

## **Positive Psychology Psychology 395**

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Class Meetings: Parmly Hall 306 MWF 11:15 – 12:10  
Office Hours: MWF 1:30 – 3 or by appointment

Positive psychology is an empirical field that synthesizes research on positive subjective experiences (happiness, pleasure, well-being), individual traits (character strengths and virtues), and social institutions (families, schools, businesses, religious organizations, civic organizations) that enable individuals and communities to thrive. We will survey the field and use primary source material to deepen our understanding of its scientific methodology. We will also explore its applications in personal, clinical, community, and professional contexts.

### **Learning Objectives**

- 1) Explore the historical, cultural, and empirical contexts in which the field of positive psychology has emerged.
- 2) Critically analyze basic and applied research on affective, cognitive, social, biological, and behavioral aspects and correlates of happiness.
- 3) Sample potential pathways to well-being through experiential learning.
- 4) Engage in a proactive and thoughtful process of self-examination with regard to personal ideals, goals, and mechanisms of happiness.

### **Course Process and Grading**

This course uses a writing-to-learn approach. Writing is a very effective tool for engaging with new information. Through the act of writing, we can actively process the content of what we have read and critically analyze it. Through writing, we stumble across linkages with other elements of our knowledge base and our personal experience that contribute to our understanding of new information. In this process, we develop new ideas and opinions about the material.

**Writing Portfolio (30%)**: The writing portfolio will contain reading responses and brief reports about experiential learning projects. For each class period marked with a WP on the schedule, please type and bring to class a writing portfolio entry. In some cases, specific prompts will be given for entries. If no prompt is provided, write a response to one of the readings for that day. Reading responses may take a variety of forms (e.g., observations, linkages of the information with content from other courses or life experience, points for discussion, questions about the material). Entries will be submitted in each relevant class meeting, and at the end of the semester you will turn in the complete collection of your entries. The WP will serve four very important functions. It will:

- Help you to read materials with a more critical eye and process content more actively
- Provide me with a consistent measure of your engagement with the material
- Supply intriguing discussion topics within each class meeting
- Reflect your intellectual and creative development from the beginning to the end of the course

Your writing portfolio will be evaluated as a complete body of work at the end of the term based on the degree to which it reflects:

- Consistent effort
- Mastery of concepts
- Clarity and sophistication of analysis
- Thoughtfulness, creativity, and originality
- Polish and professionalism

### Two Take Home Tests (20% each)

Themes Essay (15%): Identify and explain *three* major themes that have cut across the material we have discussed in this class. In a final conclusions section of this essay, link these themes to *two* primary take-home message(s) with which you will leave this course.

Class Participation (15%): Attend each class. Be prepared. Contribute to class discussions. Briefly present about and help moderate a discussion of one article.

### **Late / Missing Assignments**

All assignments, including writing portfolio entries, are due at the designated time. Only partial credit will be awarded to WP entries that are turned in after class for any reason. Take Home Tests and Themes Essays will incur a 10-point penalty beginning at the date and time they are due and compounding daily.

### **Reading Materials**

#### Required

Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. Oxford Press.  
ISBN: 978-0195188332

Haidt, J. (2006). *The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth in ancient wisdom*. Basic Books.  
ISBN: 978-0465028023

Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2009). *Strengths-based leadership*. Gallup Press.  
ISBN: 978-1595620255

Articles on Sakai

## Working Schedule

CLASS MEETING	Class meeting	TOPIC	READING / PAGES
Mon Jan 9			
Wed Jan 11	<b>WP</b> Introduction	Introductions	Peterson Ch 1 & 2
Fri Jan 13		Constructs and measurement of happiness	Peterson Ch 3 & 4  Schueller, S., & Seligman, M. (2010). Pursuit of pleasure, engagement, and meaning: Relationships to subjective and objective measures of well-being. <i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i> , 5, 253-263.
Mon Jan 16	<b>WP</b>	Flow	HH Ch 1 (The Divided Self).  Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). If we are so rich, why aren't we happy? <i>American Psychologist</i> , 54, 821-827.
Wed Jan 18	<b>WP</b>	Evolutionary perspectives	Buss, D. (2000). The evolution of happiness. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 55, 15-23. <b>Ryan</b>
Fri Jan 20		Positive affect	Fredrickson, B. L. (2003). The value of positive emotions. <i>American Scientist</i> , 91, 330-335.  Fredrickson, B. & Losada, M. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 60, 678-686. <b>Sarah</b>
Mon Jan 23	<b>WP</b>		HH Chapter 2 (Changing Your Mind).

			Diener, E. & Diener, C. (1996). Most people are happy. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 7, 181-185.
Wed Jan 25	<b>WP</b>	Pursuing happiness	Lyubormirsky, S., Sheldon, K., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 9, 111-131.
Fri Jan 27		Meditation	Slagter, Davidson, & Lutz (2011). Mental training as a tool in the neuroscientific study of brain and cognitive plasticity. <i>Frontiers in Human Neuroscience</i> , doi:10.3389/fnhum.2011.00017.  Fredrickson, B., Cohn, M., Coffey, K., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 95, 1045-1062. Miles  Davidson, R. et al. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune functioning produced by mindfulness meditation. <i>Psychosomatic Medicine</i> , 65, 564 – 570. Lauren
Mon Jan 30	Meditation with Barbara Rowe Meet in Leyburn Sacred Space	Buddhist meditation	Watch: <i>The Buddha</i>
Wed Feb 1	<b>WP</b>	Health and longevity	Cohen, S. & Pressman, S. (2006). Positive affect and health. <i>Current Directions in</i>

