

PSY430

Personality Psychology Seminar: Cultivating Wisdom In Daily Life

Course Syllabus

Mondays from 2:00pm-4:00pm. In person - AP (Anthropology Building) 124.



Instructor and Teaching Assistant Information

Instructor:

Amanda Sharples, Ph.D.

amanda.sharples@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor Office:

Online. Please book through the calendar on the Quercus site. Personal meeting room: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/my/sharplesmeetingroom> - No Password. In person: Mondays before or after class by appointment. Office SS4091.

Course Description and Learning Objectives

In this course we will have an in depth discussion on the psychological construct of wisdom. We will focus on answering the following questions: What is wisdom? How do we measure wisdom? How do we cultivate wisdom? Why should we care about wisdom? What are the benefits of being wise?

Learning Objectives:

1. *Knowledge:* By the end of this course, you should understand what wisdom is and how we measure it. You should be able to compare different methodologies, and their strengths and weaknesses. You should understand different

definitions of wisdom and have a solid grasp of the literature examining how to develop wisdom.

2. *Application:* By the end of this course, you should understand how to apply what you have learned about wisdom to social problems and how to develop wisdom to your own life
3. *Scientific Thinking:* By the end of this course, you should understand how the empirical method applies to research in social and personality psychology. You should feel more comfortable evaluating research in general, but studies in social and personality psychology, specifically and the conclusions that are drawn from these studies.
4. *Communication:* By the end of this course, you should have improved your ability to communicate your thoughts and research findings verbally and in writing.
5. *Professional Development:* By the end of this course, you should have improved your time-management skills and ability to respond appropriately to constructive feedback.

Class Structure: Classes will be composed primarily of group discussions. I will pose questions and introduce key ideas from the readings each week. Following this, you are expected to actively contribute to our discussions and will be evaluated in part on your contributions.

Discussion Participation: In the class discussions, you will have the opportunity to express your opinion and learn your classmates' opinions on topics and readings. This provides an interactive component of the course that is meant to be engaging for students. During discussions, please remember that some of your classmates may have opinions that are different from your own. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates' opinions, and be respectful in language and when sharing your opinions.

Note about prerequisites: It is your responsibility to ensure that you have met *all* prerequisites listed in the Psychology section of the A&S Calendar for this course. If you lack any prerequisites you may be removed.

This Document

This is the course syllabus and contains all the important details regarding this course; what you will learn, what you will need, how you will be evaluated, available resources, and the schedule for the course. The course syllabus is a contract between you and I, which means that we both agree to abide by its terms. On day one of the course, we will go through the

syllabus together, make any changes we mutually agree on, and acknowledge our acceptance of its terms.

Course Resources

Readings: All readings for this course, which include chapters and journal articles, will be made available on the Quercus site under library course reserves. The citations for these readings may be found in this syllabus after the lecture schedule.

When reading journal articles, try to make note of the research question, the hypotheses, identify the key variables, identify the design of the study (was there an experimental manipulation? Was it within or between subjects), identify the key results, and provide a 1-2 sentence paraphrased conclusion of what they found. I will post a guide for how to read journal articles, as well.

When reading theoretical papers or chapters, I will guide as to what information you should take away from these papers.

Quercus: All course materials will be made available on the Quercus website, including lecture slides, announcements, and supplementary materials. You are advised to regularly check the announcements section of the Quercus website because you are solely responsible for staying on top of all course announcements made through Quercus.

Ongoing feedback: I've created a survey that students can fill out anonymously after each class to provide me with feedback on the course. This gives you the opportunity to let me know if I am going through the material too quickly, if there is a particular concept you are really struggling with, if there is something that could be improved about the structure of each class, etc. The link to this survey is available on Quercus. I can't promise that I will be able to touch on every concern expressed in the feedback surveys. I will be looking for common concerns being expressed by students.

How to get help with the course: The fastest way to get help with the course is to attend one of the weekly office hours. If you have a short question that can be answered via email, then please email myself or the TA. Before emailing, however, please check the course syllabus as most of the important information about the course can be found there. If you have a question that may require a longer explanation, please come to office hours instead of emailing as it will be much easier for me to explain this in person and it will give you the opportunity to ask follow-up questions

Course Evaluation

Component	Date	Weight
Self-Reflection and Personal Life Philosophy Assignment	Throughout the term	25%
Participation (In class or discussion board)	Throughout the term	15%
Paper Topic Proposal and Literature Review	October 11th	10%
Presentations	November 18th, 25th, and Dec 2.	15%
Final Paper	Dec 2nd	35%

Participation: 15%

As this is a seminar course, you are expected to attend and actively participate in all class sessions. Participation will include active participation in seminars (asking and answering questions, thoughtful discussion on the readings). To receive full marks, you should aim to pose one thoughtful question and provide one thoughtful response each seminar (I recommend writing questions out in advance).

