

Psychology of Emotions and Well-being

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Course Description:

This course aims to bring psychology out of textbooks and into lived experience. We are not interested in psychology for the sake of psychology, but because we want to live better, more conscious, and more skilful lives.

So, if you study psychology but struggle to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations, this course might be for you. And if you study something completely different but are curious about psychology — without wanting to sit through hours of lectures on abstract theories — this course might also be for you.

This highly experiential course is designed for anyone who wants to better understand everyday situations and learn how to navigate them with greater awareness and practical skill. We will pay particular attention to emotions — how to recognise them, work with them, and regulate them through experiential workshops and practical exercises.

The course is also strongly interdisciplinary. Drawing from psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and the arts, we will explore different ways of understanding ourselves and relating to the world around us. The aim is to help participants navigate everyday struggles and discomfort with greater self-awareness, resilience, and agency.

Course Prerequisites:

There are no formal prerequisites. However, students should be curious, eager to explore, and prepared to step outside their comfort zone, which may be challenged at times.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

- Enhanced ability to recognize and describe your experience and emotions
- Deeper understanding of the variety of methods and techniques used for emotional regulation
- Being more sensitive to surroundings and other people
- Increased understanding of how art can help with well-being
- Drop some myths about what sustain happiness and wellbeing
- Stronger orientation skills in new environment, enabling you to navigate novelty
- Increased cultural awareness

Course Requirements:

1. Individual and group presentation

Each student is required to present and lead a discussion on one of the course themes of their own choice relating to the topic of the course and the students' interests. Upon an agreement with the instructor, the student will present their topic to the class for about 20-minute long. It will be followed by a discussion lead by the presenting student.

2. Reflections for portfolio

A total of four reflection entries will be required from each student, each 500-words long. The paper should reflect on the course topics, readings, discussions, etc. pertaining to the content of the class and should examine a theme beyond the reading and/or class discussion. The choice of the readings or themes is up to each student, although the instructor is ready to consult the topics with students. Intellectual queries are welcome but a reflection based on one's own application of the knowledge gained on to one's personal experience will suffice.

3. Midterm discussion

The midterm exam will be conducted as a group discussion. Four discussion topics, covering the course material, will be announced at the beginning of the semester. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings for each topic and identify additional relevant sources to prepare for a critical discussion.

On the day of the exam, each group will be assigned one of the four topics. Students will discuss the topic in groups of four for approximately 15 minutes, examining it from different perspectives and demonstrating their understanding of the course material. While the discussion emphasizes critical thinking and the ability to engage with diverse viewpoints, adequate preparation through the assigned readings and independent research is essential for meaningful participation.

4. Dream diary

Students will regularly record their dreams in a dream diary, which will serve as the basis for in-class analysis. The final submission should include three dream entries, each accompanied by its respective analysis.

5. Final podcast

In the final reflection assignment, students are required to choose a topic relevant to the psychology of emotions and well-being and create a podcast about it. The podcast should be approximately five minutes long and present recent research on the selected topic, drawing on up to five scholarly sources. It should also include the student's personal reflection on the topic's relevance to their everyday life. The students are requested to submit video of podcast along with the script.

6. Participation

Class participation will consider the students' familiarity with the course readings and the willingness to either spur or join a class debate on a particular class topic.

Assessment and Final Grade:

- Individual and group presentation 20%
- Reflections for portfolio 10%
- Midterm discussion 20%
- Dream diary 10%
- Final podcast 20%
- Participation 20%

Grading Policy:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

Introduction to different theories of emotions

In this class, we will explore major theories of emotion, with a particular focus on the contemporary model proposed by Lisa Feldman Barrett. We will examine the predictive coding framework as a foundation for understanding the construction of emotions, providing the theoretical basis for subsequent workshop-based exploration and application throughout the course.

- Readings
 - Barrett, L. F., Adolphs, R., Marsella, S., Martinez, A. M., & Pollak, S. D. (2019). Emotional expressions reconsidered: Challenges to inferring emotion from human facial movements. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 20(1), 1-68.

Week 3

Embodiment and emotions

In this class, we will explore the topic of embodiment and its relevance for emotions and emotion regulation. We will also begin practicing basic techniques of emotional regulation.

- Readings
 - Fuchs, T. (2020). The circularity of the embodied mind. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1707.
 - Fuchs, T. (2017). Intercorporeality and interaffectivity. *Intercorporeality: Emerging socialities in interaction*, 7853, 3-23.

Week 4

Mindfulness

Since the body is continuously connected to and influenced by its environment, we will engage in two mindfulness sessions. The first will focus on the body as a contained experience. The second will attend to the body in relation to architecture and its surrounding environment. Through these practices, we will develop awareness of our bodily reactions to different situational contexts.

