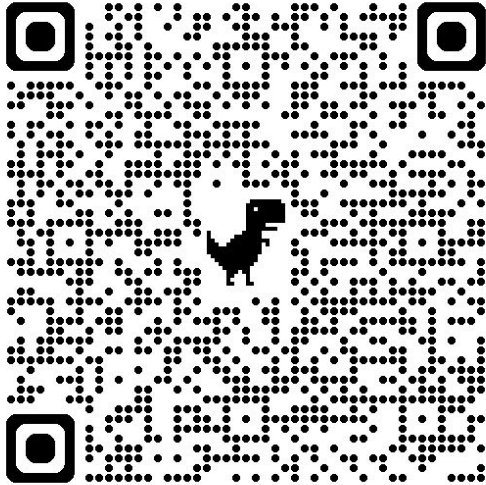




Building Reading Skills through a Focus on Wellness and Brain Science Themes

WITESOL 2025



Heidi Evans and Andrea Poulos
Department of English, Program in ESL
<https://tinyurl.com/bdf66hvp>



Session goals

- Explore a thematic reading skills course
- Share adaptable learner training activities
- Discuss the impact of wellness and brain-based learning themes



UW Program in ESL Overview

- ESL 114: Intermediate Language Skills
- ESL 115: Grammar for Academic Use
- ESL 116: Academic Reading and Vocabulary Skills
- ESL 117: Academic Writing I
- ESL 118: Academic Writing II ("first" year composition equivalent)

ESL 116 course overview, past to present

- Reading strategies to become effective and efficient readers of college-level articles
- Vocabulary building
- Introduction to summarizing and paraphrasing
- Scaffolded practice using Generative AI

Image: screenshot of Canvas course



Welcome to ESL 116-2 Fall 2025

9:55 am MWF | 6144 Helen C White

Academic Reading and Vocabulary Skills

Instructor: Heidi Evans

[Syllabus](#) | heidi.evans@wisc.edu

[Student Hours](#): Mon 11:00 am-12:00 pm in 5135 HCW & by appointment in [Zoom](#)

[Important Course Dates](#) | [Vocabulary Resources](#) | [Writing Center Grammar Videos](#)

Course Resources



[Course Schedule](#)



[Pressbook](#)



[Vocabulary & Articles](#)

[Printing for Students](#)



[Module 0:
Orientation](#)



[Module 1:
Identity](#)



[Module 2: Health
& Wellness](#)



[Module 3:
Psychology: The
Brain & Learning](#)



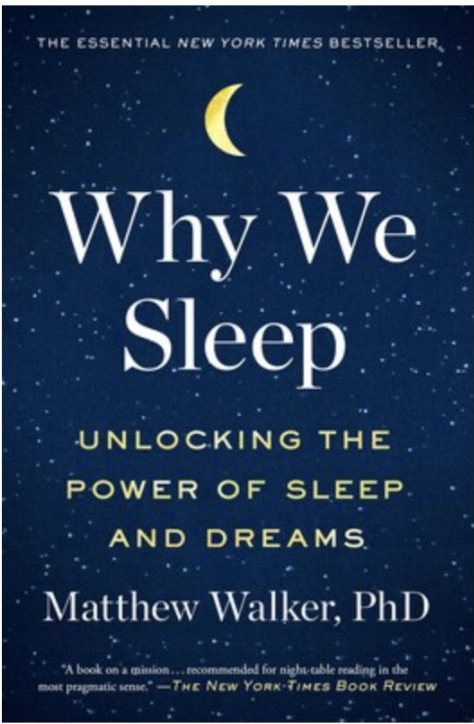
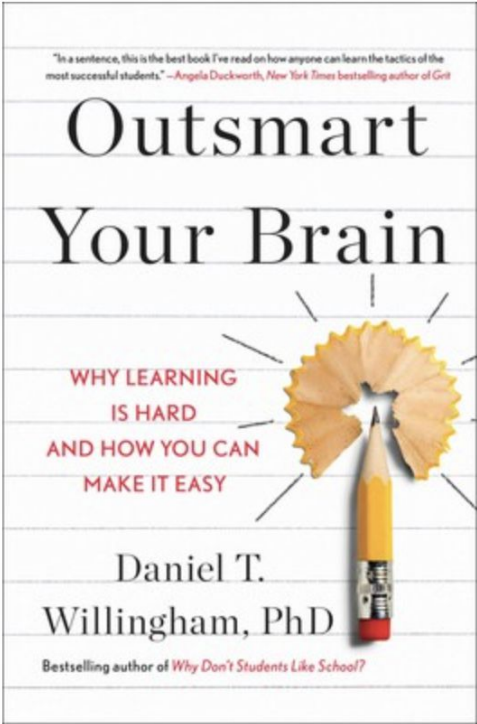
[Module 4: Course
Wrap-Up & Final
Exam](#)



Course Materials



Authentic materials: Book excerpts, articles



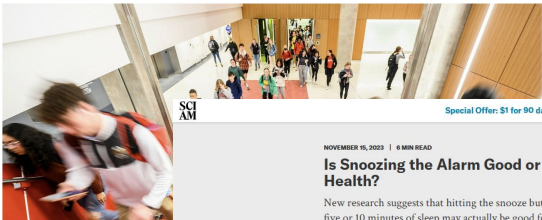
News

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Students of innovative course report significantly improved mental health and flourishing

September 21, 2022 | By Heather Harris | [🔗](#)



Special Offer: \$1 for 90 days

NOVEMBER 15, 2023 | 6 MIN READ

Is Snoozing the Alarm Good or Bad for Your Health?

