



Instructors



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Course description

Embark on an enlightening journey through the essence of empathy in healthcare, a vital tool that transcends understanding into healing. This course deciphers empathy as the art of perceiving a patient's pain and perspective, coupled with the profound intent to assist and communicate that comprehension. Amidst a technological era in healthcare education, the essential human connection is at risk of being overshadowed. Acknowledging the concerning trend of empathy's decline during medical training, we emphasize the imperative of nurturing this humanistic skill.

Jean Decety, Ph.D., with a devoted career spanning 35 years in Empathy in Health Professions, guides us through the intricate social and neuroscientific landscapes of empathetic engagement. This course is an invitation to ascend beyond the role of a physician—to evolve as a compassionate being. As we traverse the academic term, we will rediscover the power of empathy to transform us into more adept and humane pre-health professionals. After all, as Forrest Carter reminds us, to love and to heal, we must first understand (p. 38).

Approach:



IDH2930 - Empathy in Health Professions, #29961
Spring 2024, **HVR1 114, Monday - Period 5** (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM)

This course dives deep into the social neuroscience of empathy, using Dr. Jean Decety's groundbreaking research as a foundation. As honors students taking this course, you will be immersed in a multifaceted exploration involving:

- Readings: Primarily from "The Social Neuroscience of Empathy," supplemented with texts and contemporary articles.
- Media: Engaging with videos, podcasts, and other multimedia tools to understand empathy from various perspectives.
- Experiences: Participating in empathy questionnaires, and conducting real-world observations to reinforce learning.

Nature of Student Work:

- Students will actively participate in discussions, engage in weekly reflections, and work on group projects.

Course Objectives

Short-Term Goals:

- Develop an understanding of the concept of empathy from neuroscientific and social perspectives.
- Gain knowledge of how empathy functions, its evolutionary origins, and its importance in social interactions.
- Identify the role of empathy in the patient-caregiver relationship and its impact on healthcare outcomes.

Long-Term Goals:

- Cultivate the ability to apply empathic skills in clinical and professional settings.
- Foster a commitment to maintaining empathy as a core value throughout one's medical or health profession education and career.
- Integrate the principles of empathetic engagement into future healthcare practices, policies, or research.

UF Class Attendance Policies

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>



Materials and Resources

Required:

- ["The Social Neuroscience of Empathy"](#) by Jean Decety, William Ickes

Optional: (means these are cool reads, but not required!):

- ["The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society"](#) by Frans de Waal
- ["The Empathy Exams: Essays"](#) by Leslie Jamiso
- ["The Art of Empathy: A Complete Guide to Life's Most Essential Skill"](#) by Karla McLaren
- ["Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others"](#) by Marco Iacoboni
- ["Born for Love: Why Empathy Is Essential - and Endangered"](#) by Bruce D. Perry and Maia Szalavitz
- ["The Empathic Brain: How the Discovery of Mirror Neurons Changes our Understanding of Human Nature"](#) by Christian Keysers
- ["Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives"](#) by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie
- ["Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age"](#) by Sherry Turkle
- ["Attending: Medicine, Mindfulness, and Humanity"](#) by Ronald Epstein, M.D.
- ["Compassionomics: The Revolutionary Scientific Evidence that Caring Makes a Difference"](#) by Stephen Trzeciak and Anthony Mazzarell
- ["The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human"](#) by V.S. Ramachandran
- ["The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales"](#) by Oliver Sacks
- ["Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion"](#) by Paul Bloom

Assignments and Grading Procedures

Grading:

Requirement	Total Points
Weekly Reflections (300 words each)	36
Mid-semester Group Project	15
In-Class Participation	24



Capstone Project	25
Total	100

The points that you will earn can be translated into letter-grades as follows:

92.5 - 100.0 = A	72.5 - <77.5 = C
90.0 - <92.5 = A-	70.0 - <72.5 = C-
87.5 - <90.0 = B+	67.5 - <70.0 = D+
82.5 - <87.5 = B	62.5 - <67.5 = D
80.0 - <82.5 = B-	60.0 - <62.5 = D-
77.5 - <80.0 = C+	<60.0 = E

Assigned Readings:

Read prior to class.

