

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS, SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Wesleyan University
Graduate Liberal Studies
Fall 2020

Positive Psychology Science and Practice: How to Be Happy

Instructor: Jennifer D'Andrea, PhD

Class Meetings: Thursdays 7:00 – 8:30 PM with additional 1 hour per week of class work to be scheduled by student

Location: Your Computer

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Course Description

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of human happiness. The field has compiled an enormous research base offering evidence of the fundamental components of well-being and flourishing. This course will draw on scientific research in combination with in-class discussion, exercises, and media presentations in order to teach students scientifically driven practices for building a more satisfying life. The course will utilize two textbooks and incorporate supplemental readings, movies, and videos. Because the field informs us that simple knowledge of theory and research is insufficient for personal change, a portion of each class will be devoted to participation in both group and individual exercises that students are expected to continue to work on outside of class. Course requirements include readings, short and longer reflection papers, and both in-class and out-of-class activities, exercises, and assignments that intend to help students put theory and research into practice and begin to develop “happiness habits” they will continue to develop after the conclusion of the course.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- Critique, discuss, and apply the positive psychology research literature.
- Apply core theories, science, and application of positive psychology to psychological, emotional, and biological processes.
- Develop strategies to better utilize and capitalize on their personal strengths in order to improve their happiness.
- Develop a plan for integrating positive psychology concepts and strategies into their day-to-day lives.
- Put into effect a “personal happiness plan” for use in their lives beyond the completion of the course.

REQUIRED READING

Lopez, Pedrotti, & Snyder (2019). *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths 4th Edition*.

- *For students who do not wish to purchase this text book, selected chapters will be uploaded to the course moodle.*

Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The How of Happiness*. New York: Penguin Press.

In addition to these texts, the course will make use of journal articles that will be posted to the course moodle.

ASSIGNMENTS

Written reflections on readings (posted to Moodle)
Written responses to peer reflections (posted to Moodle)
Class discussion
In- and out-of-class activities and exercises
Happiness journal
Final Project: Personal Happiness Plan

Assessment

Written reflections:	25%
In-Class Participation:	20%
Activities:	25%
Happiness Journal (ungraded):	10%
Final Project:	20%

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes. If unable to attend a class meeting, students must alert the instructor in advance and develop a plan for completing the material.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Classes 1, 2, and 3

- Introduction to Positive Psychology
- What does NOT make us happy? (Debunking myths)
- Using a wider lens: a global perspective of happiness

Text Readings:

Lopez text Chapters 1 and 2

SL text Chapters 1 and 2

Articles:

Hamblin (2014). Buy experiences, not things. *The Atlantic*, October 7 2014.

Joshanloo (2014). Eastern conceptualizations of happiness: fundamental differences with Western views. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15, 475-493.

Joshanloo & Weijers (2014). Aversion to happiness across cultures: a review of where and why people are averse to happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15, 717-735.

Oishi, Graham, Kenhir, & Galinha. (2013). Concepts of happiness across time and cultures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39 (5), 559 – 577.

Seligman, Martin. (2019). Positive Psychology: A personal history. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 15, 1-23.

Out-Of-Class Activities:

Go to authentic happiness website and complete VIA

Begin (personal) Happiness Journal with reflection about outcome of VIA assessment

Watch documentary *Happy*

Moodle post – reflection on readings

Respond to one classmate's Moodle post

Classes 4, 5, and 6

- Positive Emotions
- Optimism
- Resilience and Grit

Text Readings:

Lopez text Chapters 6, 7, 8

SL text Chapters 4, 7, 10

Articles:

Croft, Dunn, & Quiodbach (2014). From tribulations to appreciation: experiencing adversity in the past predicts greater savoring in the present. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 55, 511-516.

Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen (2001). Positive emotions in early life and longevity: findings from the nun study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 804-813.

Fredrickson et. al. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crises? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 365-376.

Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel. (2008). Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1045-1062.

Kok, Coffey, Cohn, Catalano.... et. al. (2013). How positive emotions build physical health: perceived positive social connections account for the upward spiral between positive emotions and vagal tone. *Psychological Science*, 24, 1123-1132.

Out of Class Activities:

Moodle posts – reflection on readings

Moodle posts – respond to a classmate's reflection

Authentic Happiness website – complete optimism assessment

Happiness Journal -- reflection on the outcome of optimism assessment

Practice – reflect upon and intentionally reframe a negative event occurring between classes

Practice – reflect upon personal attributions for a positive event occurring between classes

Practice – intentionally engage in savoring a few times throughout the week.

Journal – about practice reflections in Happiness journal

Watch documentary: *Lost Boys of Sudan*

Small group – share outcomes of optimism assessment and practice activities, and discuss ideas for a happiness plan that will lead to greater optimism.

Small group – gather to discuss *Lost Boys of Sudan*. What place does this film have in the course?

