

**Comm 400:  
Mindful Communication  
(4 units)**

**Fall 2019  
Mon, Wed 3:30-4:50p  
Location: ANN 209**

**Instructor: Professor Andrea Hollingshead  
Office Hours: Wednesday 5:00-6:00pm  
Office: ANN 414L  
Contact Info: aholling@usc.edu**

## **Course Description:**

Mindfulness is being fully present, aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions without judgment or reactivity. Mindfulness can increase focus, improve emotion regulation, reduce anxiety, and improve wellbeing.

This course applies the concept of mindfulness to the practice of communication. In most work and life situations, the goals of mindful communication are to promote common understanding, meaningful conversations, and positive relationships. However, difficult situations can arise where the goals of mindful communication are personal safety and self-preservation. A mindful communicator observes, listens and adjusts their communication to the context.

We will explore a range of research topics that relate to mindful communication including, for example, attention, presence, deep listening, perspective taking, relational awareness, communication goals, conversational dynamics, and emotional intelligence. We will also examine real world examples of mindful (and mindless) communication among strangers, in relationships, at work, in public and in social media.

This is an experiential class. Readings, discussions, class activities, assignments and guest speakers are designed to enhance mindful communication practices and skills. The diverse set of guest speakers each has their own mindful approach to communication that has, in large part, contributed to their success.

The course is inspired by the *Mindful USC* initiative (<http://mindful.usc.edu>).

## **Learning Objectives:**

The specific objectives of the course are to provide students with:

- Concepts and a language for understanding mindful (and mindless) communication
- Understanding of factors that influence how people decide what to say and how they respond to other people
- Analytical tools to accurately assess communication situations across contexts (friends, strangers, face-to-face, social media, etc.)

- Insight into their own communication and the ability to communicate more mindfully
- Skills to recognize and navigate through conflict and other difficult communication situations
- A safe and supportive class environment for learning and experimentation

### **Class Materials:**

Class materials include two texts, articles, websites, TED talks and other videos. The weekly assignments are described in the course calendar below, and the full citations are in a separate reading list on blackboard. All articles and links will be posted on Course Blackboard under “Course Materials.”

Two required books:

Sofer, O. J. (2018). Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication. Shambala: Boulder.

Miller, R. (2014). ConCom: Conflict Communication: A New Paradigm in Conscious Communication. Amazon.

### **Class Assignments:**

More specific guidelines on all assignments will be given later in the semester.

**Short Papers:** There are three short papers in which you’ll engage in an activity and write about the experience. 2 double-spaced pp (max).

The paper topics are:

- 1) *Unplugging*
- 2) *Observing communication rules in action*
- 3) *Leaving the echo chamber*

**Communication Self-Reflection Journal:** One course goal is to gain insight into your own communication patterns and to become a more mindful communicator. You’ll do this by journaling for 20 min about your communication each week for the semester. Set aside a 20-min block on a specific day and time in advance. In Week 1, reflect on your strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations as a communicator. After that, it’s up to you. This is your private journal. At the end of the semester, you’ll summarize your journey and discoveries.

**Midterm Book Review:** Instead of a midterm exam, you will read, describe, and critique a book of your choosing that relates to the topic of mindful communication (broadly defined) in a 10 min video. Creativity is highly encouraged. Book topics are due on Wed, Oct 2 for my approval. Midterm videos will be shown in class on Wed, Oct 16 with a brief Q & A afterward.

**Final Project:** On Dec 4, the last day of class, you will make a 12 min in-class presentation on a topic that relates to mindful communication. You will also turn in your script and a bibliography of consulted references in APA format. The only requirements are: the topic is relevant to the course and your project involves research. A short topic statement is due on blackboard at the beginning of class on Oct 30 for my feedback.

**Class Participation and Professionalism:**

This is a fun course, especially for students who attend every session, keep up with assigned readings and actively participate in class discussions. I expect everyone to stay up to date on course readings and come to class ready for discussion.

