



Compassion Syllabus

Advanced Topics: Compassion Science 4th Year Honours Seminar, PSYC4341

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This is a 4th year honours level seminar studying the Science of Compassion. Compassion is a growing area of interest within the sciences, particularly psychology, and it has been studied from perspectives such as developmental, social, clinical psychology, as well as in evolutionary science and neuroscience. Often compassion is confused with similar constructs such as sympathy, empathy, altruism, or kindness. This course will provide a clearer focus on what defines compassion and how it might differ to other near concepts. It will also examine how compassion can help psychological well-being.

Keywords: Compassion, Science of Compassion

Advanced Topics: Compassion Science
4th Year Honours Seminar, PSYC4341
Semester 2, 2019, Thursday 11:00am-1:00pm

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Required Text: None.

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Course Introduction:

This is a 4th year honours level seminar studying the Science of Compassion. Compassion is a growing area of interest within the sciences, particularly psychology, and it has been studied from perspectives such as developmental, social, clinical psychology, as well as in evolutionary science and neuroscience. Often compassion is confused with similar constructs such as sympathy, empathy, altruism, or kindness. This course will provide a clearer focus on what defines compassion and how it might differ to other near concepts. It will also examine how compassion can help psychological well-being.

At differing times across the seminar Dr Stan Steindl and I might record a podcast of the topic discussed in the seminar. We will do the live recording in class, and we invite you to be part of the discussion. Last year we recorded 4 live podcasts that were reflections on the topics that were presented that week in the Seminar. As a participating student you are welcome to just listen to the conversation as it is recorded, or if you feel slightly more courageous or passionate, ask a question or make a comment during the discussion. See the podcast here: <https://soundcloud.com/jamesn-kirby> and the first recording we did with the seminar course here: <https://soundcloud.com/jamesn-kirby/science-of-compassion-class>

Course Aims:

The course aims to expose students to 1) a broad range of research findings regarding the phenomena of compassion, and 2) knowledge of the application of the research to clinical practice. Students will be introduced to topics that are relevant to understanding compassion, and how this can be studied in clinical contexts, but also be applied to better understanding social connectedness and human relating.

Learning Objectives:

After successfully completing the course you should be able to:

1. Define the key features of compassion;
2. Discuss the basic theories relating to compassion science;
3. Discuss the empirical content and methodology of the most current psychosocial research on compassion science;
4. Have some familiarity with how compassion can be applied to assisting with general mental health and wellbeing.

Learning Resources:

Peer reviewed scientific journal articles will be required to be read in preparation for each topic covered in seminar (see below, *Required Reading*). Additional learning resources, such as peer reviewed scientific journal articles, will be recommended by your peers, corresponding to each topic covered in seminar.

Required Reading:

Introduction to Compassion Science: Seminar 1

- Gilbert, P. (2014). The origins and nature of compassion focused therapy. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 53*, 6-41. doi: 10.1111/bjc.12043
- Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*, 351-374. doi: 10.1037/a001880

Cultivating Compassion: Seminar 2

- Kirby, J.N. (2016). Compassion interventions: The programs, the evidence, and implications for research and practice. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*. doi: 10.1111/papt.12104.
- Wilson, A. C., Mackintosh, K., Power, K., & Chan, S. W. Y. (2018). Effectiveness of self-compassion related therapies: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-1037-6>.

Measuring Compassion & Compassion in Children: Seminar 3

- Strauss, C., Taylor, B. L., Gu, J., Kuyken, W., Baer, R., Jones, F., & Cavanagh, K. (2016). What is compassion and how can we measure it? A review of definitions and measures. *Clinical Psychology Review, 47*, 15–27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.05.004>
- Ministero, L. M., Poulin, M. J., Buffone, A. E., & DeLury, S. (2017). Empathic Concern and the Desire to Help as Separable Components of Compassionate Responding. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*
- Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2006). Altruistic helping in human infants and young chimpanzees. *Science, 311*, 1301. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1121448>