			<p><i>Psychological Science</i>, 15, 122-125.</p> <p>Danner, D., Snowdon, D., &amp; Friesen, W. (2001). Positive emotions in early life and longevity: Findings from the Nun Study. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 80, 804-813.</p>
Fri Feb 3		Wellness	Peterson Ch 9
Mon Feb 6	<b>WP</b>	Biological links between happiness and health	<p>Ryff, C. D., Singer, B. H., &amp; Love, G. D. (2004). Positive health: Connecting well-being with biology. <i>Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences</i>, 359, 1383-1394.</p> <p>Fredrickson, B., Mancuso, R., Branigan, C., &amp; Tugade, M. (2000). The undoing effect of positive emotions. <i>Motivation and Emotion</i>, 24, 237-258. <b>Madison</b></p>
Wed Feb 8	<b>Meditation 11:45 – 12:10</b>	Cognition	Peterson Ch 5
Fri Feb 10	<p><b>Mock Convention</b> <b>No class meeting</b></p> <p><b>Take home test due 5pm</b></p>		
Mon Feb 13	<b>WP</b> Secret good deed	<p>Affective Forecasting</p> <p>Dan Gilbert: TED</p>	<p>Gertner, J. (September 7, 2003). The futile pursuit of happiness. New York Times Magazine. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/07/magazine/the-futile-pursuit-of-happiness.html?pagewanted=all&amp;src=pm">http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/07/magazine/the-futile-pursuit-of-happiness.html?pagewanted=all&amp;src=pm</a> <b>Justin</b></p>
Wed Feb 15	<b>WP</b>	Motivation	Lyubomirsky, S. (2001).

			<p>Why are some people happier than others? The role of cognitive and motivational processes in well-being. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 56, 239-249. <b>Gina</b></p> <p>Bring results of VIA Strengths Inventory: <a href="http://www.authenticahappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires.aspx">http://www.authenticahappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires.aspx</a></p>
Fri Feb 17	Meditation 11:45 – 12:10	Strengths classification	VIA Inventory
Feb 20 - 24	<b>BREAK</b>		
Mon Feb 27	<b>WP</b>	Hedonic treadmill  Choice	<p>Schwartz, B., Ward, A., Monterosso, J., Lyubormirsky, S., White, K., &amp; Lehman, D. (2002). Maximizing versus satisficing: Happiness is a matter of choice. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 83, 1178-1197. <b>Krista</b></p> <p>Diener, E., Lucas, R., &amp; Scollon, C. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 61, 305-314.</p>
Wed Feb 29	<b>WP</b>	Human nature	HH Ch 3 (Reciprocity), 4 (Hypocrisy), 5 (Pursuit of Happiness)
Fri Mar 2		Memory	<p>Carey, B. (April 5, 2009). Brain researchers open door to editing memory. <i>The New York Times</i>. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/06/health/research/06brain.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/06/health/research/06brain.html</a></p> <p>Watch: <i>The Unbearable</i></p>

			<i>Lightness of Being</i>
Mon Mar 5	<b>WP</b>	Relationships	Peterson Ch 10
Wed Mar 7	Meditation 11:45 – 12:10	Love	HH Ch 6 (Love)
Fri Mar 9	No class meeting		
Mon Mar 12	<b>WP</b> Gratitude letter	Social Capital	Diener, E. & Oishi, S. (2005). The nonobvious social psychology of happiness. <i>Psychological Inquiry</i> , 16, 162-167.
Wed Mar 14	Phi Beta Kappa Meet 10:45–11:30  <b>WP</b>	Resilience	HH Ch 7 (Adversity)  Bonanno, G. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? <i>American Psychologist</i> , 59, 20-28. Victoria
Fri Mar 16		Strengths, Values, and Interests	Peterson Ch 6, 7, 8
Mon Mar 19	<b>WP</b>	Strengths	Dahlsgaard, K., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2005). Shared virtue: The convergence of valued human strengths across culture and history. <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 9, 203-213.  Peterson, C., Ruch, W., Beermann, U., Park, N., & Seligman, M. (2007). Strengths of character, orientations to happiness, and life satisfaction. <i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i> , 2, 149-156. Kelsey

Wed Mar 21	<b>WP</b>	Virtue	HH Ch 8 (Virtue)
Fri Mar 23	Meditation <b>11:15 – 11:45</b> Leyburn Sacred Space	Enabling Institutions	Peterson Ch 11  Diener, E. (2006). Guidelines for national indicators of subjective well-being and ill-being. <i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i> , 7, 397-404. <b>Charlotte</b>
Mon Mar 26	<b>WP</b>  Take home test due 5pm	Religion & Elevation	HH Ch 9 (Divinity).  King, P. & Furrow, J. (2004). Religion as a resource for positive youth development: Religion, social capital, and moral outcomes. <i>Developmental Psychology</i> , 40, 703-713. <b>Katie</b>
Wed Mar 28	Tasha Walsh	Leadership and Professional Applications of Positive Psychology	Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2009). <i>Strengths-based leadership</i> . Gallup Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Parts One &amp; Three</li> <li>• Complete Questionnaire</li> <li>• Read sections on your Top 5 strengths</li> </ul>
Fri Mar 30	<b>WP</b>	Leadership	
Mon Apr 2	<b>WP</b>	Leadership	
Wed Apr 4	<b>Writing Portfolio due</b>	Where to go from here  Savoring  Meaning of life	Peterson Ch 12  Lyubormirsky, S. (2007). <i>The how of happiness</i> (pp. 190-204). Penguin Press.  HH Ch 10 (Meaning)
Fri Apr 6	Meditation RE Lee Episcopal Church Labyrinth		
Mon Apr 9	<b>Themes Essay due @ 5pm via email</b>		