Your class participation grade will be based on the frequency and quality of your class contributions and over the semester. If you have excellent attendance and make high quality comments during each class discussion, you will earn a high participation grade.

High quality comments:

- Offer a unique and relevant perspective
- Are informed by course material
- Move the analysis forward
- Build on the comments of others
- Include logic or evidence

I hope to cultivate a safe and positive learning environment where everyone is treated with the highest respect and feels comfortable expressing their opinions. I also expect everyone to be fully present during class, so please turn off your phones and laptops before we start class.

**Assignment Submission Policy:**

All assignments are due on the date and time specified and must be submitted via Blackboard. Late assignments will receive a one-grade reduction for 24-hour period. Allow plenty of time to upload assignments by the deadline, and double-check to make sure the process was successful. Please do not email your assignments to me.

**Course Grading:**

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Short Papers	20	20
Midterm Book Review	25	25
Final Project	30	30
Communication Self-Reflection/Journal	10	10
Class Participation and Professionalism	15	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Course Grading Policy:**

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A/A- Outstanding, thoughtful and careful work
- B+/B Above average work, good insight, could benefit from more attention to detail
- B-/C+ Needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through
- C and below Incomplete, bare minimum and/or showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

- |    |          |    |         |
|----|----------|----|---------|
| A  | = 100-93 | C  | = 76-73 |
| A- | = 92-90  | C- | = 72-70 |
| B+ | = 89-87  | D+ | = 69-67 |
| B  | = 86-83  | D  | = 66-63 |
| B- | = 82-80  | D- | = 62-60 |
| C+ | = 79-77  | F  | = 59-0  |

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Class Readings Due (see Reading List for full citation)</b>	<b>Deliverable/Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 1 Aug 26</b>	Introduction to Mindfulness	“Breathing happiness” (Seppala, TED talk)  How mindful are you? Take the mindfulness quiz.  “Mindfulness over matter” (Langer, Poptech talk)	
<b>Week 2 Sep 2</b>	Awareness & Presence	“Say what you mean” (text) Chapters 1-3  “Five steps for being present”  “How to practice the art of being present”  “Being fully present”	

		“Five ways to listen better” (Treasure, TED talk)	
<b>Week 3 Sep 9</b>	Communication Intentions	“Say what you mean” (text) Chapters 4-6	<b>Paper 1 “Unplugging” is due on Sep 9-noon</b>
<b>Week 4 Sep 16</b>	Emotional Agility and Intelligence	“Say what you mean” (text) Chapters 7-9  “Emotional Intelligence scale” ( <i>Psychology Today</i> , take scale and bring score to class)	
<b>Week 5 Sep 23</b>	Empathy and Compassion	“The kernel of human (rodent) kindness” (Garrett, <u>NY Times</u> )  “Compassion and the true meaning of empathy” (Halifax, TED talk)	
<b>Week 6 Sep 30</b>	Communication rules	“Say what you mean” (text) Chapter 10-12  “Communication, Rules and Norms” (Stafford, <u>Encyclopedia of Human Relationships</u> )	<b>Midterm Book Choice due on Oct. 2</b>
<b>Week 7 Oct. 7</b>	Nonverbal communication and paralanguage	“Nonverbal communication” (Wikipedia)  Torres Patel, D. “Paralinguistic communication leads to more perceptive conversation.”  “Retrieval processes in transactive memory systems” (Hollingshead, <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> )	<b>Paper 2: “Observing communication rules in action” is due Oct 7-noon</b>