Interventions Cultivating Compassion & ‘Flows’ of Compassion: Seminar 4

- Kirby, J. N., Tellegen, C. L., & Steindl, S. R. (2017). A meta-analysis of compassion-based interventions: Current state of knowledge and future directions. *Behavior Therapy, 48*, 778-792. doi:10.1016/j.beth.2017.06.003
- Lopez, A., Sanderman R., Ranchor, A.V., & Schroevers, M.J. (2018). Compassion for Others and Self-Compassion: Levels, Correlates, and Relationship with Psychological Well-being. *Mindfulness, 9*, 325-331. DOI 10.1007/s12671-017-0777-z

Compassion and how it relates to Ethics, What is Sympathy & Empathy: Seminar 5

- Kirby, J.N., Stiendl, S.R., & Doty, J. (2017). Compassion as the highest ethic. In L.M. Monteiro et al. (eds.), *Practitioner’s Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions, Mindfulness in Behavioral Health* (pp.253-277). doi 10.1007/978-3-319-64924-5_10
- Wispe, L. (1986). The distinction between sympathy and empathy: To call forth a concept, a word is needed. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 314-321.
- Batson, C.D. et al. (1995). Immorality from empathy-induced altruism: When compassion and justice conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*
- Bloom, P. & Zaki, J. (2016). Does Empathy Guide or Hinder Moral Action? *New York Times*.

Fears of Compassion & Mindfulness: Seminar 6

- Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., Matos, M., & Rivis, A. (2010). Fears of compassion: Development of three self-report measures. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, *84*, 239-255. doi: 10.1348/147608310X526511.
- Kirby, J.N., Day, J., & Sagar, V. (2019). The 'Flow' of compassion: A meta-analysis of the fears of compassion scales and psychological functioning (Online advanced pub.). *Clinical Psychological Review*, *70*, 26-39. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2019.03.001
- Jazaieri, H., McGonigal, K., Jinpa, T., Doty, J.R., Gross, J.J., & Goldin, P.R. (2014). A randomized controlled trial of compassion cultivation training: Effects on mindfulness, affect, and emotion regulation. *Motivation & Emotion*, *38*, 23-35. doi: 10.1007/s11031-013-9368-z

Does Compassion differ across Gender & Culture, and the Collapse of Compassion: Seminar 7

- Yarnell, L.M., Stafford, R.E., Neff, K.D., Reilly, E.D., Knox, M., & Mullarkey, M. (2015) Meta-Analysis of Gender Differences in Self-Compassion. *Self and Identity*, *14*, 499-520, doi: 10.1080/15298868.2015.1029966
- Chaio, J.Y. (2017). Cultural Neuroscience of Compassion and Empathy. In E. Seppala et al (Eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190464684.013.12
- Cameron, D., & Payne, K. (2011). Escaping Affect: How Motivated Emotion Regulation Creates Insensitivity to Mass Suffering. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *100*, 1-15. doi: 10.1037/a0021643

Compassion Fatigue, and the links between Compassion and Forgiveness: Seminar 8

- Klimecki, O., & Singer, T. (2011). Empathic distress fatigue rather than compassion fatigue? Integrating findings from empathy research in psychology and social neuroscience. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199738571.003.0253
- Loewenstein, G., & Small, D.A. (2007). The Scarecrow and the Tin Man: The Vicissitudes of Human Sympathy and Caring. *Review of General Psychology*, *11*, 112-126. DOI: 10.1037/1089-2680.11.2.112
- Gilbert, P., & Woodyatt, L. (2017). An Evolutionary Approach to Shame-Based Self-Criticism, Self-Forgiveness, and Compassion. L. Woodyatt et al. (eds.), *Handbook of the Psychology of Self-Forgiveness*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-60573-9_3

How does Compassion differ to Kindness & Can compassion help with Depression: Seminar 9

- Gilbert, P., Basran, J., MacArthur, M., Kirby, J.N. (2019). Differences in the semantics of prosocial words: An exploration of compassion and kindness. *Mindfulness*.
- Pauley, G., & McPherson, S. (2010). The experience and meaning of compassion and self-compassion for individuals with depression or anxiety. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, *83*, 129-143