Weekly Class Reflection and other assignments:

Each week, students will be expected to write a one-page report reflecting on the chapter covered during that week, as well as on additional materials discussed in class. Twice during the term, you may opt to base your reflection on an episode from either the 'From Where I'm Standing' or 'A Mile in My Shoes' podcast by the Empathy Museum. Students will upload all responses to Canvas by Friday, 11:59 pm, of that same week. ***Any submissions after that time will have a 50% penalty and will only be accepted until Sunday at 11:59 pm.***

Participation:

Participation will be graded every week and will encompass student involvement in the classroom. Class attendance is mandatory, and so students have a responsibility to inform instructors prior to absences whenever possible. Attendance and participation are combined for grading, and one point will be deducted for each unexcused absence. Students must obtain written notes for medical appointments. Instructors will make every effort to reasonably accommodate students who miss class due to Provost-



approved University- sponsored activities or legally required activities (ex: emergency military service, jury duty).

Exams:

There are no exams in this course.

Academic Honesty

As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

The DRC is located at 0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565 (www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/).



Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

- University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 352-392-1575, www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/

Counseling Services, Groups and Workshops, Outreach and Consultation, Self-Help Library, Wellness Coaching

- U Matter We Care, www.umatter.ufl.edu/
- Career Resource Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, www.crc.ufl.edu/

Important Dates

First day of class	Monday, January 8, 2024
Martin Luther King Jr. Day (no class)	Monday, January 15, 2024
Spring break (no class)	Monday, March 11, 2024
Weekly Discussions	Due every Friday at 11:59 pm

Course Schedule or Outline

Week 1: What Is It Like To Walk In Your Shoes?

- Introduction
- Overview of the course and its significance
- A brief exploration of empathy's role in the world

Week 2: The Basics of Empathy

- Definitions and types of empathy.
- Why is empathy considered an evolutionary trait?



- Assigned Reading: *Chapter 1 - These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena*

Week 3: Neuroanatomy of Empathy

- Delving into the brain: Which regions play a role in our empathetic responses?
- Assigned Reading: *Chapter 16 - Empathic Processing: Its Cognitive and Affective Dimensions and Neuroanatomical Basis*

Week 4: The Development of Empathy

- From infancy to adulthood: How does empathy evolve over an individual's lifetime?
- Assigned Reading: *Chapter 5 - Empathic Accuracy: Its links to Clinical, Cognitive, Developmental, Social, and Physiological Psychology*

Week 5: Empathy's Evolutionary History

- Understanding the survival and societal benefits of empathy in human evolution.
- From ancient civilizations to modern-day: How has empathy been perceived and practiced?
- Assigned Reading: *Chapter 2 - Emotional Contagion and Empathy*

Week 6: Sociological Perspectives on Empathy

- Cultural, societal, and individual factors that shape our empathetic behaviors.
- Assigned Readings:
 - *Chapter 3 - Being Imitated: Consequences of Nonconsciously Showing Empathy*
 - *Chapter 4 - Empathy and Knowledge Projection*

Week 7: Empathy in the Digital Age

- The challenge of maintaining empathy in an era dominated by screens and technology.
- Assigned Reading: Excerpt from *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* by Sherry Turkle

Week 8: Empathy Erosion in Medical Education

- Exploring research findings on the decline of empathy during medical training.
- Assigned Reading: *Chapter 7 - Empathy and Education*



Week 9: Case Studies

- Analyzing real-life scenarios where empathy played a crucial role in patient outcomes.
- Assigned Readings:
 - *Chapter 12 - Perceiving Others in Pain: Experimental and Clinical Evidence on the Role of Empathy*

Week 10: Empathy Skills Lab

- *Chapter 8 - Rogerian Empathy in an Organismic Theory: A Way of Being*
(No reaction required this week.)

Week 11: Strategies to Enhance Empathy

- Practical exercises and mindsets to cultivate and sustain empathy in healthcare settings.
- Assigned Readings:
 - *Chapter 9 - Empathy in Psychotherapy: Dialogue and Embodied Understanding*

Week 12: Reflection and Forward Motion

- How can we ensure the future of healthcare remains human-centric?
- Personal reflections on lessons learned and how to apply them in future endeavors.
- Assigned Reading: *Chapter 11 - Empathy, Morality, and Social Convention: Evidence from the Study of Psychopathy and Other Psychiatric Disorders*

Week 13: Group Presentations

- Students will present their own case studies.

Week 14: Group Presentations

- Students will present their own case studies.