

## CMGT 599: Mindful Communication and the Workplace (4 units)

Fall 2021

Wednesday evenings: 6:30-9:20p (online)

Instructor: Professor Andrea Hollingshead  
Contact Info: [aholling@usc.edu](mailto: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 principles 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.

We will explore a range of research topics that relate to mindful communication including mindful breathing and meditation, attention, presence, deep listening, perspective taking, empathy, compassion and self-compassion, kindness, gratitude, emotional intelligence, psychological safety, creativity, conflict resolution, workplace relationships, diversity and cultural differences, remote collaborations, team wellbeing, mindful leadership, work-life balance and many others.

The course is highly interactive and experiential. It is based on the "flipped classroom" model, which means course content is delivered before class via weekly modules on Blackboard. Weekly modules contain readings from academic journals and news media, TED talks and short videos, and short written assignments. The weekly modules prepare students for in-class discussions and activities.

This 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:

- Theory and research-based knowledge on the benefits of mindfulness in the workplace
- Concepts and a language for understanding mindful (and mindless) communication
- Analytical tools to accurately assess and respond to workplace situations
- Insight into their communication practices in the workplace and in life
- Skills to recognize and navigate through conflict and other difficult workplace and communication situations
- A safe and supportive class environment for learning and experimentation

## **Class Materials:**

All course materials, which include readings, TED talk videos and other learning materials are provided in the Weekly Modules (see below). There is no required textbook.

Live class sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard. Please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with appropriate disciplinary action.

## **Assignments:**

I will provide specific assignment guidelines in class later in the semester.

***Weekly Module Completion.*** The course is organized around weekly topics. Each topic has a learning module on Blackboard that is due by Wednesday at 5 pm with the exception of Module 1. Each module will consist of one or two academic research articles; TED talks and other videos; news and other popular press articles; scales or surveys; and short assignments where you will apply the module content. Each module should be informative, thought provoking and entertaining. Plan on 4 hours to complete each module. This component is worth 30% of your course grade.

***Midterm Book Review Video.*** Instead of a midterm exam, you will read, describe, and critique a book of your choice that relates to any course-related topic or mindful communication (broadly defined) in an 8 min video. Midterm videos will be shown in class during the week of. Creativity is highly encouraged. This component is worth 20% of your course grade.

***Final Class Research Project Video.*** You will produce an 8 min video on a research topic that relates to mindful communication. The videos will be shown on the last day of class. The topic should be one that interests you, has relevant academic research and goes into some depth on the topic. Creativity is highly encouraged. This component is worth 25% of your course grade.

***Final Self-Reflection Paper (in place of Final Exam).*** One course goal is for students to gain insight into their own communication patterns and to become more mindful communicators. Instead of a final exam, you will write a self-reflection paper on your thoughts and discoveries about mindful communication over the semester. Reflecting on the small assignments in the modules and in-class free writing exercises will be helpful for this assignment. It will be due on the day of our scheduled final exam. This component is worth 10% of your course grade.

***Class Participation.*** I expect everyone in CMGT 599 to treat one another with respect and kindness, and to do their part in creating a safe, positive and comfortable space for sharing knowledge and ideas. Class participation is an important component of this class. Contributions to large group discussions, polls, chats and breakout groups all count toward class participation.

Most class activities will involve the completion of a work product such as a brief written response or a verbal presentation, which counts toward class participation. This component is worth 15% of your course grade.

**Attendance.** While class attendance is expected, I understand that personal circumstances can arise. If you know you will miss class, please let me know in advance. Most classes will be recorded so you can review the recording to see what you missed. It is your responsibility to keep up with modules and other assignments if you miss class.

**Assignment Submission Policy:**

All assignments are due on the date and time specified and must be submitted via Blackboard to receive full credit. Allow plenty of time to upload assignments by the deadline. Please do not email your assignments to me. You should receive a confirmation from Blackboard if the assignment was successfully submitted. Late assignments will receive a penalty.

