



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

Spring 2022: Tues, Thurs 2:00-3:20p

Section: 20610R

Location: Most sessions will be online via Zoom.

(On-campus sessions will meet in ANN 406.

See “Class Modality” for details.)

Instructor: Prof. Andrea Hollingshead

Office Hour: Thurs 3:20-4:20pm (Zoom)

Contact Info: aholling@usc.edu

Course Description:

This course promotes student mental health and wellbeing through the study and practice of mindfulness and mindful communication. Mindfulness is being fully present, engaged, and aware of one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions without judgment or reactivity. Mindfulness reduces anxiety, increases focus, helps with emotion regulation, and improves wellbeing. Although mindfulness is generally thought of as an intrapersonal process, this course applies principles of mindfulness to the practice of communication. Mindful communication promotes common understanding, meaningful conversations, and positive relationships.

This course explores a range of research topics related to mindfulness and mindful communication. Specific topics include: breathing and meditation; deep listening; attention and presence; perspective taking; empathy and kindness; compassion and self-compassion; emotional intelligence; gratitude; (dis)honesty; trust, reputation and respect; psychological safety; relationships and difficult conversations; apologies and forgiveness; giving and receiving feedback; creativity and problem-solving; conflict escalation and resolution; diversity and inclusion; and mindful social media.

The course is highly interactive and experiential. It is a “flipped classroom,” which means course content is delivered before class via weekly modules on Blackboard. The weekly modules prepare students for in-class discussions and experiential activities. Modules contain readings from academic journals and news media, TED talks and short videos, and short written assignments. The modules are designed to be interesting, informative, and thought provoking.

Because class sessions are discussion-based and experiential, it is not possible to take this course asynchronously.

This course was 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
- 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 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 Modality:

Most class sessions will take place online via Zoom. Some class sessions involving experiential activities will take place on-campus and in-person. On those days, we will meet in ANN 406 first before going to another location. (Note: this is not a ‘hybrid’ class, and it is not possible to participate in on-campus experiential activities via Zoom.)

On-campus sessions are currently planned for 1/25, 2/15, 3/1, 3/3, 3/8, 3/10, 4/21, 4/26, and 4/28. Class modality on these dates is subject to change based on weather, guest speaker availability, and other unforeseen circumstances. All other class sessions will take place on Zoom.

Course Requirements and Policies:

Zoom: Students should enter our Zoom classroom through Blackboard. **I expect everyone to keep their video on during class and especially during breakout rooms.** This is especially important in a small and highly interactive class. Seeing one another creates a sense of presence and community. If you have a personal circumstance that makes keeping your video on difficult, no problem, just let me know.

Zoom sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard. Course content is my intellectual property and our class meetings are confidential. USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of class. 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/>).

Class Readings and Materials:

All course materials, which include readings and videos, will be available in the Weekly Modules on Blackboard with the exception of materials required for students’ midterm and final research project videos. Each module will be posted a week before it is due in class. There is no required textbook.

Assignments:

Below is a summary. I will provide specific guidelines later in the semester.

Weekly Module Completion. The course is divided into weekly modules. Each module contains learning materials and short assignments on a topic, and should take about 3 hours to complete. It will usually consist of one or two academic research articles, TED talks and other videos, news and other popular press articles, scales and surveys, and short essays where you will apply the knowledge gained from the module. In general, weekly modules are due by 12-noon on Tuesdays. See course schedule for specific due dates. This component is worth 25% of your course grade.

Midterm Book Review Video. Instead of a midterm exam, students will read, describe, and critique a book about mindful communication (broadly defined) in an 8 min video. We will watch the midterm videos in class during the week of Mar 1. Book topics are due on Feb 8 for my feedback and approval. Creativity is highly encouraged. This component is worth 25% of your course grade.

Final Class Research Project Video. Students will produce an 8 min video on an academic research topic related to mindful communication for their final projects. We will watch the videos in class during the last week of the semester: Apr 26 & 28. A short topic statement is due on Mar 29. The final research project video is due on Apr 26. Creativity is highly encouraged. This component is worth 25% of your course grade.

Final Self-Reflection Paper (in place of Final Exam). One key course goal is for students to gain insight into their own communication patterns and to become more mindful communicators. Instead of a final exam, students will write a self-reflection paper on their thoughts and discoveries about mindful communication over the semester. Reflecting on the small module assignments will be helpful for this assignment. It may also be helpful to keep a journal during the semester. I recommend scheduling a 20-min block on a specific day and time each week. In Week 1, reflect on your strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations as a communicator. After that, it is up to you. The final self-reflection paper will be open-ended and posted on May 4. It will be due on May 10 at 12-noon. This component is worth 10% of your course grade.

