

GG101x: The Science of Happiness



<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

Course Syllabus
2021-2022

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 Sonja Lyubomirsky, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Robert Emmons—discussing themes like happiness, 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. Register with a friend, form a "Happiness Team" (i.e., study group), or get your colleagues to take the course

with you! Right now, you can join the [GG101x group on Facebook](#) to begin to get acquainted with the worldwide GG101x community.

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 about the course material to HappinessCourse@berkeley.edu, and our course instructional team will make every effort to assist you. For questions about edX.org, please visit https://courses.edx.org/support/contact_us

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 and graded; Verified only)
- Pre-/Post-Course Surveys (ungraded)
- Problem Sets: Self-test questions after select videos and readings (graded; Verified only)
- Midterm (graded; Verified only)
- Final Exam (graded; Verified only)

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

- [GGIA Happiness Practices](#)
- Pre-recorded live Q&A video chats with instructors & expert guests
- Supplemental materials: Recommended, but not required, articles, book chapters, or 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

Per edX.org policy, only learners enrolled in the Verified Track have access to graded materials and the associated Progress page in this course. For Verified Track learners:

Problem Sets = 30% of grade

Midterm = 30% of grade

Final Exam = 40% of grade

* Verified Track learners 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 must 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 and 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

All course materials will be posted to edX.org on Wednesday, September 1, 2021, at 00:01 (UTC), including content from Week 1: Introduction to the Science of Happiness, to the last section called Final Exam, Wrap Up and Reflections. Audit track learners will be able to access non-credit earning course materials for a limited time, 10 weeks from the date of enrollment, as specified by edX.org. After 10 weeks, audit learners will no longer have access to course materials. For Verified learners, all coursework intended to earn credit towards a grade must be completed by 11:59pm (UTC) on August 31, 2022. Enrollment, and upgrade to Verified will be open through July 31, 2022.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

- Welcome to the course!
- What is happiness?
- Why does happiness matter?
- Problem Set #1 (graded; Verified only)
- Happiness Practice #1: Three Good Things (ungraded)
- Happiness and positive emotions
- Pessimism, myths, and misconceptions about happiness
- Problem Set #2 (graded; Verified only)

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.

Pre-recorded live video Q&As:

- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Sonja Lyubomirsky
- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Barbara Fredrickson
- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Iris Mauss

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; Verified only)
- Happiness Practice #2: Active Listening (ungraded)
- Romantic relationships, family, and friendships
- The science of empathy
- Problem Set #4 (graded; Verified only)

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; Verified only)
- The kindness-happiness loop
- Happiness Practice #3: Random Acts of Kindness (ungraded)
- Skeptics and champions of compassion
- Momentous kindness
- Problem Set #6 (graded; Verified only)

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; Verified only)
- The science of forgiveness
- Happiness Practice #4: Forgiving (ungraded)
- Building trust
- Problem Set #8 (graded; Verified only)

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.

Pre-recorded live video Q&As:

- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Dacher Keltner, 2015

- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Dacher Keltner, 2016
- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Dacher Keltner, 2017

MIDTERM EXAM

Format:

- 30 multiple-choice questions designed like the Problem Set questions (graded; Verified only)

WEEK 6: MINDFULNESS

- Mindful awareness and happiness
- What is mindfulness?
- Problem Set #9 (graded; Verified only)
- Happiness Practice #5: Mindfulness (ungraded)
- Benefits of mindfulness for mind, brain, and body
- Real-world applications of mindfulness
- Problem Set #10 (graded; Verified only)

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 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.

Pre-recorded live video Q&A:

- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Matt Killingsworth

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; Verified only)
- Finding “flow” and setting goals
- Happiness Practice #7: Best Possible Self (ungraded)
- Problem Set #12 (graded; Verified only)

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; Verified only)
- Gratitude, the body, and relationships
- Challenges to gratitude
- Happiness Practice #9: Gratitude Journal (ungraded)
- Scaling gratitude
- Problem Set #14 (graded; Verified only)

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.

Pre-recorded live video Q&As:

- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Sara Algoe
- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Robert Emmons
- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and David DeSteno

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; Verified only)
- Finding your “fit” (ungraded)
- Problem Set #16 (graded; Verified only)
- 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.

Pre-recorded live video Q&A:

- Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Kristin Layous

FINAL EXAM, WRAP-UP & REFLECTIONS**Format:**

- 45 multiple-choice questions designed like the Problem Set and Midterm Exam questions (graded; Verified only)

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 books *Born to Be Good* (W.W. Norton, 2009) and *The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence* (Penguin Press, 2016), 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 prosocial 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



Blanchard Kenfack is an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley and student assistant at the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC). For GGSC's Science of Happiness and Happiness at Work courses, Blanchard manages discussion forum moderation, email correspondence, and regular course updates. He is an intended Business Administration and Data Science Dual Major and is passionate about learning about West Africa's economic development.



Flora Jin is an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley and student assistant at the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC). For GGSC's Science of Happiness and Happiness at Work courses, Flora works in content management, discussion moderation, and learner support. Flora is pursuing a dual degree in Psychology and Molecular and Cell Biology with emphases in Medical Biology and Physiology. What makes her happy is volunteering, music, reading, and playing and watching sports with friends.

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](#).

UC Berkeley [Digital Learning Services](#).

EARN CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

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.

[Learn more about how to earn continuing education credit](#) hours for this course in the Overview section of the Greater Good website.