



GG101x: The Science of Happiness

Course Syllabus, January 5–June 30, 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. However, you can email questions or problems to HappinessCourse@berkeley.edu, and we will make every effort to assist you. You can also post questions in [this course discussion thread](#), and we'll do our best to address them.

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](#)

- Live Q&A video chats with instructors & expert guests
- Supplemental readings—recommended, but not required (e.g., from *The How of Happiness*, *Born to Be Good*, and other books and articles listed under “Want More?” sections—see below)
- Supplemental videos
- 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 and earn a certificate of completion. If you want proof that you have completed the course, for school, employment, or other professional purposes, you can pay for a [Verified Certificate of completion](#).

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 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 boosting their own happiness.



Course Outline

All course material will be available on edX beginning January 5, 2016, and will remain open to students for earning credit until June 30, 2016. All coursework intended to earn credit towards a certificate of completion must be completed by June 30, 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
Happiness Practice #1: Three Good Things
What's joy got to do with it?
Pessimism, myths, and misconceptions about happiness
Problem Set #2

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
Happiness Practice #2: Active Listening
Romantic relationships, family, and friendships
The science of empathy
Problem Set #4

Key Papers:

Wagner, U., Galli, L., Schott, B. H., Wold, A., van der Schalk, J., Manstead, A. S. R., Scherer, K., Walter, H. (2014). [Beautiful friendship: Social sharing of emotions improves subjective feelings and activates the neural reward circuitry](#). *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 10(6), 801-808.



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
The kindness-happiness loop
Happiness Practice #3: Random Acts of Kindness
Skeptics and champions of compassion
Momentous kindness
Problem Set #6

Guest Lecturers:

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

Key Studies:

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 & happiness
Peacemaking & reconciliation
Problem Set #7
The science of forgiveness
Happiness Practice #4: Forgiving
Building trust
Problem Set #8

Guest Lecturers:

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

Key Studies:

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

Week 6: Mindfulness

Mindful awareness & happiness
What is mindfulness?
Problem Set #9
Happiness Practice #5: Mindfulness
Benefits of mindfulness for mind, brain, and body
Real-world applications of mindfulness
Problem Set #10

Guest Lecturers:

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

Key Studies:

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
Problem Set #11
Finding “flow” and setting goals
Happiness Practice #7: Best Possible Self
Problem Set #12

Guest Lecturers:

Kristin Neff, Ph.D.

Key Studies:

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
This is your mind, on gratitude
Problem Set #13
Gratitude, the body, and relationships
Challenges to gratitude
Cultivating gratitude
Happiness Practice #9: Gratitude Journal
Scaling gratitude
Problem Set #14

Guest Lecturers:

Robert Emmons, Ph.D.

Key Studies:

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.
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.

Week 9: New Frontiers and Happiness “Fit”

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

Key Studies:

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). [How do simple positive activities increase well-being?](#) *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(1), 57-62.
Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (2003). [Approaching awe: A moral, aesthetic, and spiritual emotion.](#) *Cognition and Emotion*, 17, 297-314.

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 ground-breaking 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 Assistants

Juliana Breines, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral fellow at Brandeis University who received her Ph.D. in social and personality psychology from the University of California, Berkeley. Her research examines the influence of self-compassion on physical and psychological health. Things that make her happy: Cape Cod beaches, movie nights with her husband, and writing about psychology.



Hai Hoang, B.A., recently graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with highest honors in psychology. He plans to pursue a Ph. D in applied psychology. Beside schoolwork, Hai is a student speaker for numerous events and has held several student-advisory positions on campus. He does martial arts and photography in his free time, but what makes him most happy is being with the people he loves.



Yves Van Melckebeke, M.B.E., is a consultant specialized in change management, coaching people who are facing challenging situations and often difficult times. His innate curiosity lead him to focus on many positive psychology topics, including happiness at work. What makes him happy is spending time with his family and friends, contributing to the evolution of a more positive society, and further building up his knowledge of human psychology.



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.