

Wesleyan University
Winter Session
2024

The Science of Happiness

Instructor: Jennifer D'Andrea, PhD

Class Meetings: Tuesday – Friday
9 AM – 12 PM and 1 PM – 3 PM

Class Meeting Dates: January 9th – 12th
January 16th – 19th

Location: Your Computer – see course Moodle for zoom link

Email: 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 4 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 4th 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

4 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 9th
 - Class 3 January 11th
 - Class 5 January 16th
 - Class 7 January 18th

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%	Due Monday January 22nd
Reflection Papers	25%	See above for Dates
Final Project:	25%	Due Monday January 22nd

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 9th: 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 Hickenbottom (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 10th: 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.

Kinghorn et. al. (2019). Putting virtues in context: engaging the VIA classification of character strengths in caregiving for orphans and vulnerable children across cultures. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 14(6)*, 845-853.

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.

Shin et. al. (2020). Good for self or good for others? The well-being benefits of kindness in two cultures depend on how the kindness is framed. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 15(6)*, 795-805.

Xianglong Zeng et. al. (2020). Appreciative joy rooted in Chinese cultures its relationship with strengths in Values In Action. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 15(1)*, 112-121.

Thurs January 11th: An American Happiness: Positivity, Goal Pursuit, and Resilience

Reflection Paper #2 Due 11:59 PM

Positivity/Goal Pursuit Readings:

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.

Resilience Readings:

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/>

Friday January 12th: Gratitude, Spirituality, Transcendence, Flow

Text:

Lopez Chapter 10 Spirituality Section

Lopez Chapter 10 Flow Section

Lopez Chapter 11 Gratitude Section

Articles:

Bussing et. al. (2021). Awe/gratitude as an experiential aspect of spirituality and its association to perceived positive changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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, T.A. (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.

Wachholtz & Pargament (2004). Is spirituality a critical ingredient of meditation?

Tuesday January 16th: Connections: Fun, Empathy, Altruism, Forgiveness

Reflection Paper #3 Due 11:59 PM

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.

Gall & Bilodeau (2020). The role of forgiveness as a coping response to intimate partner stress.

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

Reis et. al. (2017). Fun is more fun when others are involved. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(6), 547-557.

Smallen (2019). Practicing forgiveness: a framework for a routine forgiveness practice.

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

Wednesday January 17th: Second Wave Positive Psychology: Beyond the Binary

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 (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.

Van Tongeren & Van Tongeren (2021). Finding meaning amidst COVID-19: An existential positive psychology model of suffering. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-10

Thursday January 18th: First Wave and Second Wave Positive Psychology Interventions

Reflection Paper #4 Due 11:59 PM

Articles:

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.

Wong & Yu (2021). Existential suffering in palliative care: An existential positive psychology perspective. *Medicina*, 57, 924.

Friday January 19th: Third Wave Positive Psychology: Beyond the Individual

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.

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 (2018). Don't worry, be happy: erasing racism, sexism, and poverty in positive psychology. *Psychotherapy Politics International, 16*, 1-13.

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.

Monday January 22nd:

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