

Wesleyan University  
Winter Session  
2023

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## **The Science of Happiness**

Instructor: Jennifer D'Andrea, PhD

Class Meetings: Monday – Friday  
10 AM – 12 PM and 1 PM – 3 PM

Class Meeting Dates: January 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>  
January 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>  
January 23<sup>rd</sup>

Location: Your Computer – see course Moodle for zoom link

Email: [jdandrea@wesleyan.edu](mailto:jdandrea@wesleyan.edu)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Positive Psychology is the study of human happiness. The field has compiled an enormous research base offering evidence of the fundamental components of well-being and flourishing. While early work utilized a narrow, Western definition of happiness, the discipline later broadened its focus to include traditionally Eastern concepts such as social harmony and compassion. More recently, the field has been redefined through second wave positive psychology and a newly emerging third wave positive psychology, both of which seek to break free from the binary concepts of “positive” and “negative” in favor of a dialectic approach while utilizing concepts of flourishing through suffering found in indigenous psychology, as well as including models for systemic change found in social work, sociology, and economics.

This course will trace the history and development of Positive Psychology from its inception to the current state of the field, utilizing selected chapters from a Positive Psychology text supplemented by journal articles. Core concepts will be discussed and critiqued. Students will be required to keep “flourishing journals” and complete out-of-class activities for the purpose of personal reflection upon and practice of individual experiences of happiness. Additional course requirements include 5 short reflection papers, in-class discussion and a final project.

### **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.
- Apply concepts of first wave, second wave, and third wave positive psychologies on both a macro/systemic and micro/individual level.
- Develop an individualized plan for the integration of salient positive psychology concepts into everyday life.

## **REQUIRED READING**

Selected chapters from:

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

- *All Chapters will be uploaded to the course Moodle.*
- *In addition to selected text chapters, journal articles will be assigned reading for each class meeting.*
- ***All required reading will be uploaded to the course Moodle.***

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**Class discussion**

**In- and out-of-class activities and exercises**

**Flourishing journal**

- Journal entries are based upon individual reflection exercises and practice activities completed in and out of class time

**5 short reflection papers**

- 3-5 pages based upon readings, activities, and discussions
- Papers can be emailed to me or uploaded to course Moodle
- Due by 11:59 PM on the following dates:
  - Class 1 January 10<sup>th</sup>
  - Class 3 January 12<sup>th</sup>
  - Class 5 January 17<sup>th</sup>
  - Class 7 January 19<sup>th</sup>
  - Class 9 January 23<sup>rd</sup>

**Final Project: Personal Flourishing Plan**

- Class participants will submit a personalized flourishing plan developed from readings, discussions, journal reflections, and activities conducted throughout the course.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

Class Attendance:	20%	
In-Class Participation:	20%	
Flourishing Journal (ungraded):	10%	<b>Due Friday January 27<sup>th</sup></b>
Reflection Papers	30%	<b>See above for Dates</b>
Final Project:	20%	<b>Due Friday January 27<sup>th</sup></b>

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Tues January 10<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to Positive Psychology**

#### **Reflection Paper #1 Due at 11:59 PM**

**Text:**

Lopez Chapter 1

**Articles:**

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

Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008). Positive psychology, ethnocentrism, and the disguised ideology of individualism. *Theory and Psychology* 18(5), 563-589.

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

Peters & Marek. (2020.) The snake oil charms of positive psychology. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52:11, 1116-1119.

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

Snow (2019). Positive psychology, the classification of character strengths and virtues, and issues of measurement. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14:1, 20-31.

### **Weds January 11<sup>th</sup>: Using A Wider Lens**

**Text:**

Lopez Chapters 2 and 4

**Articles:**

Bonn and Tafarodi (2013). Visualizing the good life: a cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of Happiness Studies* (14), 1839-1856.

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.

Layous et. al. (2013). Culture matters when designing a successful happiness-increasing activity: a comparison of the US and South Korea. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 44(8), 1294-1303.

## Thurs January 12<sup>th</sup>: An American Happiness: Positivity And Goal Pursuit

### Reflection Paper #2 Due 11:59 PM

#### Text:

Lopez Chapters 6 and 8

#### Articles:

Cypryanska & Nezlek (2018). Everyone can be a winner: The benefits of competing in organized races for recreational runners. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14(6), 749-755.

Danner et. al. (2001). Positive emotions in early life and longevity: findings from the nun study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(5), 804-913.

Frederickson et. al. (2008). Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95(5), 1045-1062.

Hill & Turiano (2014). Purpose in life as a predictor of mortality across adulthood. *Psychological Science*, 25(7), 1482-1486.

