading authorities on positive psychology but also gifted teachers skilled at making science fun and personal. They'll be joined by world-renowned experts—including Barbara Fredrickson, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Robert Emmons—discussing themes like positive emotion, mindfulness, and gratitude.

One key lesson we've learned from previous students? You'll get more out of the Science of Happiness if you take it with other people. Sign up with a buddy, form a "Happiness Team" (i.e., study group), or get your colleagues to take it with you! Right now, you can join the [GG101x group on Facebook](#) to get started.



Course Contact

Due to the high number of students enrolled, your instructors will not be able to reply to individual emails directly. However, you can email questions or problems to HappinessCourse@berkeley.edu and we will make every effort to assist you.

Key Course Elements

Instructor Lecture Videos
Guest Lecture Videos
Readings (e.g., articles from [Greater Good](#), peer-reviewed scientific papers, book excerpts)
“Let’s Discuss” Discussion Forums (ungraded)
Weekly “Happiness Practices” (ungraded)
Weekly Emotion “Check-Ins” (ungraded)
Pre-/Post-Course Surveys (ungraded)
Problem Sets: Self-test questions after select videos and readings (graded)
Midterm (graded)
Final Exam (graded)

Additional Course Elements (optional, ungraded, and hosted on other platforms)

[Greater Good Quizzes](#)

[GGIA Happiness Practices](#)

Live Q&A video chats with instructors & expert guests

Supplemental materials – recommended, but not required, articles, book chapters or videos listed under “Want More?” sections—see below)

Recommended films about happiness (i.e., “Happiness Cinema” sections)

Recommended Supplemental Readings (optional)

We’ll be recommending specific chapters from these books throughout the course.

Purchasing them is optional.

[The How of Happiness](#), by Sonja Lyubomirsky (Penguin Press, 2008)

[Born to Be Good](#), by Dacher Keltner (W.W. Norton, 2009)

[The Compassionate Instinct](#), Dacher Keltner, Jason Marsh, Jeremy Adam Smith (eds.) (W.W. Norton, 2010)

* You can also purchase Born to be Good and The Compassionate Instinct together as a [Package Offer](#) for a discounted price!

International students can [order an e-book](#) of this Born to Be Good package at eBooks.com. The package of Born to Be Good and The Compassionate Instinct is priced specially for Science of Happiness students, offered together for just £8.00 in the UK, €10.00 elsewhere in Europe, and \$14.50 in Australia. These prices exclude any local sales tax. The US price (\$12.99) appears in all countries where the other currencies do not apply; however, that price is available only to people outside the United States and Canada.



Grading

Problem Sets = 30% of grade

Midterm = 30% of grade

Final Exam = 40% of grade

* Students must earn a total grade of at least **60%** in order to pass the course. If you want proof that you have completed the course, for school, employment, or other professional purposes, you can upgrade to a [Verified Certificate of Achievement](#).

Main Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define happiness in a manner that is consistent with scientific evidence.
- Identify key psychological, social, and biological factors that relate to happiness.
- Understand the relationship between happiness, human connection, and pro-social qualities, such as compassion, altruism, and gratitude.
- Explain why engaging in or practicing certain kinds of exercises or activities can boost happiness.
- Apply lessons from positive & social psychology to their personal and professional lives, enhancing their self-understanding.
- Practice research-tested techniques for fostering happiness within themselves and the people around them.

Course Outline

Course materials will be launched on a weekly basis on edX.org beginning Tuesday, September 6, 2016, with Week 1: Introduction to the Science of Happiness. Thereafter, materials for each week will be launched weekly on Tuesdays (e.g., Week 2 on Tuesday, September 13, and so on). All coursework intended to earn credit towards a certificate of completion must be completed by November 15, 2016.

Week 1: Introduction to the Science of Happiness

- Welcome to the course: Introductions, overview, and logistics
- What is happiness? Philosophical and scientific perspectives
- Why does happiness matter?
- Problem Set #1 (graded)
- Happiness Practice #1: Three Good Things (ungraded)
- What's joy got to do with it?
- Pessimism, myths, and misconceptions about happiness
- Problem Set #2 (graded)

Guest Lecturers:



Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D.
Barbara Fredrickson, Ph.D.

Key Papers:

Catalino et. al. (2014) [Prioritizing positivity: An effective approach to pursuing happiness](#). *Emotion*, 14(6), 1155-1161
Lyubomirsky et. al. (2005). [Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change](#). *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 111–131.
Kahneman, D. (1999). [Objective happiness](#). In D. Kahneman, E. Diener & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: Foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 3-25). New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

Week 2: The Power of Social Connection

- Happiness and social connection
- Why do social connections foster happiness?
- We're built to connect
- Problem Set #3 (graded)
- Happiness Practice #2: Active Listening (ungraded)
- Romantic relationships, family, and friendships
- The science of empathy
- Problem Set #4 (graded)

Key Papers:

Nelson, S. K., Kushlev, K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). [The pains and pleasures of parenting: When, why, and how is parenthood associated with more or less well-being?](#) *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(3), 846-895.
Keltner, D., Kogan A., Piff, P. & Saturn, S. (2014) [The sociocultural appraisals, values, and emotions \(SAVE\) framework of prosociality: Core processes from gene to meme](#), *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 425-460.