New research suggests that hitting the snooze button to squeeze in an extra five or 10 minutes of sleep may actually be good for you

BY JOCELYN SOUL-MORRIS | EDITED BY LAUREN J. YOUNG



Images: book covers, news article and journal article



OER Resources: OER Commons, Pressbooks



Learning Framework: Effective Strategies for College Success

This free digital textbook serves as a companion to EDUC 1300/1200/1100 Learning Framework: Effective Strategies for College Success at Austin Community College. This book is an accessible and relevant way to explore the research and theory in the psychology of learning, cognition, and motivation as well as factors that impact learning, and the presentation of specific learning strategies. This Open Educational Resource was remixed from a previous version found at <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/austinctc-learningframeworks/> by Heather Syrett and Laura Lucas.

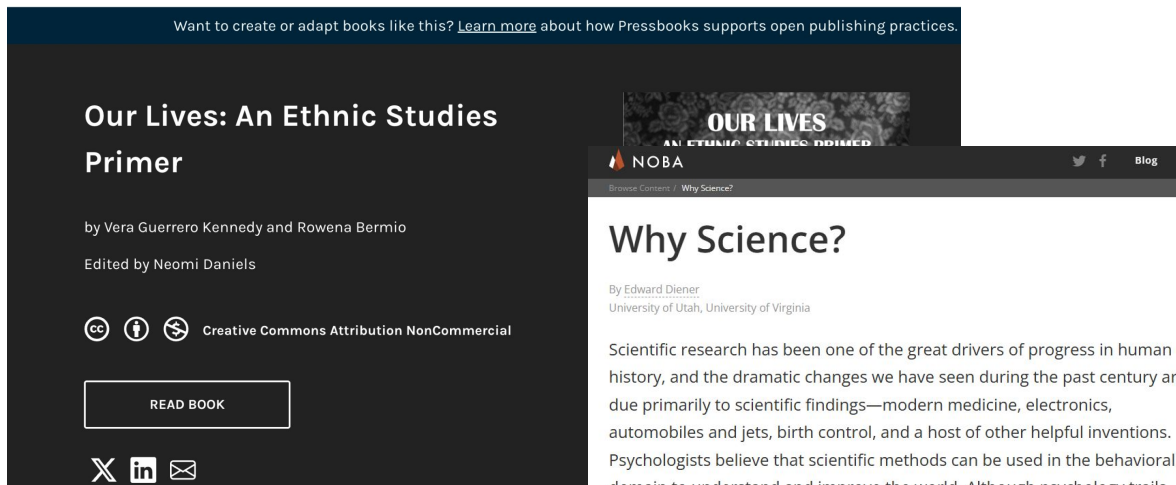
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Student Development and General Studies
Austin Community College

PB PRESSBOOKS



Images: OER resource, Pressbook, and nonprofit organization article

Scientific research has been one of the great drivers of progress in human history, and the dramatic changes we have seen during the past century are due primarily to scientific findings—modern medicine, electronics, automobiles and jets, birth control, and a host of other helpful inventions. Psychologists believe that scientific methods can be used in the behavioral domain to understand and improve the world. Although psychology trails the biological and physical sciences in terms of progress, we are optimistic based on discoveries to date that scientific psychology will make many important discoveries that can benefit humanity. This module outlines the characteristics of the science, and the promises it holds for understanding behavior. The ethics that guide psychological research are briefly described. It concludes with the reasons you should learn about scientific psychology



Online course textbook

- [Academic Reading and Vocabulary Skills Pressbook](#)
- Open educational resource
- Skills component to complement three course modules



Home Read Sign in [Search in book ...](#)

Academic Reading and Vocabulary Skills

This Pressbook was designed specifically for ESL students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

by UW-Madison ESL Program; Alejandro Azocar; Heidi Evans; Andrea Poulos; and Becky Tarver Chase



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READ BOOK

Image: Course textbook homepage



Course themes

- Identity
- Mental Health and Wellness
- Psychology: The Brain and Learning



Identify 3 topics for a Health & Wellness Unit



Learner training activities: Health & Wellness

- Develop stress awareness
- Build a stress toolkit
- Create conditions for getting sufficient sleep
- Follow a sleep schedule
- Get enough sleep



Identify 3 topics the Brain & Learning Unit



Learner training activities: The Brain & Learning

- Develop skills to be efficient and effective readers
- Support your brain with repetition for learning
- Make connections between sources
- Help learners take responsibility for their own learning
- Introduce appropriate and inappropriate use of AI



