

**Syllabus: Psychology 410, Summer 2020  
The Psychology of Well-Being & Tibetan Buddhism**

**Course Content:**

The goal of this course is to understand and experience teachings on happiness and well-being that come from modern psychological science and from Buddhism (particularly Tibetan Buddhism). This class will provide an intellectual tour of important theory and research writings in Buddhism and modern psychology. The class will anchor the learning through virtual visits to religious and cultural centers of Buddhism, and through virtual conversations with Buddhist teachers and guests discussing psychology and well-being. Particular attention is given in this course to understanding the concept of anxiety management from a psychological science and Buddhist viewpoint, as the management of anxiety has a very strong effect on well-being.

**Textbook (Required Readings):**

The course uses open source readings and videos that can be accessed through the PSU Library proxies, and open source websites.

**Instructors and Program Support**

Course Instructors and Program Support: Christopher Allen, Ph.D. is the primary instructor. The class will have assistance from cultural specialists including Norzom Lala, MSW.

Christopher is an adjunct faculty member and senior instructor in the department of psychology at PSU. He has won the John Eliot Alan award for outstanding teacher at PSU in 2015 and 2019. His area of expertise includes personality and well-being psychology, and a special interest in mindfulness practices. Christopher can be reached at [challen@pdx.edu](mailto:challen@pdx.edu).

Norzom is an indigenous Tibetan nomad from the region of Amdo. Norzom is one of 10 Dalai Lama Foundation sponsored scholars in the world, and a research assistant in the department of social work.

**Class Calendar**

Start Date: 06/22/2020 End Date 08/16/2020

Class times: M, W 4:40 to 6:30

**Graded Items**

PhotoVoice and Personal Archaeology Assignments: 30%

Weekly 4 Concepts Journaling 15%

Self-Assessment Paper: 15%

Weekly Reading Quizzes: 20%

Discussion Posts: 10%

**In-Depth Course Description**

Through virtual visits to religious and cultural centers of Buddhism, and through virtual conversations with Buddhist teachers and guests discussing psychology and well-being, students

will learn about ways of life in Tibetan Buddhism that reflect cultivating a balanced life and generating compassion for self and others. Students will learn about both Tibetan Buddhist and modern psychological methods for self-regulation, happiness and well-being.

The course will cover important Tibetan Buddhist concepts on well-being and compare and contrast these with psychological science on well-being. For example, Tibetan Buddhism promotes an ideal state of well-being that results from freeing the mind of its afflictive tendencies. Psychological researcher Ed Diener Ph.D., after years of leading scientific research teams on psychological happiness, concluded something similar, when he said his research supported the idea that “satisfaction is less a matter of getting what you want than wanting what you have” (Deiner, 2005). Both western models of scientific psychology and Tibetan Buddhism claim that the happiness resulting from internal mental training is more durable than stimulus-driven pleasure, although neither are against stimulus driven pleasure. Psychological science and Tibetan Buddhism have similarities and differences in their approaches toward guiding people toward “conative balance” or in Tibetan Buddhist terms, “desiring wisely”. Important evidence-based psychotherapies such as Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy that are used particularly for the self-regulation of anxiety and impulse control, use principles similar to Tibetan Buddhism. Yet in Tibet, well-being and mindfulness are not therapies, rather they are imbued into daily community and culture.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Learning Outcome 1: Demonstrate an understanding of key aspects of happiness and well-being concepts according to Tibetan Buddhism, and psychological science, and be able to describe how they are similar, complementary, or different.
- Learning Outcome 2: Be able to discuss and describe anxiety management according to Tibetan Buddhism, discuss and describe three psychological science approaches to managing anxiety, and discuss and describe similarities and differences between various models and paradigms.
- Learning Outcome 3: Students will be able to articulate insights into components of Tibetan Buddhism and contrast this with a student’s own culture and worldview, values, and beliefs.
- Learning Outcome 4: Students will be able to articulate insights into their current practices regarding happiness and describe how empirical psychological research might alter their happiness practices.