

# Moral Emotions Inside

## *Dillwynia 2023*



*Moral Emotions Inside* was a twelve-week course of philosophy and creative writing classes conducted at Dillwynia correctional centre. Students studied moral emotions like grief, love, and forgiveness in an intensive seminar format with lecturers from the University of Sydney, established a vibrant and respectful learning community, and applied their knowledge and experience in a self-led capstone project.

### Overview

*Moral Emotions Inside* involved weekly assigned reading and writing activities intended to develop time management skills, discipline, independent thinking, and creative expression. Over twelve weeks, students studied topics that stimulate the kinds of active learning, self-reflection, and collaborative work that research suggests are effective in supporting intellectual development, pro-social skills, and positive well-being outcomes for incarcerated people. Students engaged in:

1. Six intensive seminars on moral emotions that were developed in a co-design session with lecturers from the University of Sydney.
2. Three seminars given by guest lecturers from across the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
3. One self-led capstone project.

### Aims

Corrections NSW is moving towards an emphasis on desistance, which requires “a permanent and positive shift in a person’s identity and sense of belonging”; it is “different for each individual” and is facilitated by “positive life changes that enhance an individual’s strengths and build positive social capital and resilience.”<sup>1</sup> *Moral Emotions Inside* was designed to promote desistance by:

- Helping students build their confidence and self-worth via collaborative discussion and creative reflection.
- Developing students’ self-awareness and openness to others through engagement with philosophically challenging material.
- Promoting a sense of belonging by building an engaged cohort with shared goals.
- Encouraging positive social attributes like discipline, active listening, creativity, and resilience.
- Developing students’ professional skills in writing, problem-solving, and interpersonal negotiation.

	Weeks												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Seminars	Intensive seminars centred on six moral emotions												
Guest Lectures								Seminars with guest lecturers from FASS disciplines					
Projects							Self-guided project development				Co-design session		

“This course gave us a sense of **freedom** – the freedom to **think**, to express our **thoughts**, and our **feelings**.”

1. <https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au/reducing-re-offending/targets.html>

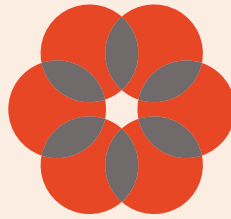
# Student Outcomes



## Taking Responsibility

Students completed weekly reading assignments, which included academic philosophical work and poetry. They completed weekly creative writing tasks and optional philosophy homework. These tasks prompted reflection on their experience of the moral emotions. Students were instrumental in co-designing their studies. They took responsibility for their own ideas by engaging in collaborative discussion and developing their perspective in dialogue with their peers.

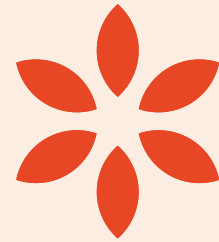
“Beyond the lectures and discussions, we have learned how to think, to be more aware of our surroundings, **how to be more considerate of others.**”



## Community and Belonging

Students were invited to express their thoughts and emotions in a learning environment that prioritised empathy, acceptance, and respectful debate. The classroom became a safe space where students developed relationships built on trust and understanding. Educational officers and other members of the Dillwynia community praised the ways in which the course had positively influenced the environment of the centre.

“**We felt safe in the space we were in.** It has helped us to relate more to others and to realise that we were not alone in the battle we were fighting, that we are not alone in what we were feeling.”



## Self-expression

Students responded to the course in creative and critical ways that expressed their individual histories, vulnerabilities and aspirations. They shared poems and reflections that demonstrated a commitment to self-examination and a high degree of trust in their peers. Capstone projects exhibited dedication and creative passion. These projects included books of poetry, personal essays, and collage journalism.

“It has taught us more than just to read poetry and its meaning, but to **reach within ourselves and our own feelings of how we can relate to it,** how we can draw our own experiences and turn them into our own masterpieces.”



# What's Next?

## Other Centres

We are seeking support from Corrections and other institutions to run *Moral Emotions Inside* in another NSW prison in 2024. Our ambition is to establish a suite of university offerings across NSW prisons and Youth Justice centres by 2028.

## Reading Groups

We are training students from the University of Sydney to lead reading groups at Dillwynia with the aim of maintaining a continuous connection to the vibrant learning community established this year as we take *Moral Emotions Inside* to another facility.

## Dillwynia Library Project

We facilitated a School of Humanities book drive in September-October 2023 which has established a lasting connection between The University and the Dillwynia library. We are collaborating with Corrections library staff to expand this initiative and increase access to educational materials in other NSW prisons.