Self-Reflection and Personal Life Philosophy Assignment: 25%

At the beginning of the term, you will complete two surveys examining your character strengths and values. You will reflect on these (specific prompts provided in assignment instructions). From this you will craft a personal life philosophy. Throughout the course, you will put your life philosophy into practice and keep a reflective journal every week explaining how you did this. At the end of the term, you will integrate your observations from the journals and summarize these into a self-reflection and revised personal life philosophy. More detailed instructions are provided in the assignment instructions on the course website. The assessment will be broken down into three parts:

Part 1: Identify strengths and values, and reflect. Submit reflection. Due Sept 23rd.

Part 2: Write your personal life philosophy and submit your plan for putting your personal life philosophy into action. Due September 30th.

Part 3: Submit your final reflection with answers to the questions from part 3. Due Nov 25.

Final Paper: 35%

Paper Topic Proposal, Presentation, and Final Paper: As psychological scientists, we should develop expertise in *both* scientific methodology and theory development. Laboratory courses focus on scientific methodology. In this seminar course, we will focus on theory development and critique, while also thinking about how we may apply the course content to a real-world problem.

For your final paper, you must think of a real-world problem that may be defined as a “wicked problem” as it is ill defined and there is no clear right or wrong solution (e.g., how do we bring people out of poverty? How do we fix climate change?). You must develop a theory with respect to how wisdom relates to this problem (pull from the course modules on defining, measuring, cultivating, and/or understanding the benefits of wisdom).

This research project will be broken into three components:

Proposal (10%): First, you will submit a 2-page (double-spaced) proposal where you describe your topic. This should provide a brief introduction to the topic, a statement of the problem and your theory regarding how wisdom or

Presentation (15%): You will create a 10-minute power-point style (you may use a different program) presentation that you will deliver to the class describing the real-world problem and your theory (e.g., a shortened version of the paper). There will be 4 minutes for questions and answers for a total of 14 minutes.

Final Paper (35%): The entire paper should be 7-9 pages (no less than 7 and no more than 9), not including references or appendices. It should be in APA style 7. This should also be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font.

Suggested space allocation is provided in the paper structure section below.

I recommended this podcast to learn more about wicked problems: [On Wisdom 26: Wicked Problems \(with Judith Glück\) \(fireside.fm\)](#)

Paper format:

Introduction: Introduce the problem, use literature to explain how wisdom relates to this problem, state your theory. (2-3 pages)

Breakdown: provide logical and empirical evidence (existing empirical evidence) to support your theory. (2-3 pages)

Critique: Explain the strengths of your theory and what it adds to the field (theoretical implications) and possible limitations or critiques of your theory (2-3 pages)

Conclusion: provide a take home message (1-2 paragraphs) noting the real-world significance of your theory as it relates to this problem (practical implications).

A few important details: For the final paper, when you are summarizing past research, you must include citations for at least 8 papers published in peer-reviewed journals (we will discuss this in class). The paper should be written in APA style. Both the proposal and the

final paper should be handed in on Quercus by 11:59pm on the day they are due, and should include a full reference list.

More details on these assignments will be provided in class.

Policy on Lateness: I understand life gets challenging and things may come up that make it difficult for you to complete your work on time. I am happy to support you and work with you so that you can successfully complete this course and have a positive learning experience. For most course assignments, you do not need to contact me so long as your assignment is submitted within 24 hours of the due date. Following this, a 2% late penalty may apply. If you are concerned about meeting a deadline or need assistance making a plan for getting work completed, please contact me as soon as you can so we can work this out together. Please contact me in advance to the due date unless this is not possible.

Specific Medical Circumstances. If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on the Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Ensuring Transparency in Grading: Your proposal and final paper will be marked by me. Marking these types of assignments can be challenging and somewhat subjective. In order to make this process as fair as possible, I will be creating a detailed rubric to use when grading these assignments. I will provide you with a copy of these rubrics at least one week before the assignment is due. This should provide you with a clear understanding of how you will be graded before you submit your assignment.

Contesting your grade: Please carefully review and consider your feedback before contesting your grade for an assignment or test. If you have concerns about how an assignment was graded, you need to submit an official re-grade request form explaining why you think your assignment should be re-graded. This can be found on Quercus under "course materials." You must send this to me within 2 weeks of receiving your grade. We will review your request but reserve the right to remark the entire paper, which means you could lose marks in other sections. If there has been a calculation error, please just let me know and we will re-calculate your grade immediately.

