

Physical Education & Mind Body Health (PEMBH) provides a variety of offerings in fitness and activities classes designed to promote health and general fitness based upon individual goals and needs.

Introduction to Mindfulness

PHED 119

2 units

Fall 2023 –

Location:

Wednesday 3:00 – 4:50pm DMC 203; Section 50035R
5:30 – 7:20pm; DMC 202; Section 50024R

Friday 10:00 – 11:50am DMC 208; Section 50037R

Blackboard (Bb): <https://blackboard.usc.edu>

Instructor: Christian Straka

Pronouns: He/Him [What's this](#)

Office: PED 107

Office Hours: Fridays 12:00 – 1:30pm by appointment

Contact Info: cstraka@usc.edu

IT HELP

Bb - USC Information Technology Services Help

Phone: 213.740.5555

Contact Info: <https://itservices.usc.edu/contact>

Hours: 24 hours a day, every day

Physical Education & Mind Body Health (PEMBH) Mission

Physical Education & Mind Body Health (PEMBH) provides a variety of opportunities for students to improve their general health and fitness through fitness related and recreational activities classes. Courses are designed to introduce students to various aspects of health and physical education principles. With this exposure, knowledge, and skill, students are better equipped to make choices regarding a healthy and active lifestyle. All classes stress the importance of exercise and leisure time activity to physical, mental, and social well-being.

Acknowledgement

Though our program here is secular, it is with an acknowledgement for the roots mindfulness has in Buddhist philosophy, which emerged in the context of an ancient India where Hinduism, Jainism, yoga, asceticism, and other traditions were practiced. Certain practices and ideas have evolved and been carried across time and geography and have been adapted here for a foundational, interdisciplinary study.

The PEMBH department acknowledges our presence on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Tongva people and their neighbors: (from North to South) the Chumash, Tataviam, Kitanemuk, Serrano, Cahuilla, Payomkawichum, Acjachemen, Ipai-Tipai, Kumeyaay, and Quechan peoples, whose ancestors ruled the region we now call Southern California for at least 9,000 years. Indigenous stewardship and rightful claims to these lands have never been voluntarily relinquished nor legally extinguished. We pay respects to the members and elders of these communities, past and present, who remain stewards, caretakers, and advocates of these lands, river systems, and the waters and islands of the Santa Barbara Channel. <https://dornsife.usc.edu/hist/land-acknowledgement/>

Course Description

This course is an introduction to mindfulness. Through it, students will learn the principles of practice, develop their own meditation practice, and apply principles to daily life. They will learn strategies to

skillfully work with thoughts, emotions, and sensations, while developing their capacity to enhance mind-body awareness of present-moment experience. They will study theory and research in the field of mindfulness and the emerging science that shows promising, beneficial effects for physical and mental health and well-being. This course is designed for beginners and is also suitable for those with experience who want to refine their practice. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, practice, and discussion.

Prerequisite: None

Co-Requisite: None

Recommended Preparation: None

Learning Objectives

1. Synthesize theory, practice, and research in mindfulness and apply understanding to individual practice.
2. Develop and sustain a personal meditation practice.
3. Investigate mind-body awareness and connection and apply principles to enhance capacity for presence, connection, openness, and curiosity in experiences.
4. Describe and apply mindfulness principles to skillfully cultivate focus and concentration, including as they relate to working with emotions, thoughts, and sensations.
5. Describe and apply mindfulness principles as they relate to self-regulation in navigating difficult emotions and thoughts, including stress and anxiety.
6. Identify and apply techniques to skillfully cultivate emotions of well-being, such as kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.
7. Apply mindful awareness in daily life, including as it relates to:
 - a. clarity in decision making and problem solving to skillfully respond, rather than react, to complex situations.
 - b. interpersonal relationships and relational mindfulness practices of active listening and mindful communication.
 - c. navigating change, time management, and exploring what it means to have a conscious and purposeful relationship with technology.

PEMBH Objectives

Students will understand the importance of sound health & fitness principles as they relate to better health & will be able to:

- Recognize the physical and mental benefits of increased physical activity.
- Examine the effect of nutrition, rest, and other lifestyle factors that contribute to better health.

Students will be exposed to a variety of activities providing them the opportunity to:

- Utilize physical activity as a tool to manage stress.
- Participate in a motivating and nurturing environment resulting in a greater sense of well-being and self-esteem.