		“Your body language shapes who you are” (Cuddy, TED talk)	
<b>Week 8 Oct 14</b>	Midterms		<b>Midterm book review video due: Oct 16</b>
<b>Week 9 Oct 21</b>	Persuasion and Influence	“Harnessing the power of persuasion” (Cialdini, <i>Harvard Business Review</i> )	
<b>Week 10 Oct 28</b>	Conflict and Personal Safety	“ConCom” (Text) Section 1	<b>Final Project Topic Due before class on Oct 30</b>
<b>Week 11 Nov 4</b>	Dealing with difficult people and difficult situations	“ConCom” (Text) Sections 2 & 3  “...before you stare.” (Pogue, <i>NY Times</i> )  “What to say/not say to someone who is grieving” (Pogue, <i>NY Times</i> )  “How to deal with a jerk without being a jerk” (Grant, <i>NY Times</i> )	
<b>Week 12 Nov 11</b>	Online Civility and Incivility	“Testing the effects of incivility.” (Popan et al., <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> )	
<b>Week 13 Nov 18</b>	Reversing Hate	“The white flight of Derek Black...” (Saslow, <i>Washington Post</i> )  “Empathy is not an endorsement.” (Marron, TED talk)  “Why it’s worth listening to people we disagree with.” (Wood, TED talk)	

		“Color blind or color brave” (Hobson, TED talk)	
<b>Week 14</b> <b>Nov 25</b>	Public Shaming and Online Mobs	<p>“Public Shaming” (<i>Last week tonight with John Oliver</i>)</p> <p>“What happens when online shaming spirals out of control” (Ronson, TED talk)</p> <p>“The impact public shaming in digital world” (<i>Psychology Today</i>)</p> <p>“Some online mobs are vicious; others are perfectly rational” (Hess, <i>NY Times</i>)</p> <p>“I’m a black feminist and call-out culture is toxic” (Ross, <i>NY Times</i>.)</p> <p>“The power of vulnerability” (Brown, TED Talk)</p>	<b>Paper 3: “Leaving the Echo Chapter” due on Nov 25 by 12-noon.</b>
<b>Week 15</b> <b>Dec 2</b>	Course wrap-up and Final Presentations		<p>Final Presentations, Scripts and Bibliography Due on Dec 4</p> <p>Mindful Communication Assessment Due on Dec 6</p>

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems:**

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

## Support Systems:

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

[engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*  
[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*  
[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

### **Comm 400 Reading List with Citations and Links**

#### Week 1: Introduction to Mindfulness

Seppala, E. (2016). "Breathing happiness" TED talk: Sacramento (Apr).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uvli7NBUfY4>

Mindfulness Quiz:

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take\\_quiz/mindfulness](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/mindfulness)

\*Take quiz. Reflect on the questions and your score.

Langer, E. (2013) Mindfulness over matter. Poptech talk.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XQUJR4uIGM>

#### Week 2: Awareness & Presence

Chapters 1-3 in Sofer, O. J. (2018). Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication. Shambala: Boulder.

Formica, M. (2011). Five steps for being present. *Psychology Today* blog. (June 14).  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/enlightened-living/201106/5-steps-being-present>

Gimian, J. (2016). How to practice the art of being present. Mindful.org. (Nov 11).  
<https://www.mindful.org/practice-art-being-present/>

Being fully present. Resiliencybuilder.com  
<http://www.resiliencybuilder.com/admin/factsheets/11.pdf>

Treasure, J. (2011). "Five ways to listen better." TED talk. (July)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/julian\\_treasure\\_5\\_ways\\_to\\_listen\\_better](https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better)

### Week 3: Communication Intentions

Chapters 4-6 in Sofer, O. J. (2018). Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication. Shambala: Boulder.

### Week 4: Emotional Agility and Intelligence

Chapters 7-9 in Sofer, O. J. (2018). Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication. Shambala: Boulder.

Emotional Intelligence scale, *Psychology Today*. (Take the free version and save your report, bring to class.) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/tests/personality/emotional-intelligence-test>

### Week 5: Empathy and Compassion

Garrett, H. J. (2018). The kernel of human (rodent) kindness. *New York Times*. (Dec 28). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/28/opinion/empathy-research-morality-rats.html>

Halifax, J. (2010). Compassion and the true meaning of empathy TED talk. (Dec) [https://www.ted.com/talks/joan\\_halifax?](https://www.ted.com/talks/joan_halifax?)

### Week 6: Communication Rules

Chapters 10-12 in Sofer, O. J. (2018). Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication. Shambala: Boulder.