Week 3: Compassion & Kindness

- Compassion, kindness, and happiness
- The what and why of compassion
- Problem Set #5 (graded)
- The kindness-happiness loop
- Happiness Practice #3: Random Acts of Kindness (ungraded)
- Skeptics and champions of compassion
- Momentous kindness
- Problem Set #6 (graded)

Guest Lecturers:

Paul Ekman, Ph.D. (optional)
Philip Zimbardo, Ph.D.



Key Papers:

- Goetz, J., Simon-Thomas, E., & Keltner, D. (2010). [Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review](#). *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(3), 351–374.
- Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). [Spending money on others promotes happiness](#). *Science*, 319(5870), 1687-1688.
- Warneken, F. & Tomasello, M. (2006). [Altruistic helping in human infants and young chimpanzees](#). *Science*, 311(5765), 1301-1303.

Week 4: Cooperation & Reconciliation

- Cooperation and happiness
- Peacemaking and reconciliation
- Problem Set #7 (graded)
- The science of forgiveness
- Happiness Practice #4: Forgiving (ungraded)
- Building trust
- Problem Set #8 (graded)

Guest Lecturers:

Frederic Luskin, Ph.D.
Jack Kornfield, Ph.D.

Key Papers:

- Tabibnia, G. & Lieberman, M. D. (2007). [Fairness and cooperation are rewarding](#). *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1118, 90-101.
- Tsang, J., McCullough, M. E., & Fincham, F. D. (2006). [The longitudinal association between forgiveness and relationship closeness and commitment](#). *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 25(4), 448-472.

Week 5: Midterm Exam (graded)

Week 6: Mindfulness

- Mindful Awareness & Happiness
- What is Mindfulness?
- Problem Set #9 (graded)
- Happiness Practice #5: Mindfulness (ungraded)
- Benefits of Mindfulness for Mind, Brain, and Body
- Real-world Applications of Mindfulness
- Problem Set #10 (graded)

Guest Lecturers:

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.
Shauna Shapiro, Ph.D.

Key Papers:

- Creswell, J. D. & Lindsay, E. (2014). [How does mindfulness training affect health? A](#)



[mindfulness-stress-buffering-account](#), *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(6), 401-407.

Killingsworth, M. & Gilbert, D. (2010). [A wandering mind is an unhappy mind](#). *Science*, 330(6006), 932.

Davidson, R. J., et al. (2003). [Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation](#). *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65(4), 564–570.

Week 7: Mental Habits of Happiness

- Mental habits of happiness
- Self-compassion: A path to resilience and happiness
- Happiness Practice #6: Self-Compassionate Letter (ungraded)
- Problem Set #11 (graded)
- Finding “flow” and setting goals
- Happiness Practice #7: Best Possible Self (ungraded)
- Problem Set #12 (graded)

Guest Lecturers:

Kristin Neff, Ph.D.

Key Papers:

Germer, C. K., & Neff, K. D. (2013). [Self-compassion in clinical practice](#). *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(8), 856-867.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & LeFevre, J. (1989). [Optimal experience in work and leisure](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(5), 815-822.

Week 8: Gratitude

- Gratitude and happiness
- Happiness Practice #8: Gratitude letter (ungraded)
- This is your mind, on gratitude
- Problem Set #13 (graded)
- Gratitude, the body, and relationships
- Challenges to gratitude
- Happiness Practice #9: Gratitude Journal (ungraded)
- Scaling gratitude
- Problem Set #14 (graded)

Guest Lecturers:

Robert Emmons, Ph.D.

Key Papers:

Wood, A. M., Froh, J. J., & Geraghty, A. W. A. (2010). [Gratitude and well-being: A review and theoretical integration](#). *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 890-905.

Emmons, R. A. & McCullough, M. E. (2003). [Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life](#). *Journal of*



Personality and Social Psychology, 84(2), 377–389.

Week 9: New Frontiers and Happiness “Fit”

- The cutting-edge: Awe, wonder, and beauty
- Happiness Practice #10: Awe Walk (ungraded)
- Laughter, play, and narrative
- Problem Set #15 (graded)
- Finding your “fit” (ungraded)
- Problem Set #16 (graded)
- Synthesis and farewell

Key Papers:

Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (2003). [Approaching awe: A moral, aesthetic, and spiritual emotion](#). *Cognition and Emotion*, 17, 297-314.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). [How do simple positive activities increase well-being?](#) *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(1), 57-62.