Class Participation

I expect everyone in Comm 400 to treat one another with respect and kindness, and to do their part in creating a safe, positive and comfortable space for discussing ideas. The main requirement for an “A” class participation is active engagement during class sessions. Active engagement includes having videos on; actively contributing to chat, class discussions and breakout rooms; and completing all polls and google forms from in-class activities. Although it is not possible to make up missed classes, one or two absences should not affect your overall class participation grade. Class Participation is worth 15% of your course grade.

Assignment Submission Policy:

All assignments are due on the date and time specified on Blackboard to receive full credit. Late assignments will receive a penalty. Allow plenty of time to upload assignments to Blackboard by the deadline. Students should receive confirmation from Blackboard if the submission was successful. Please do not email your assignments to me.

If you have a special circumstance, please let me know as soon as possible. We will figure out a solution.

Course Grade Breakdown:

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weekly Modules	25	25
Midterm Book Review	25	25
Final Class Research Project	25	25
Final Self-Reflection Paper	10	10
Class Participation	15	15
TOTAL	100	100%

Course Grading Standards:

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 receive a percentage score. The assignment percentage scores will be weighted, 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

Your percentage score must be over the threshold to receive that grade; there is no rounding up.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Dates: 1/11, 1/13	Introduction to Course and Mindfulness		
Week 2 Dates: 1/18, 1/20	Awareness, Presence and Perception	Module 1: Presence, Attention and Everyday Mindfulness	Module 1 due: Jan 18 by 12:00-noon PST
Week 3 Dates: 1/25, 1/27	Listening, Empathy and Compassion (On campus: 1/25)	Module 2: Empathy and (Self) Compassion	Module 2 due: Jan 25 by 12:00-noon PST
Week 4 Dates: 2/1, 2/3	Perspective Taking and Emotional Intelligence	Module 3: Perceiving Others' Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions	Module 3 due: Feb 1 by 12:00-noon PST
Week 5 Dates: 2/8, 2/10	Kindness, Gratitude and Forgiveness	Module 4: Vulnerability and Communication	Module 4 due: Feb 8 by 12:00-noon PST Midterm Book Topic due: Feb 8 by 12-noon (in Module 4).
Week 6 Dates: 2/15, 2/17	Communication Goals, Intentions and Norms (On campus, 2/15)	Module 5: Speaking up, Silence, and Safety	Module 5 due: Feb 15 by 12:00-noon pm PST
Week 7 Dates: 2/22, 2/24	Psychological Safety, Honesty and Trust	Module 6: Preparing your Midterm Book Review Video	Module 6 due: Feb 22 by 12:00-noon PST
Week 8 Dates: 3/1, 3/3	Midterm Book Review Video Viewing & Discussion (On campus, 3/1 & 3/3)	No Module	Midterm Book Review Video links are due on Mar 1 by 12-noon on Blackboard.

Week 9 Dates: 3/8, 3/10	Creativity (On campus, 3/8, 3/10)	Module 7: Mindfulness and Creativity	Module 7 due: 3/8 by 12:00- noon PST
Week 10 Dates: 3/15, 3/17	SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS	No Module	
Week 11 Dates: 3/22, 3/24	Relationships	Module 8: Communicating Mindfully in Relationships	Module 8 due: Mar 22 by 12-noon
Week 12 Dates: 3/29, 3/31	Conflict and Difficult Conversations	Module 9: Approaching Difficult Conversations	Module 9 due: Mar 29 by 12-noon Final Project Topic Due on Mar 29 by 12-noon (in Module 9)
Week 13 Dates: 4/5, 4/7	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Anti- Racism	Module 10: Embracing Differences	Module 10 due: Apr 5 by 12:00-noon PST
Week 14 Dates: 4/12, 4/14	Online (In)civility and Social Media	Module 11: Finding Academic Sources for Research Project Videos	Module 11 due: Apr 12 by 12-noon
Week 15 Dates: 4/19, 4/21	Course Review and Capstone (On-campus 4/21)	(Prepare Final Research Project Video)	
Week 16 Dates: 4/26, 4/28	Final Research Project Videos and Course Recap (On-campus 4/26, 4/28)	No Module	Final Research Project Video links are due on Apr 26 by 12-noon.
STUDY DAYS Dates: 4/30-5/3			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Dates: 5/4-5/11		Final Self-Reflection Paper Assignment will be posted on May 4 at 12-noon PST	Final Self-Reflection Paper is due: May 10 by 12-noon PST

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.

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. 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/>.

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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

In addition, all course work should be original, created by you, and not previously submitted for another course unless you have received my prior approval.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

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

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, 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

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

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

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

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, 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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

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

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.