Compassion and its links to Shame & Compassion as we Age: Seminar 10

- Matos, M., Duarte, J., & Pinto-Gouveia, J. (2017). The Origins of Fears of Compassion: Shame and Lack of Safeness Memories, Fears of Compassion and Psychopathology. *The Journal of Psychology*, *151*, 804-819, DOI: 10.1080/00223980.2017.1393380
- Marshall, S. L., Parker, P. D., Ciarrochi, J., Sahdra, B., Jackson, C. J., & Heaven, P. C. L. (2015). Self-compassion protects against the negative effects of low self-esteem: A longitudinal

study in a large adolescent sample. *Journal of Personality and Individual Differences*, 74, 116–121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.09.013>

Compassion and links to Parenting, & Compassion and Brain Science: Seminar 11

- Kirby, J. N. (2016). The role of mindfulness and compassion in enhancing nurturing family environments. *Clinical Psychology: Science & Practice*, 23, 142–157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cpsp.12149>
- Klimecki, O. M., Leiberg, S., Ricard, M., & Singer, T. (2014). Differential pattern of functional brain plasticity after compassion and empathy training. *Social Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience*, 7, 873–879. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nst060>

Assessment:

Participation (20%) – Learning Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4

Task Description: Participation is critical for an interesting discussion and it's much more enjoyable and interesting to present on your research topics to an audience that's engaged. Students should be aware that I may ask you questions and for your opinions about certain topics being discussed in the seminars. I may also ask you to expand on your ideas when you share them. As a student, I encourage you to ask me questions and to expand on my ideas as well. This helps broaden our views and different understandings. Although when sharing ideas, it is best to share ideas informed by the readings, so reflections that have been informed by the set readings is best.

Criteria & Marking: If you show up on time and attend each of the presentations (in their entirety), actively contribute to the discussions, ask the speaker constructive and considered questions, demonstrate in your comments and questions that you clearly understand the topics that we've discussed, then you'll be awarded full marks for participation.

Session Chair Role (10%) – Learning Objective 4

Task Description: You will professionally chair a presentation given by one of your peers. The purpose of this assessment is to give you some experience at being an effective chair for a speaker or for a conference session in your future professional life. For this task, you will be the chair of one presentation during the semester. You will not know in advance which presentation you will chair, but you will know which week you are acting as a chair.

Criteria & Marking: The requirements of a chair position are typically as follows. You will be assessed on your ability to achieve the requirements. Marking criteria will be made available on Blackboard.

1. You are responsible for chairing a 30-minute timeslot, during which a student gives a presentation and the audience asks questions.
2. Make sure you have a watch, stopwatch, or reliable smartphone timekeeping capability to support your role.
3. At the start, you are required to get the attention of the room so there is quiet.
4. You give a brief (no more than 30 sec) introduction of the speaker and the talk. This should be a little more interesting than just stating the person's name and the title of their talk (both of which will probably be perfectly visible already on the overhead).
5. You make sure that the talk runs on time. The talk should run for no more than 20 minutes.
6. You should provide the speaker with signs that they have 5, 1 and 0 minutes to go before the end. You should ensure that the speaker sees the signs.

7. If the speaker is still talking at 0 minutes, you should find a way to get them to stop within 1-2 minutes.
8. When the speaker ends, you thank them, and then lead the applause.
9. You then make a short comment about a positive aspect of the talk.
10. Then you ask the audience whether there are any questions. You would determine which person gets to ask a question and you sequence the questions. You would also determine if one questioner has held the floor for too long, and politely move on to the next questioner.
11. Questions should last for about 10 minutes.
12. If there are no questions from the audience, you should have at least two questions of your own that you would ask. **IMPORTANT:** You may not get the questions in advance with a speaker's help. You need to think of the questions on the basis of your knowledge of some basics of the area or related areas, and on the basis of the content that the speaker has provided during their talk.
13. You then determine when questions should end, at which point you thank both the speaker and the audience, and you yield the floor to the next speaker and chair.