Liang et. al. (2017). The four Ps of purpose among College Bound students: people, propensity, passion, prosocial benefits. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 281-294.

## Friday January 13<sup>th</sup>: The Trouble With Resilience

#### Text:

Lopez Chapter 5

#### Articles:

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.

Okeke-Ihejirika et. al. (2020). Re-envisioning resilience from African immigrants' perspectives. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 52(3), 129-149.

Vella & Pai (2019). Theoretical review of psychological resilience: defining resilience and resilience research over the decades. *Archives of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 7(2), 233-238.

#### Blog Posts:

<http://teresachinn.co.uk/the-problem-with-resilience/>

<https://idronline.org/the-problem-with-resilience-as-we-know-it-mental-health-wellbeing/>

**Monday January 16<sup>th</sup>: NO CLASS – MLK Day**

**Tuesday January 17<sup>th</sup>: Gratitude, Spirituality, Transcendence, Flow**

**Reflection Paper #3 Due 11:59 PM**

**Text:**

Lopez Chapter 10 Spirituality Section

Lopez Chapter 10 Flow Section

Lopez Chapter 11 Gratitude Section

**Articles:**

Boggio et. al. (2020). Writing about gratitude increases emotion regulation efficacy. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 15(5), 598-604.

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

Emmons & McCullough (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.

Hariharan & Kapoor (2020). Impact of practicing spirituality on psychological well-being. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(3), 252-257.

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

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.

Shin et. al. (2020). Gratitude in collectivistic and individualist cultures. *Journal of Positive Psychology* 15(5), 598-604.

## **Wednesday January 18<sup>th</sup>: Connections – Relationships, Empathy, Altruism, Forgiveness**

### **Text:**

Lopez Chapter 11 (empathy and altruism sections)

Lopez Chapter 12 (forgiveness section)

### **Articles:**

Back and Guse (2015). The effect of contemplation and meditation on 'great compassion' on the psychological well-being of adolescents. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 10(4), 359-369.

Brannon et. al. (2013). Friends and family: a cross-cultural investigation of social support and subjective well-being among college students. *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 8(1), 65-75.

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 & Brannon (2018). I'll make it up to you: examining the effect of apologies on forgiveness. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(6), 597-604.

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

Waters et. al. (2020). Positive psychology in a pandemic: buffering, bolstering, and building mental health. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1-21.

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

## **Thursday January 19<sup>th</sup>: Second Wave Positive Psychology: Beyond the Binary**

### **Reflection Paper #4 Due 11:59 PM**

Arslan et. al. (2021). Mediating effect of personal meaning in the prediction of life satisfaction and mental health problems based on coronavirus suffering. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-8.

Lomas (2016). The art of second wave positive psychology: harnessing Zen aesthetics to explore the dialectics of flourishing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 6(2), 14-29.

Lomas (2016). Flourishing as a dialectical balance: emerging insights from second wave positive psychology. *Palgrave Communications/Humanities/Social Sciences/Business*, 1-5.

Lomas & Ivtzan (2015). Second wave positive psychology: exploring the positive-negative dialectics of wellbeing. *Journal of Happiness Studies* (17), 1753-1768.

## Friday January 20<sup>th</sup>: First Wave and Second Wave Positive Psychology Interventions

### Articles:

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.

Hendricks et. al. (2018). How WEIRD are positive psychology interventions? A bibliometric analysis of randomized controlled trials on the science of well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14(4), 489-501.

Ivtzan et. al. (2018). Mindfulness-based flourishing program: A cross-cultural study of Hong Kong Chinese and British participants. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 19, 2205-2223.

Winter, Plumb et. al. (2018). Goal-focused positive psychotherapy: an integration of positive psychology and psychotherapy. *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 47(2), 223-233.

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

Wong, P. (2020). Existential positive psychology and integrative meaning therapy. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 32(7-8), 565-578.

## Monday January 23<sup>rd</sup>: Third Wave Positive Psychology: Beyond the Individual

### Reflection Paper #5 Due 11:59 PM

### 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.

Kern et. al. (2019). Systems-informed positive psychology. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 15(6), 705-715.

Lomas et. al. (2020). Third wave positive psychology: broadening toward complexity. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1-15.

Sinclair & Lomas. (2020). Can positivity be counterproductive when suffering domestic abuse: a narrative review. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 10(1), 26-53.

Yakushko & Blodgett (2021). Negative reflections about positive psychology: on constraining the field to focus on happiness and personal fulfillment. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 6(1), 104-131.

## Friday January 27<sup>th</sup>:

- **Final Project Due 11:59 PM**
- **Flourishing Journal Due 11:59 PM**