Action Research



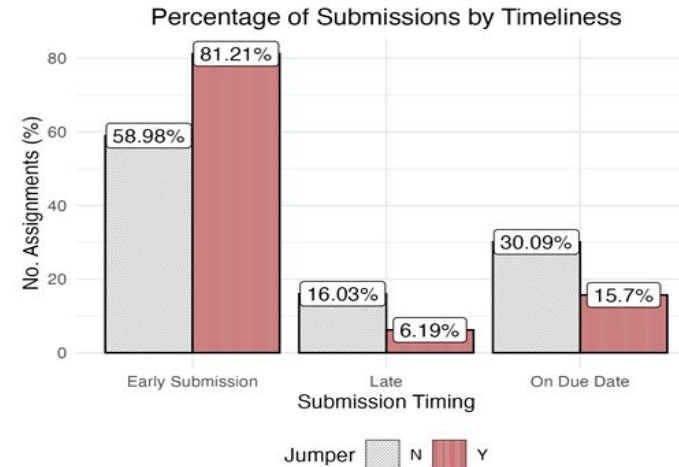
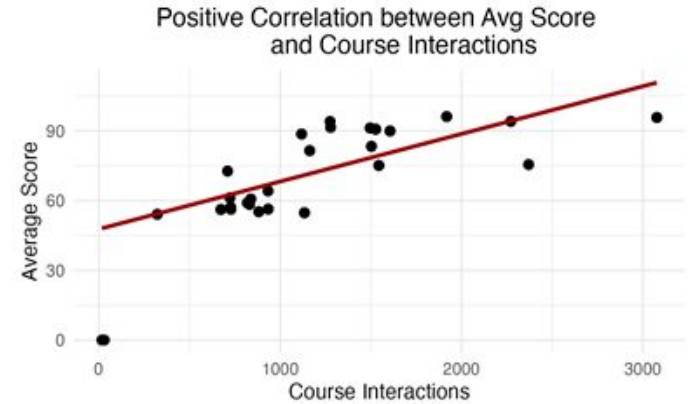
Action research

- [Data Empowered Educational Research Practices: DEEP Microgrant 2024](#)
- **Context:** Students who demonstrate the required skills can skip ESL 117 and go directly to ESL 118. These students are called "jumpers."
- **Research question:** Does engagement with the LMS (Canvas) correlate with students becoming "jumpers?"
- **Data:** Canvas analytics for Andy & Heidi's classes



Results

- Frequent LMS **engagement** leads to **higher assignment scores** and increased likelihood of jumping.
- Jumpers tend to **submit** assignments (including non-graded/low-stakes) **before the due date**.
- **Daily** LMS interaction correlates with **better overall performance**.





Implications for teachers

- Understand the **habits of successful students**.
- Offer **online resources**.
- Train students in **effective study techniques** to build habits leading to success.
- Use **nudges** (announcements, homework reminders, and assignment comments) to encourage regular logins.
- **Ask students for feedback** on how well the LMS works and make improvements.



Implications for students

- Experience **a variety of study techniques**. Find what works best for each student.
- Increase **LMS engagement**. Log in daily.
- **Preview** content before class and **review** content after class to enhance preparation and success.
- Complete **homework**. Submit work early or on time.



Identify 3 takeaways



Empowering learners

- Self-reflection
- Toolkit of health & wellness tips and resources
- Supporting the brain
- Learner strategy training
- Repetition and connections make a difference
- Relevance and transferability of content
- Developing an ethical approach to using AI



Questions & Answers



Thank you for your participation!

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Heidi Evans

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Additional Resources



Selected resources for health & wellness theme

- [Students of innovative course report significantly improved mental health and flourishing](#) (University of Wisconsin news article)
- [OER Commons: Effective Strategies for College Success: Ch. 16: Managing your Mental \(and Physical\) Health](#)
- [Why We Sleep](#) (book excerpt)
- [Sleep Better at Every Age](#) (*New York Times* article)
- [Is snoozing the alarm good or bad for your health?](#) (*Scientific American* article)



Selected resources for the brain & learning theme

- [Outsmart your brain: Why learning is hard and how you can make it easy](#) (book excerpt)
- Non-profit organizations: [Noba and the Diener Education Fund](#)
 - [Diener, E. \(2024\). Why science? In R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener \(Eds\), Noba textbook series: Psychology. Champaign, IL: DEF publishers. Retrieved from <http://noba.to/qu4abpzy>](#)
- [College of the Canyons OER Textbooks](#)
 - [Learning to Learn: An Open Educational Resources Publication by College of the Canyons. Zero Textbook Cost. Counseling 142. Version 1.0](#) (selected excerpts)
- [OER Commons: Metacognition](#)



Additional resources

- Luo, T., Hostetler, K., Freeman, C., & Stefaniak, J. (2020). The power of open: Benefits, barriers, and strategies for integration of open educational resources. *Open Learning*, 35(2), 140–158.
- Mullens, A. M., & Hoffman, B. (2023). The affordability solution: A systematic review of open educational resources. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(3), 1–44.