Students will demonstrate proficiency through knowledge & acquired skills enabling them to:

- Develop an appreciation of physical activity as a lifetime pursuit and a means to better health.

Course Textbook

Mindfulness for Young Adults: Tools to Thrive in School and Life, by Linda Yaron Weston
Available in print and e-book:

- [USC Library Course Reserves](#) (login to USC Course Reserves ARES with USC Net ID)
- [Routledge](#): 20% off for USC students with code FLR40
- Also available on [Amazon](#) and at USC Bookstore.

Supplemental Readings – Available on Blackboard (Bb)

Communication

I encourage students to reach out by email and will try to respond as soon as possible, and within 48 hours.

Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection is an integral part of the learning and teaching process. As such, you will complete a series of reflections on your practice through the course. We will also complete mid- and end-of-course evaluations for the course so that it can best serve the needs of students. Please feel free to also communicate feedback to me through the semester in person or by email.

Grades

The impact of your practice will be felt in how much effort, time, and awareness you choose to invest in it. Grades are based on your willingness to show up for your personal and class practice and are based on your approach to the following criteria:

1. Presence: time and awareness to show up for your practice
2. Effort: diligence and precision with which you practice
3. Curiosity: growth through a nonjudgmental approach
4. Kindness: choosing gentleness and patience over harshness towards body, mind, and practice

All work is due on the assigned date and is to be typed and submitted to Blackboard. Format: submit as a Word or PDF document, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1” margins, MLA format. Due dates under course outline. In the event that a due date falls on a university holiday, students are able to submit the following school day.

- **60 Points:** Attend class and participate in sessions. 4 points for each week. It is the responsibility of each student to accurately sign in. Participation is an essential component of this course and serves to deepen student inquiry and reflection of the course material. Students need to be present in class to earn participation points. There will be an absence make-up opportunity in Module 5.
- **20 Points Each (100 points total): 5 Module Reflection Forms (for each of the 5 Modules). (Due Sunday midnight September 3, 17, October 1, 15, November 5).** They include:

- Daily personal meditation practice log. 5-10 minutes per day recommended time Modules 1, 2 (weeks 1-4); 10-15 minutes per day Modules 3, 4 (weeks 5-8); 15-20+ minutes/day Module 5 (weeks 9-15). Or, you may increase depth by a self-chosen amount of minutes each week. You are welcome to use an app, guided meditations, or break up the time through the day.
 - Rubric Criteria: 8-10 points for meditation practice (presence, effort); 2-2.5 points for each of the written responses (thorough, reflective).
 - Workbook prompts. Choose 2 questions from the module to answer.
 - Class reflection prompts. Submit a reflection from class each module. Can be typed or submitted as a picture included in your document.
 - Outside meditation class. Attend a meditation class outside ours. Include reflection in Module 4 (week 8) form.
- **40 Points. Mindfulness in Daily Life Group Strategy and Presentation. (Due Week of November 6 in class)**
 1. Choose an area/topic in mindfulness you're interested in exploring with a group in Week 4. Areas of daily life can include relationships and communication, mindful eating, self-care and self-compassion, mindful technology use, mindful learning, mindful decision making, mindful movement, social justice, or the environment.
 2. Choose a mindfulness strategy to apply to an area of daily life you'd like to try out regularly for 5 weeks (daily or minimum 3x week). While groups will choose a shared topic to explore as a community, they may all employ different strategies within it. You are welcome to explore apps that track progress or enhance your experience.
 3. Organize a group in-class 15-minute per group presentation on your mindfulness topic and strategy. Include relevant research behind it (from credible, evidence-based sources; MLA format), reflections on how your strategy went, recommendations, or next steps. Presentations should be cooperative with each group member speaking, and interactive in nature (the class participates in the particular technique), and be visually displayed (ie. PowerPoint, Prezy, etc.).

Rubric Criteria: 8 points for each of the following:

 - Content: clearly and concisely convey thoughtful ideas and examples
 - Application: Understanding and application of mindfulness principles
 - Voice: volume, clarity, emotion
 - Stance: body language, eye contact, presence
 - Style: effort, creativity, organization, applicability, interactivity, collaboration
 - **75 Points. Online Exam (Due Sunday, November 19 midnight).** Based on content from reading, class content, and discussions. Be sure to stay current on course reading and material, as not all content on exam will be discussed in class.
 - **25 Points. Meditation Final Reflection (Due last day of class midnight).** Rubric Criteria: 5 points for each: Thorough, reflective, creative, understands and applies principles of practice.