Week 10: Final Exam, Wrap-Up & Reflections



Instructor and Staff Bios

Course Instructors

Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, and the founding faculty director of the Greater Good Science Center. Since earning his doctorate from Stanford University, Dacher has devoted his career to studying the nature of human goodness and happiness, conducting groundbreaking research on compassion, awe, laughter, and love. Dacher is the author of the best-selling book *Born to Be Good* (W.W. Norton, 2009) and a co-editor of the anthology *The Compassionate Instinct* (W.W. Norton, 2010), in addition to more than 100 scientific papers and two best-selling textbooks. An outstanding speaker who has earned many research and teaching awards, Dacher has received rave reviews for his “Human Happiness” course at UC Berkeley. His work is featured regularly in major media outlets, including *The New York Times*, CNN, and NPR. In 2008, the *Utne Reader* named him as one of 50 visionaries who are changing our world. What makes Dacher happy is wrestling with his loved ones, yoga, being up close to Iggy Pop, and swimming in cold, salty water.



Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Ph.D., is the science director of the Greater Good Science Center. A neuroscientist who earned her doctorate from UC Berkeley, her research has explored the neurobiological roots of pro-social emotion and behavior, as well as the psychosocial benefits of emotional authenticity and connection. A gifted teacher, Emiliana has presented to the Dalai Lama and audiences worldwide. What makes her happy is meals with friends & family, playing music with people, and boogie boarding at the beach.



Course Producer

Jason Marsh, M.J., is the Greater Good Science Center’s director of programs and the founding editor-in-chief of the GGSC’s award-winning online magazine, *Greater Good*. A graduate of Brown University and the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, Jason is also a co-editor of two anthologies of Greater Good articles: *The Compassionate Instinct* (WW Norton, 2010) and *Are We Born Racist?* (Beacon Press, 2010). What makes Jason happy is chasing fly balls, playing charades with his daughter, and reading A.O. Scott.





Course Instructional Team

Hai Hoang, B.A., graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with highest honors in psychology. He has been a course assistant for the Science of Happiness since the course's first launch in 2014, and his primary role is building the course contents on edX. Beside supporting GGSC's works, Hai is a data analyst fellow for the Carnegie Foundation, Stanford. In his free time, Hai enjoys doing martial arts and photography, but what makes him most happy is being with the people he loves.



Kira Newman, B.A., is an editor and web producer at the Greater Good Science Center, and a former course assistant for the Science of Happiness. Offline, she is the creator of CaféHappy, a Toronto-based meetup that gathers monthly to discuss how to be happier. Kira comes to GGSC from the world of tech journalism, where she was published in outlets including *Social Media Monthly* and Tech.co. She spent four years traveling around the world and loves speaking French, swing dancing, and exploring local cafés.



Tanira Chao is a recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley with a Bachelor's in Psychology and a minor in Education. She hopes to pursue a Master's in Education after gaining experience within the Education field. She enjoys being outdoors, reading fiction novels, and traveling!



Amanda Perez-Ceballos is a doctoral student in Social-Personality Psychology at UC Berkeley. Her research revolves around implicit biases, prejudice, and the benefits of cross-group friendship. Specifically, her work looks at utilizing technology to foster online cross-group friendships as a means to reduce implicit biases. Also a Greater Good Science Center Research Fellow, Amanda's research explores the role that the internet can play in facilitating cross-group contact and friendships.



Special thanks to:

Story artist [Matt Jones](#), whose wonderful illustrations pop up throughout our course videos, illustrating the vagus nerve, the Dalai Lama, and many other keys to happiness.

Our dynamo video production and post-production team, including [Jigar Mehta](#) of [Shoot Edit Burn Media](#); Jason Sussberg and Emile Bokaer of [Dogpatch Films](#); and [Melanie Ruiz](#).

The [Berkeley Resource Center for Online Education](#) (BRCOE).



Earn Continuing Education Credits for The Science of Happiness

The Science of Happiness is approved for 16 CE credit hours for psychologists, therapists, social workers, counselors, nurses, and members of NIRSA. A shorter, introductory version is approved for 6 CE credit hours. Continuing Education for this course is co-sponsored by R. Cassidy Seminars.

In order to earn CE credit hours for participating in this online course, you must first [register for CE credit](#) through the course's continuing education co-sponsor, R. Cassidy Seminars (RCS), paying for either [16 CE](#) credit hours or [6 CE](#) credit hours. When you register for CE credit, you will create a login through the RCS website, which you will use to receive a CE certificate of completion.

Click [here](#) to learn more about how to earn continuing education credit hours for this course.