

# Course Reading List

## Deeper Empathy

### Week 1

#### *Unit 2. The Position of Emotion Contagion*

**Read:** See this short piece on mirror neurons by Greg Hickok, who you met in Unit 1: [Greg Hickok: Three Myths About the Brain](#) in the New York Times.

### Week 2

#### *Unit 3. Developing Empathic Accuracy*

**Read:** pages 35–36 in *The Art of Empathy* for an argument about the concept of cognitive empathy.

**Read:** For a reminder about Damasio’s work, see pages 59–64 in *The Art of Empathy*.

**Watch:** In the video in this unit, Damasio talks about the capacity for *feeling*, which is equated with the emotive aspect of Empathic Accuracy.

**Read:** Pages 65–69 in *The Age of Empathy*

#### *Unit 4. The Decisive Skill: Emotion Regulation*

**Read:** This piece in *Boston Magazine* is engagingly written, and invites you into the controversy around Lisa Feldman Barrett’s work. It’s 4 pages, but it’s very worth your time because it gives you context, brings you into the social world of research, and humanizes everyone involved.

[About Face: Emotions and Facial Expressions May Not Be Related](#)

### Week 3

#### *Unit 5. Taking Clear Perspective*

**Read:** [Novel Finding: Reading Literary Fiction Improves Empathy](#)

**Read:** *Early Reasoning About Desires: Evidence From 14- and 18-Month-Olds* (see the PDF in the unit)

**Read:** Pages 122-130 in *The Age of Empathy*

**Read:** Pages 140-143 in *The Age of Empathy*

**Read:** Page 150 in *The Age of Empathy*: It takes a thief to know a thief.

## Unit 6. Cultivating Concern for Others

**Read: *The Age of Empathy***

1. Page 67, paragraph 3 to page 68, paragraph 1 — Frans writes about “the bell curve of empathy,” but doesn’t connect it to dissimilar socialization patterns.
2. Page 71, paragraph 3 to page 72, paragraph 1 — Frans connects increased aggression in male mice to male human lack of empathy, which he suggests is a “mammalian universal.” He doesn’t allow for the effects of gendered socialization in humans here either.
3. Page 214, paragraph 2 to page 218, paragraph 1 — In this section, Frans shares numerous stories of male aggression and female empathy, but once again doesn’t account for the effects of gendered socialization.

**Read or Listen:** [A Neuroscientist Discovers a Dark Secret](#)

**Watch:** Karla built a PowerPoint to explain and simplify Dr. Susan Fiske’s work, because piecing it all together would have meant assigning *a lot* of studies. This video of the PPT provides an overview of her work, and most importantly, explores her ideas for what to do about the dangerous consequences of stereotyping.

## Week 4

### Unit 7. Consolation, Helping, and Perceptive Engagement

**Read:** Page 90-93 in *The Age of Empathy*, where Frans writes about his dual concepts of *consolation* and *targeted helping*. Karla folded both of these concepts into her concept of Perceptive Engagement.

**Read:** [Paul Bloom: Against Empathy](#) in the *Boston Review*.

**Read:** Pages 103-107 in *The Age of Empathy* for Frans’ take on altruism. Unlike Paul, Frans sees emotions and the capacity for Emotion Contagion to be a prerequisite for Concern for Others and Perceptive Engagement – all three of which are precursors, in Karla’s model, to the concept of compassion that Paul Bloom is promoting.

**Note:** On pages 275-276 in *The Art of Empathy*, Karla writes about the in-group hormone oxytocin (mistakenly called “the love hormone”), which certainly can induce powerful in-group bonding. But it also increases out-group aggression.

**Read:** Pages 115–117 in *The Age of Empathy* for Frans’ counter to the argument that empathy is merely selfish self-interest. As we’ve all seen, we *can* widen our empathic capacity, and we *can* open up our focus to include previously exiled people. It’s work – it’s emotion work to return people from exile – but making changes to neurological patterns can be done, as Richie Davidson’s work strongly suggests.

### *Unit 8. Uniting the Six Essential Aspects of Empathy*

**Review:** *The Art of Empathy*, Chapter 2 (pages 17-47)

**Review:** The development of empathy in children on pages 213-219 and 242-244 in *The Art of Empathy*

**Read:** [Look Twice by Susan Fiske](#)