Classes 7 and 8

- Engagement
- Achievement
- Flow

Text Readings:

Lopez text Chapters 10 and 15

SL text Chapter 8

Articles:

Bartz, D. (2018). Managers effectively using positive psychology and its attributes of flow, mindfulness, mindset, optimism, and happiness. *International Journal of Education and Human Developments*, 4(4), 26-32.

Schiffer, L.P and Roberts, TA. (2018). The paradox of happiness: Why are we not doing what we know makes us happy? *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13 (3), 252-259.

Raettig, T. and Weger, U. (2018). Learning as a shared peak experience: interactive flow in higher education. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 2, 39-60.

Tse et. al (2018). Teamwork and flow proneness mitigate the negative effect of excess challenge on flow state. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(3), 284-289.

Tse et. el (2020). Living well by “flowing” well: The indirect effect of autotelic personality on well-being through flow experience. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1-12.

Out-Of-Class Activities:

Moodle posts – reflection on readings

Moodle posts – respond to a classmate’s reflection

Practice – carve out time between classes to engage in an activity likely to allow a flow state.

Journal – reflect on experience of flow and impact on subjective well-being afterward

Journal -- how might the concept of flow be brought into your daily life at work or at home? Sketch a plan for implementation.

Small group between classes – gather and discuss flow practice and reflection. Share proposed plans for experiencing flow in daily life. Offer feedback to group members.

Classes 9, 10, and 11

- Connection
- Meaning

Text Readings:

Lopez Text: Chapters 11, 12

SL text: Chapters 5, 6, 9

Articles:

Bakshi, A. (2019). Happiness is not a luxury: An interview with Ed Diener. *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling, 47(2), 258-262.*

Chopk et. al. (2019). Gratitude across the lifespan: Age differences and links to subjective well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 14(3), 292-302.*

Diener et. al (2018). Happiest people revisited. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 13(2), 176-184.*

Gable, Impelt, & Asher. (2004). What do you do when things go right? The intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits of sharing positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 87, 228-245.*

Jeter, W. and Brannon, L. (2018). "I'll make it up to you:" Examining the effect of apologies on forgiveness. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 13(6), 597-604.*

McCullough, M. (2001). Forgiveness: Who does it and how do they do it?" *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10(6), 194-197.*

Piff et. al. (2015). Awe, the small self, and prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Prosocial Psychology, 108(6), 883-899.*

Robert, E. and McCullough, M. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84(2), 377-389.*

Van Cappellen, P. et. al. (2016). Religion and Well-being: The mediating role of positive emotions. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 17, 484-505.*

Witvliet, C et. al. (2001). Granting forgiveness or harboring grudges: Implications for emotion, physiology, and health. *Psychological Science, 12(2), 117-123.*

Out-Of-Class Activities:

Moodle posts – reflect on readings

Moodle posts – respond to classmate's reflection

Watch Documentary: *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*

Happiness Journal – reflect on the state of the relationships in your life. Are there any that are neglected and in need of care? Develop a plan to cultivate stronger relationships with family, friends, coworkers.

Practice – at least once between classes, work on improving a relationship. Reflect on the experience in your journal and the impact on your well-being.

Happiness Journal – write a gratitude letter. Consider what it would be like to deliver it to the person to whom it is written. Write a reflection about the experience.

Happiness journal – reflection about forgiveness and its place in your life. Is there anyone you are holding a grudge against, whom you might consider forgiving?

Practice – small experiences of transcendence throughout the week. Connect to larger meaning through nature, relationships, spirituality. Carve out time at least twice between classes to connect to meaning.

Happiness journal – reflection on transcendence practice.

Small group – discuss the documentary Forgiving Dr. Mengele – thoughts, reactions, impressions.

Class 12

- The downside of happiness
- Second wave positive psychology

Articles:

Bhatia, S. (2019). Searching for justice in an unequal world: Reframing indigenous psychology as a cultural and political project. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 39(2), 107-114.

Cohen, A. and Bai, H. (2019). Eastern wisdom, inner work, and aging: a contribution in second wave positive psychology. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 32(3-4), 472-487.

Flora, K. (2019). Second wave positive psychology: beyond the dichotomy of positive and negative and the consequences in the practice of psychotherapy. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 32(3-4), 333-340.

Lomas, T. and Ivtzan, I. (2016). Second wave positive psychology: Exploring the positive-negative dialectics of well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 1753-1768.

Marino (2008). In praise of Disappointment. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. p. 1.

Wong, P. (2019). Second wave positive psychology's (PP 2.0) contribution to counselling psychology. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 32 (3-4), 275-284.

Out of Class Activities:

Moodle post – post reflection on readings

Moodle post – post response to classmate's reflection

Happiness Journal – how does second wave psychology affect your learning and growth so far?

Final Project – Complete happiness plan. From your readings, reflections, and practices over the course of the semester, develop a plan for increasing your well-being over the coming months. Be ready to present/discuss at last class.

Class 13

- Wrap-up

Presentation of final projects – let's hear about your happiness plans. What worked for you this semester? What did not? What can you put into place quickly, what is a more long-term project?

Final thoughts.