

The Buddhism, Psychology & Mental Health Program

Teaching scientific literacy and meta-cognitive analysis

Enriching academic, social-emotional, and professional skillsets

Centering student flourishing

The Buddhism, Psychology and Mental Health (BPMH) Program is an undergraduate Minor hosted by New College at the U of T. An **internationally recognized contemplative science program**, BPMH courses engage interdisciplinary research by scientists, Buddhist Studies scholars & philosophers, health practitioners and contemplatives. Students explore the discipline with a focus on global understandings of health and distress, and the impacts of ecological breakdown and systems of oppression on individual, communal, and planetary well-being.

One of the oldest contemplative science programs in North America, BPMH is grounded in two decades of research globally on interactions between Buddhist traditions and the sciences. The program trains students in qualitative and quantitative research, scientific literacy, and writing skills. Drawing on critical mental health studies, courses foreground student flourishing through student-centered teaching emphasizing meta-cognitive and reflective learning. Program work is structured around the importance of community and relationship, characterized by respect, reciprocity, and attention to experience, affect, and embodiment.

Student surveys and program assessments confirm that participation in BPMH significantly enhances well-being, academic success, and preparation for professional life. BPMH is a founding member of the Flourishing Academic Network (FAN), a group of faculty members, student affairs professionals, university administrators, and community partners in the US and Canada partnering to advance student flourishing. FAN recognizes that university classrooms are key sites for academic, social-emotional, and professional development for students.

Program Stats

- founded in 2007, in March 2024 has **327 enrolled minors**
- one of the largest college-hosted undergraduate programs at U of T
- in 2023-24, **over 1,100 students** registered in 11 courses; all winter courses had waiting lists
- public events: in 2022-23 hosted **over 1,300 local and international participants**
- two active student groups, BPSU and PATH, provide peer support programming throughout the year
- YouTube channel content has **over 16,000 views**
- Engaging Education in Buddhist Studies project supports enhanced experiential learning opportunities
- home of Contemplative Science Podcast (with **over 37,000 listens** as of Aug 1, 2024)
- units with whom BPMH shares the most students are Psychology, Philosophy, Environment, Human Biology, Cognitive Science, Equity & Solidarity, Sociology, Mathematics, Religion (in order of number of students, most to least); 56% of students come from the Sciences & Social Sciences
- tight relationships with Emmanuel College and OISE, providing large numbers of students to their grad programs
- **tremendous fundraising potential**, with comparable programs raising hundreds of millions of dollars working with philanthropists who see the importance of evidence-based work that benefits struggling students

References available on request.

Active Core Program Courses

BPM100H1 – The Art & Science of Flourishing

Explores perspectives from the sciences and the humanities about flourishing across diverse cultures and contexts, and how wellbeing and distress are social, cultural, political, spiritual, ecological, and historical phenomena.

BPM214H1: Socially Engaged Buddhism

Explores how Socially Engaged Buddhism has developed in response to global conversations on systemic oppression, climate justice, equity, decolonization, and trauma.

BPM232H1: Buddhism and Psychology

Overview of the encounter between Buddhism and psychology, exploring how scientists, psychologists, and Buddhist reformers reinterpret Buddhism as “science” and how Buddhist practices are transformed and promoted by modern psychology.

JNR301H1: The History of Buddhist Meditation

Surveys historical, cultural, and textual contexts for Buddhist contemplative practices.

BPM330H1: Mindfulness-Informed Interventions for Mental Health

Study of mindfulness from historical, societal, structural, cultural, professional, and personal perspectives, emphasizing Buddhist foundations and concepts of embodied mind.

BPM332H1: Buddhism and Psychotherapy

Interdisciplinary study of cross-cultural therapies and theories of the mind.

BPM334H1: Science of Wisdom: Buddhist and Western Traditions

Conceptual and contemplative interdisciplinary exploration of global “wisdom traditions.”

BPM335H1: Meditation and the Body

Exploration of research on how mindfulness affects brain activity, brain structure, neurochemistry, and other psychobiological processes.

BPM338H1: Exploring Mindful Awareness

Overview of mindfulness as a systematic investigation of subjective experience, with a survey of classic and contemporary literature.

BPM381H1: Buddhist Perspectives on Current Social Issues

Explores Buddhist perspectives on issues such as climate justice, systemic racism, burnout, and mental health in sectors of society including healthcare, education, and business.

BPM339H1: Mind, Consciousness, and the Self

Interdisciplinary study of mind, consciousness, and the self, placing Buddhist traditions in dialogue with theories of the mind in psychology.

BPM432H1: Advanced Research in Meditation, Psychology and Neuroscience

Preparation for advanced research on meditation by studying theories, tools and techniques in the field.

BPM433H1: Advanced Exploration of Buddhist Psychology and Practice

Exploration of how Buddhist teachings are set in conversation with contemporary scientific research on topics such as suffering, wellbeing, and compassion.

BPM438H1: Mindfulness Meditation: Science and Research

Examines theoretical and empirical bases of mindfulness-based interventions and applications in healthcare settings and beyond. Students build scientific literacy skills through the assessment, critique, and discussion of scientific research.

Additional courses required to fulfil minor are taken in cognate units: Anthropology, Cognitive Science, East Asian Studies, Centre for Ethics, History, History of Philosophy, Science, and Technology, Human Biology, Health Studies, Centre for Indigenous Studies, School of the Environment, Sexual Diversity Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, Study of Religion, Sociology