Academic Resources

Accessibility Needs: It is very important to me that students with diverse learning needs feel supported in this course. There is no one-size-fits all approach to course design, so I do

my best to build in accessible course policies. For example, all students have a 24 hour extension on assessments as noted above under policy on lateness, and you can also approach me if you need additional support. I understand that some students may have accessibility needs, but may not have the documentation to get specific accommodations. I hope that by having these broader policies those students feel supported in this course. I will do everything in my power to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed in the course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060; accessibility.utoronto.ca.

Departmental Guidance for Undergraduate Students in Psychology: The Department of Psychology recognizes that, as a student, you may experience disruptions to your learning that are out of your control, and that there may be circumstances when you need extra support. Accordingly, the department has provided a [helpful guide](#) to clarify your and your instructor's responsibilities when navigating these situations. This guide consolidates Arts & Science Policies for undergraduate students in one place for your convenience. As an instructor in the department, I will frequently consult with these recommendations when providing you with support, and I recommend that you also consult it to learn more about your rights and responsibilities before reaching out to me.

Religious Accommodations: As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes students and faculty from a wide range of cultural and religious traditions. I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice, so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Writing: One of the key skill-sets you are developing as a student are your communication skills, including written communication. Understanding how to communicate clearly and concisely is essential for many career paths. The university provides its students with a number of resources to help them develop these skills. For more information on campus writing centres and writing courses, please visit <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>. More info on writing resources available at U of T will be posted on Quercus. I highly recommend that you make use of these. Moreover, I'm more than happy to give you feedback on your writing during my office hours, so feel free to stop by.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: Academic misconduct will be taken very seriously in this class. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported through the official university channels. Please refer to the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for more information about what constitutes academic misconduct and how academic misconduct will be dealt with: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>

Resources for Distressed Students: As a student, you may experience challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use,

feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation, financial concerns, family worries and so forth. These factors may affect your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate fully in daily activities. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle; there is no shame in needing help or in asking for help. There are many helpful resources available through your college Registrar or through Student Life (studentlife.utoronto.ca and www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed). An important part of the University experience is learning how and when to ask for help. Please take the time to inform yourself of available resources and do not hesitate to seek assistance from your Teaching Assistant or from me to help learn what supports are available

Please See Lecture Schedule on the Next Page

Course Schedule

I will try my best to stick to this outline, but changes may be made. Changes will be announced on Quercus. All readings can be found in the reference list following this page.

Lecture	Date	Topic	Notes
L1	Sept 9	Seminar Introductions	Let's get to know each other and talk a bit about what wisdom is
L2	Sept 16	What is wisdom?	
L3	Sept 23	Studying Wisdom: How do we measure wisdom?	Self-Reflection and Personal Life Philosophy Assignment Part 1 Due Sept 23
L5	Sept 30	Studying Wisdom: Is Wisdom a State or Trait	Self-Reflection and Personal Life Philosophy Assignment Part 2 Due Sept 30
L6	Oct 7	Cultivating Wisdom: Cultivating Wisdom in Daily Life Part 1	Paper Topic Proposal and Literature Review Due Oct 11
	Oct 14	<i>No Class - Thanksgiving</i>	
L7	Oct 21	Cultivating Wisdom: Cultivating Wisdom in Daily Life Part 2	
	Oct 28	<i>No Class - Reading Week</i>	
	Nov 4	Cultivating Wisdom: Teaching Wisdom	
L8	Nov 11	Benefits of Wisdom: What are the benefits of wisdom?	
L9	Nov 18	Presentations	
L10	Nov 25	Presentations	Self-Reflection and Personal Life Philosophy Assignment Part 3 Due Nov 25
	Dec 2	Presentations. Reflecting on what we have learned.	Final Paper Due

Course Schedule and Reading List

Module 1: Defining Wisdom: Key questions: What is wisdom? Do scientific definitions and folk definitions of wisdom differ? How do definitions of wisdom differ across cultures?

September 9 Lecture 1: Syllabus.

September 16th Lecture 2: Academic definitions and cultural differences

Sternberg, R. J., & Karami, S. (2021). What is wisdom? A unified 6P framework. *Review of General Psychology, 25*(2), 134-151..

Rudnev, M., Barrett, H. C., Buckwalter, W., Machery, E., Stich, S., Barr, K., ... & Grossmann, I. (2024). Dimensions of wisdom perception across twelve countries on five continents. *Nature Communications, 15*(1), 6375. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-50294-0>

John Vervaeke on Wisdom: [\(416\) The Path to Wisdom | John Vervaeke | The Tim Ferriss Show - YouTube](#)

Recommended

On Wisdom Podcast. Worldwide wisdom: [On Wisdom 52: World Wide Wisdom \(with Deepak Ramola\) \(fireside.fm\)](#)

Module 2: Measuring Wisdom: Key questions: What other kinds of measures can capture wisdom and wise behaviour? Can we capture wisdom with self report measures? Is wisdom a state or trait? Are there wise people or just wise situations?