Grading Scale: There are 300 total points possible. The overall grading scale is as follows
A 282 / A- 270 / B+ 265 / B 260 / B- 255 / C+ 250 / C 245 / C- 240 / D 235

Course Outline

| Date | Topic |
|--|--|
| Week 1 Module 1: Principles <i>Week of 8/21</i> | What is mindfulness?; principles of practice Mindfulness and identity Begin daily meditation practice (5-10 minutes/day) Workbook: Module 1: 1.0, 1.1 |
| Week 2 <i>Week of 8/28</i> | Effort and concentration; anchor Emerging science of mindfulness Technique: STOP: Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed* Due Sunday, September 3: Module 1 Reflection Form (includes mindfulness article) Workbook: Module 1: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 |
| Week 3 Module 2: Body <i>Week of 9/4</i> <i>(Holiday Monday 9/4</i> <i>Labor Day)</i> | Mind-body awareness and connection Conscious breathing Technique: Body scan Share an article about mindfulness or meditation Workbook: Module 2: 2.0, 2.1 |
| Week 4 <i>Week of 9/11</i> | Standing meditation, walking, and mindful movement* Mindful eating Choose mindfulness in daily life groups Due Sunday, September 17: Module 2 Reflection Form (includes daily life area selection) Workbook: Module 2: 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 |
| Week 5 Module 3: Heart <i>Week of 9/18</i> | Working with emotions: noticing and processing Compassion, kindness Technique: RAIN: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nonidentify, Nurture Deepen daily meditation practice (10-15 minutes/day) Workbook: Module 3: 3.0, 3.1 |
| Week 6 <i>Week of 9/25</i> | Working with difficult emotions; mindfulness and mental health Forgiveness, equanimity; joy, gratitude* Due Sunday, October 1: Module 3 Reflection Form (includes midsemester evaluation) Workbook: Module 3: 3.2, 3.3 |
| Week 7 Module 4: Mind | Working with thoughts: observation and visualization techniques Uncertainty and anxiety |

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| <i>Week of 10/2</i> | Workbook: Module 4: 4.0, 4.1 |
| Week 8 <i>Week of 10/9</i> <i>(Holiday Fall Recess 10/12-13)</i> | Resilience and post-traumatic growth Identity and social consciousness* Due Sunday, October 15: Module 4 Reflection Form (includes outside meditation class) Workbook: Module 4: 4.2, 4.3 |
| Week 9 Module 5: Daily Life <i>Week of 10/16</i> | Mindful communication Relational mindfulness; active listening and speaking Deepen daily meditation practice 15-20+ minutes/day Workbook: Module 5: 5.0, 5.1 |
| Week 10 <i>Week of 10/23</i> | Mindfulness in decision-making*; consent Balancing time and priorities; technology Workbook: Module 5: 5.2 |
| Week 11 <i>Week of 10/30</i> | Coping with change, loss, and impermanence Mindfulness and success Due Sunday, November 5: Module 5 Reflection Form (includes book reflection and make-up) Workbook: Module: 5: 5.3, 5.4 |
| Week 12 <i>Week of 11/6</i> | Due Week of November 6-10: Presentations (in class) |
| Week 13 <i>Week of 11/13</i> | Debrief presentations and review modules Practice: open awareness* Due Sunday, November 19: Online Exam (Window Friday, November 17 noon–Sunday, November 19 midnight) |
| Week 14 <i>Week of 11/20</i> <i>(Holiday Thanksgiving 11/22-26)</i> | Practice: open awareness* |
| Week 15 <i>Week of 11/27</i> | Closing and next steps End-of-Semester Evaluation Due last day of class midnight: Final Reflection |

* indicates immersive meditation practice

COVID-19 (Class Guidelines)

USC (Covid-19) Resource Center <https://we-are.usc.edu/>

Academic Conduct & Support Systems

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Student & Disability Accommodations

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems

[Counseling and Mental Health](#)

(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)

988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#)

(213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#)

(213) 740-5086

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

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#)

(213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#)
(213) 740-0411

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

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
(213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#)
(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#)
(323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.