Stafford, L. (2009). Communication, Rules and Norms. In H. Reis & S. Sprecher, Encyclopedia of Human Relationships. Sage.

### Week 7: Nonverbal Communication and Paralanguage

Nonverbal communication, Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal\\_communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal_communication)

Torres Patel, D. Paralinguistic communication leads to more perception.

Hollingshead, A. B. (1998). Retrieval processes in transactive memory systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 659-671.

Cuddy, A. (2012). Your body language shapes who you are, TED talk. (June). [https://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_shapes\\_who\\_you\\_are?](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?)

### Week 9: Persuasion & Influence

Cialdini, R. (2001). Harnessing the Science of Persuasion. *Harvard Business Review* (September-October): 22-35.

### Week 10: Conflict and Personal Safety

Section 1 in Miller, R. (2014). ConCom: Conflict Communication A New Paradigm in Conscious Communication. Amazon.

### Week 11: Dealing with difficult situations and difficult people

Sections 2 & 3 in Miller, R. (2014). ConCom: Conflict Communication A New Paradigm in Conscious Communication. Amazon.

Pogue, D. (2019). What different looking people would like you to know before you stare. *New York Times*. (Aug 13). <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/smarter-living/what-different-looking-people-would-like-you-to-know-before-you-stare.html?>

Pogue, D. (2019). What to say and not say to someone who is grieving. *New York Times*. (Feb 14). <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/smarter-living/what-to-say-and-what-not-to-say-to-someone-whos-grieving.html?>

Grant, A. (2019). How to deal with a jerk without being a jerk. *New York Times*. (Apr 5).

### Week 12: Online civility and incivility

Popan, J. R., Acosta, J, Coursey, L., & Kenworthy, J. (2019) Testing the effects of incivility during internet political discussion on perceptions of rational argument and evaluations of a political outgroup. Computers in Human Behavior, *96*, 123-132.

### Week 13: Changing hate

Saslow, (2016). The white flight of Derek Black..." *Washington Post*.

Maron, D. (2018). Empathy is not an endorsement. TED talk (Apr). ([https://www.ted.com/talks/dylan\\_marron\\_empathy\\_is\\_not\\_endorsement?](https://www.ted.com/talks/dylan_marron_empathy_is_not_endorsement?))

Z. Wood. (2018). Why it's worth listening to people we disagree with. TED talk. (Apr) [https://www.ted.com/talks/zachary\\_r\\_wood\\_why\\_it\\_s\\_worth\\_listening\\_to\\_people\\_we\\_disagree\\_with](https://www.ted.com/talks/zachary_r_wood_why_it_s_worth_listening_to_people_we_disagree_with)

Hobson, M. (2014). Color blind or color brave. TED talk. (June)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/mellody\\_hobson\\_color\\_blind\\_or\\_color\\_brave?](https://www.ted.com/talks/mellody_hobson_color_blind_or_color_brave?)

#### Week 14: Public Shaming and Online Mobs

Public shaming: Last week tonight with John Oliver  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq7Eh6JTKIg>

Scheff (2018). The impact of public shaming in the digital world *Psychology Today* blog. (July).  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shame-nation/201807/the-impact-public-shaming-in-digital-world>

Hess (2018). Some online mobs are vicious. Others are perfectly rational. *New York Times* (Aug 7.) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/07/magazine/some-online-mobs-are-vicious-others-are-perfectly-rational.html>

Ronson, J. (2015). What happens when online shaming spirals out of control. TED talk. (June)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/jon\\_ronson\\_what\\_happens\\_when\\_online\\_shaming\\_spirals\\_out\\_of\\_control](https://www.ted.com/talks/jon_ronson_what_happens_when_online_shaming_spirals_out_of_control)

Ross, L. (2019). I'm a black feminist. I think call-out culture is toxic. *New York Times* (Aug 17)  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/17/opinion/sunday/cancel-culture-call-out.html?>

Brown, B. (2010). The power of vulnerability. TED talk. (June).  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)