- Readings

- Porter, N., Bramham, J., & Thomas, M. (2017). Mindfulness and design: creating spaces for well being.
- Thampanichwat, C., Wongvorachan, T., Bunyarittikit, S., Chunhajinda, P., Phaibulputhipong, P., & Wongmahasiri, R. (2024). The architectural design strategies that promote attention to foster mindfulness: A systematic review, content analysis and meta-analysis. *Buildings*, 14(8), 2508.
- Wallace, B. A., & Shapiro, S. L. (2006). Mental balance and well-being: building bridges between Buddhism and Western psychology. *American psychologist*, 61(7), 690.

Week 5

Playful body and wellbeing

This week will be dedicated to play, exploring how engaging with theatre and dance can sometimes challenge our comfort zone, but, when we let go, may immediately foster joy and happiness. Through a series of playful exercises, we will explore our capacity to engage with novelty and release self-judgment.

- Readings

- Cassidy, S., Turnbull, S., & Gumley, A. (2014). Exploring core processes facilitating therapeutic change in Dramatherapy: A grounded theory analysis of published case studies. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 41(4), 353-365.
- Koch, S. C., Riege, R. F., Tisborn, K., Biondo, J., Martin, L., & Beelmann, A. (2019). Effects of dance movement therapy and dance on health-related psychological outcomes. A meta-analysis update. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 1806.

Week 6

Emotional regulation techniques II.

We will further explore and experiment with different emotional regulation techniques, as well as examine how yoga influences embodiment and our capacity to stay with experience.

- Readings
 - Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. *Psychological inquiry*, 26(1), 1-26.

Week 7

Midterm discussion

In the midterm discussion, we will explore the techniques and methods introduced throughout the course and analyze why they may or may not work for specific individuals and groups, as well as the conditions that might facilitate or hinder their effectiveness. Rather than focusing on whether these techniques work in general, we will examine the underlying mechanisms of emotion regulation strategies.

Week 8

Freud and dreams

In this week, we will begin exploring basic theories of dream interpretation and work with different approaches to understanding dreams.

- Readings
 - Vinocur Fischbein, S., & Miramón, B. (2015). Theoretical trajectories: Dreams and dreaming from Freud to Bion. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 96(4), 967-992.

Week 9

Jung and active imagination

We will explore Carl Jung's theory of dreams and active imagination, and practice how to engage with and let go into inner images.

- **Readings**

- Colman, W. (2011). Synchronicity and the meaning-making psyche. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 56(4), 471-491.

Week 10

Movie and wellbeing

We will go to the cinema to watch a Czech film on the topic of emotional health and illness. Subsequently, we will engage in an analytical workshop in which we will explore our diverse interpretations of the film and what they may reveal about ourselves and our inner landscapes.

- **Readings**

- Isik, A. I., & Vessel, E. A. (2021). From visual perception to aesthetic appeal: Brain responses to aesthetically appealing natural landscape movies. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 15, 676032.

Week 11

Creativity and emotions

In these sessions, we will explore how music influences mental well-being, as well as how neuroaesthetics is emerging as an important field of study.

- **Readings**

- Daykin, N., Mansfield, L., Meads, C., Julier, G., Tomlinson, A., Payne, A., ... & Victor, C. (2018). What works for wellbeing? A systematic review of wellbeing outcomes for music and singing in adults. *Perspectives in public health*, 138(1), 39-46.

Week 12

Art and emotional regulation

Through interactive workshops, we will explore what happens when we are exposed to, or actively create, art.

- **Readings**

- Sundquist, D., & Lubart, T. (2022). Being intelligent with emotions to benefit creativity: Emotion across the seven Cs of creativity. *Journal of Intelligence*, 10(4), 106.

Week 13

Final discussion and summary of the course

Readings:

Barrett, L. F., Adolphs, R., Marsella, S., Martinez, A. M., & Pollak, S. D. (2019). Emotional expressions reconsidered: Challenges to inferring emotion from human facial movements. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 20(1), 1-68.

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Fuchs, T. (2020). The circularity of the embodied mind. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1707.

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Koch, S. C., Riege, R. F., Tisborn, K., Biondo, J., Martin, L., & Beelmann, A. (2019). Effects of dance movement therapy and dance on health-related psychological outcomes. A meta-analysis update. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 1806.

Porter, N., Bramham, J., & Thomas, M. (2017). Mindfulness and design: creating spaces for well being.

Sundquist, D., & Lubart, T. (2022). Being intelligent with emotions to benefit creativity: Emotion across the seven Cs of creativity. *Journal of Intelligence*, 10(4), 106.

Thampanichwat, C., Wongvorachan, T., Bunyarittikit, S., Chunhajinda, P., Phaibulphuttipong, P., & Wongmahasiri, R. (2024). The architectural design strategies that promote attention to foster mindfulness: A systematic review, content analysis and meta-analysis. *Buildings*, 14(8), 2508.

Vinocur Fischbein, S., & Miramón, B. (2015). Theoretical trajectories: Dreams and dreaming from Freud to Bion. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 96(4), 967-992.

Wallace, B. A., & Shapiro, S. L. (2006). Mental balance and well-being: building bridges between Buddhism and Western psychology. *American psychologist*, 61(7), 690.