**Course Grading:**

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weekly Modules	30	30
Midterm Book Review	20	20
Final Class Research Project	25	25
Final Self-Reflection Paper	10	10
Class Participation	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 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
- A- = 92-90
- B+ = 89-87
- C = 76-73
- C- = 72-70
- D+ = 69-67

B = 86-83  
 B- = 82-80  
 C+ = 79-77

D = 66-63  
 D- = 62-60  
 F = 59-0

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

**Important note to students:** Be advised that the topics/daily activities may change based on the progress of the class, guest speaker availability, and unforeseen consequences. Assignment due dates will not change.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Aug 25	Introduction to Course and Mindfulness	Module 1: Mindfulness and Mindlessness	<b>Module 1 due: Fri., 8/27 by 5 pm</b>
Week 2 Sep 1	Awareness, Presence and Listening	Module 2: Presence, Attention, and Mindful Listening	<b>Module 2 due: Wed, Sep 1 by 5 pm</b>
Week 3 Sep 8	Empathy, Compassion and Self-Compassion	Module 3: Compassion for Yourself and for Colleagues	<b>Module 3 due: Wed, Sep 8 by 5 pm</b>
Week 4 Sep 15	Perspective Taking and Emotional Intelligence	Module 4: Perceiving and Expressing Emotions Mindfully at Work	<b>Module 4 due: Wed, Sep 15 by 5 pm</b>
Week 5 Sep 22	Kindness, Gratitude and Forgiveness in the Workplace	Module 5: Kindness, Gratitude and Forgiveness in the Workplace	<b>Module 5 due: Wed, Sep 22 by 5 pm</b> <b>Midterm Book Topic due: Wed, Sep 22 by 5 pm</b>
Week 6 Sep 29	Communication Goals, Intentions and Norms	Module 6: Communication Intentions and Creating Safe Spaces at Work	<b>Module 6 due: Wed, Sep 29 by 5 pm</b>
Week 7 Oct 6	E-Communications and Social Media at work	Module 7: Mindful and Harmful Social Media Use	<b>Module 7 due: Wed, Oct 6 by 5 pm</b>
Week 8 Oct 13	Midterm Book Review Video Viewing & Discussion	No Module	<b>Midterm Book Review Video links are due on Oct 13 by 2 pm on Blackboard.</b>

Week 9 Oct 20	Creativity	Module 8: Mindfulness and Creativity at Work	<b>Module 8 due: Wed, Oct 20 by 5 pm</b>
Week 10 Oct 27	Work Relationships	Module 9: Communicating Mindfully in Work and Personal Relationships	<b>Module 9 due: Wed, Oct 20 by 5 pm</b>
Week 11 Nov 3	Culture and Diversity	Module 10: Embracing Differences at Work: Policies and Practices	<b>Module 10 due: Wed, Nov 3 by 5 pm</b> <b>Final Project Topic Due: Wed, Nov 3 by 5 pm</b>
Week 12 Nov 10	Delivering Negative Feedback and Difficult Conversations	Module 11: Having Difficult Conversations and Resolving Conflict at Work	<b>Module 11 due: Wed, Nov 10 by 5 pm</b>
Week 13 Nov 17	Mindful Leadership and Teams	Module 12: Mindful Leadership and Team Wellbeing	<b>Module 12 due: Wed, Nov 17 by 5 pm</b>
Nov 24 Thanksgiving Break	University Holiday NO CLASS	No Module	
Week 14 Dec 1	Final Research Project Videos and Course Recap	No Module	<b>Final Research Project Due Video links due on Blackboard by Wed, Dec 1 by 2 pm.</b>
STUDY DAYS			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD			<b>Final Self-Reflection Paper Due: Wed, Dec 8 by 5 pm</b>

## XII. Policies and Procedures

### Blackboard

I use Blackboard extensively. Check every day for updates and announcements.

## **Communication**

Use USC email for contacting me, and check your USC email every day for time-sensitive information.

## **Zoom Etiquette**

I expect everyone to have their video camera on and microphones muted during class. It is important for developing rapport and relationships that we see each other, just as in an in-person class. However, please let me know if you need to turn your video off due to limited Internet bandwidth, visual and audio distractions in your location, or other reason. It's not a problem. If you are not able to find a quiet, distraction free spot where you can use your microphone, use the chat window for questions and comments relevant to the class. A headset will improve audio quality.

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

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

### **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).

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

### **Accommodations:**

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure this letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am -5:00 pm. The office is in the Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776."

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity during COVID 19. See the university's site for the latest information: <https://coronavirus.usc.edu/>.

## **Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.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) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call* [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

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

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, 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 Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*  
[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Scholarships and Awards*

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

The Annenberg Student Emergency Fund is distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies affecting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses.

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.