Sept 23 Lecture 3 Studying Wisdom – How do we measure this?

Grossmann, I., Weststrate, N. M., Ardelt, M., Brienza, J. P., Dong, M., Ferrari, M., ... & Vervaeke, J. (2020). The science of wisdom in a polarized world: Knowns and unknowns. *Psychological Inquiry, 31*(2), 103-133.

Webster, J. D. (2019). Self-report wisdom measures: Strengths, limitations, and future directions. In R. J. Sternberg & J. Glück (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom* (pp. 297–320). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108568272.015>

Sept 30 Lecture 4 Studying Wisdom – Is it a state or trait?

Grossmann, I., Kung, F. Y. H., & Santos, H. C. (2019). Wisdom as state versus trait. In R. J. Sternberg & J. Glück (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of wisdom* (pp. 249–273). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108568272.013>

Grossmann, I., Gerlach, T. M., & Denissen, J. J. (2016). Wise reasoning in the face of everyday life challenges. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 7(7), 611-622.

Recommended

[On Wisdom Episode 5: The Foolish Sage \(with Eranda Jayawickreme\) \(fireside.fm\)](#)

Module 3: Cultivating Wisdom: Key Questions: How do we cultivate wisdom? How can we translate wise emotional and cognitive processes into wise behaviour? Is the cultivation of wisdom a daily practice or can one event change our ability to think wisely? Can wisdom be taught?

Oct 7 - Lecture 5: Cultivating Wisdom in Daily Life Part 1

Glück, J., & Weststrate, N. M. (2022). The wisdom researchers and the elephant: An integrative model of wise behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 26(4), 342-374.

Weststrate, N. M., & Glück, J. (2017). Hard-earned wisdom: Exploratory processing of difficult life experience is positively associated with wisdom. *Developmental psychology*, 53(4), 800.

Fowers, B. J., Novak, L. F., Calder, A. J., & Sommer, R. K. (2021). Courage, justice, and practical wisdom as key virtues in the era of COVID-19. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 647912.

Recommended

[On Wisdom 26: Wicked Problems \(with Judith Glück\) \(fireside.fm\)](#)

Oct 21 - Lecture 6: Cultivating Wisdom in Daily Life Part 2

Grossmann, I., Oakes, H., & Santos, H. C. (2019). Wise reasoning benefits from emodiversity, irrespective of emotional intensity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 148(5), 805.

Grossmann, I., & Kross, E. (2014). Exploring Solomon's paradox: Self-distancing eliminates the self-other asymmetry in wise reasoning about close relationships in younger and older adults. *Psychological science*, 25(8), 1571-1580.

Vervaeke, J. (2022). How a philosophy of meditation can explore the deep connections between mindfulness and contemplative wisdom. In *Routledge Handbook on the Philosophy of Meditation* (pp. 192-208). Routledge.

Nov 4 Lecture 7: Cultivating Wisdom – Teaching Wisdom

Ardelt, M. (2020). Can wisdom and psychosocial growth be learned in university courses? *Journal of Moral Education*, 49(1), 30-45.

Ferrari, M., & Kim, J. (2019). Educating for wisdom. In R. J. Sternberg & J. Glück (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom* (pp. 347–371). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108568272.017>

Module 4: Benefits of Wisdom: Key Questions: Why should we care about wisdom and developing wisdom? Is wisdom more predictive of well-being than other traits?

Nov 11 - Lecture 8: Benefits of Wisdom

Brienza, J. P., Kung, F. Y., & Chao, M. M. (2021). Wise reasoning, intergroup positivity, and attitude polarization across contexts. *Nature Communications*, 12(1), 3313.

Grossmann, I., Na, J., Varnum, M. E., Kitayama, S., & Nisbett, R. E. (2013). A route to well-being: intelligence versus wise reasoning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 142(3), 944.

Presentations:

Nov 18: Presentations (8) – 8 minutes each

Nov 25: Presentations (8) - 8 minutes each

Dec 2: Final Presentations (First hour - 4) and Final Reflections

Lecture 9 - Final Reflections Reading:

Weststrate, N. M. (2019). The mirror of wisdom: Self-reflection as a developmental precursor and core competency of wise people. In R. J. Sternberg & J. Glück (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of wisdom* (pp. 500–518). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108568272.024>