You will be graded on your ability to achieve all the above. The grade will be broken down into the following components, in equal parts:

1. Introduction of the speaker
2. Timekeeping and compliance of speaker
3. Readiness of own question(s) to speaker
4. Management of Q&A session

Presentation (35%) Learning Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4

Task Description: Every week, two to three students will present. The presentations should be 20-minutes plus 10-minutes for questions and discussion. During our first meeting, you'll receive a list of 20 topics that we'll discuss in the seminar. Since there are 20 students in the seminar, each student must present one topic. These topics will be assigned randomly in our first meeting.

Since you're being assessed on how well you've researched your topic and the quality of your presentation, you really need to demonstrate that you know your way around the topic. This means that you must provide a balance between breadth and depth. That is, you need to have a broad understanding of your topic (e.g., what general questions and issues people are raising, why they matter, and how they relates to the seminar topic more generally). You also need to have a solid grasp of some of the particulars (e.g., what are the specific arguments, experiments, and theories that people are referring to, what do these arguments, etc. actually say about the topic if anything, and what's the current status of the topic).

At the end of each week, after we've seen the presentations, the presenters for the following week must provide the class with the title of a paper, chapter, link, or YouTube (e.g., Ted Talk) movie for everyone to read to help us prepare for the presentation so we can have questions and discussion points ready. Please send James a copy by email to distribute to the rest of the class.

Criteria & Marking: Made available on Blackboard

Science Communication Paper (35%) Learning Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4

Task Description: Each student will write a science communication paper that would be aimed to appear in something like the Conversation.

The piece should be about 800 - 1,000 words on any topic of your choice that was covered in the seminar, which can be the same topic or a different topic from the one covered in your presentation.

When writing your blog be as creative as you like. There is no limitations on what you include, so feel free to include images, graphs, figures, anything that you think would enhance the impact of your science communication paper. For example, some might want to include a video clip – so use a hyperlink to a YouTube video or something similar.

Importantly the science communication paper needs to be informed by the evidence related to your topic. But make the piece exciting, thought provoking, and impactful. As a guide, have a think about how these blogs are typically assessed? Usually by the number of people who share the piece through social media. So make it catchy. And if you are looking for inspiration read some of the blogs on the Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/au>

In fact, your science communication paper has the chance to be published on our online Compassion Journal (<http://compassionjournal.com/>), which is a collaborative undertaking between Stanford's Center for Compassion & Altruism Research & Education, and us here at UQ with the Compassionate Mind Research Group. So your blog has the possibility to have a life beyond just being assessed for a grade in this seminar course!

Here is a template/guide on how to structure your Blog:

- What is the issue? (100-150 words)
- Why is it significant? (300-350 words)
- Science supporting the views and conclusions (250 words)
- Other issues of importance (100 words)
- Key final points/tips (150 words)

Criteria & Marking: Made available on Blackboard

Topics, Randomly Assigned Week 1 (limit one student per specific topic):

1. What ways can we measure compassion?
2. Are children capable of showing compassion?
3. Are Compassion Based Interventions helpful?
4. Flows of Compassion: Is it possible to be high in self-compassion but not compassionate to others?
5. Is there a difference between being ethical and compassionate?
6. What are the differences between sympathy and empathy?
7. Can somebody be fearful of compassion?
8. Is it possible to be compassionate without mindfulness?
9. Does compassion differ between men and women?
10. Is there differences in compassion across cultures?
11. Does compassion-fatigue exist, is it a helpful concept?
12. Can you be compassionate to somebody you don't like?
13. What are the differences between kindness and compassion?
14. Can compassion help with depression?
15. Can compassion help with shame?
16. Do we become more compassionate as we age?
17. Does compassion improve parenting or does it lead to spoilt children?
18. Can compassion be represented in the brain?
19. Collapse of Compassion: Are we as compassionate to one person as we are to big groups of people?
20. Compassion & Forgiveness: Can you be compassionate without forgiving somebody?