

Wesleyan University
Winter Session
2025

The Science of Happiness

Instructor: Jennifer D'Andrea, PhD

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

Class Meeting Dates: January 7th – 10th
January 14th – 17th

Location: Your Computer

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 and flourishing. 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 7th
 - Class 3 January 9th
 - Class 5 January 14th
 - Class 7 January 16th

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 20th
Reflection Papers	25%	See above for Dates
Final Project:	25%	Due Monday January 20th

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 7th: 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.

Lomas (2023). Exploring associations between income and wellbeing: new global insights from a Gallup world poll. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 1-18*.

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 8th: 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.

Krys et. al. (2022). Introduction to a culturally sensitive measure of wellbeing: combining life satisfaction and interdependent happiness across 49 different cultures. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 24*, 607-627.

Layout 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.

Thurs January 9th: 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.

Resilience Readings:

Text:

Lopez Chapter 5

Articles:

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.

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

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 10th: Connections Part I: Flow, Gratitude, Spirituality/Transcendence, Forgiveness

Flow readings:

Liu et. al. (2023). Flow and flourishing during the pandemic: the roles of strengths use and playful design. *The Journal of Happiness Studies*, 24, 2153-2175.

Lopez 10 flow section

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.

Gratitude readings:

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.

Lopez 11 gratitude section

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

Spirituality/Transcendence readings:

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

Lopez 10 Spirituality section

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

Forgiveness readings:

Lopez 12 forgiveness section

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.

Tuesday January 14th: Connections Part II: Relationships, Fun, and Social Media

Reflection Paper #3 Due 11:59 PM

Articles:

Bennet (2022). My very serious quest to bring fun back into my life. *New York Times*, August 21st 2022.

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.

Brown & Kuss (2020). Fear of missing out, mental wellbeing, and social connectedness: a seven-day social media abstinence trial. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 1-18.

DePaola et. al. (2020). #Happy: Constructing and sharing everyday understandings of happiness on Instagram. *Human Arenas*, 5, 469-487.

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.

Lee et. al. (2023). Does using social media increase or decrease happiness? An empirical study of Facebook users in Taiwan. *Pacific Economic Review*, 1-18.

Quinn (2021). Social media and social wellbeing in later life. *Aging and Society*, 41, 1349-1370.

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

Tkacova et. al. (2021). Social media and students' wellbeing: an empirical analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, 13, 1-19.

Wednesday January 15th: Second Wave Positive Psychology: Beyond the Binary

Excerpts from Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search For Meaning*: "Logotherapy in a Nutshell" and "Postscript 1984."

Kaftanski & Hanson (2022). Suffering, authenticity, and meaning in life: toward an integrated conceptualization of wellbeing. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1-7.

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 16th: First Wave and Second Wave Positive Psychology Interventions

Reflection Paper #4 Due 11:59 PM

First Wave Intervention Readings:

Appiah (2020). Context matters: sociocultural considerations in the design and implementation of community-based PPIs in sub-Saharan Africa. *Cultural Psychology*, 28(4), 613-639.

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.

Second Wave Intervention Readings

De Jong et. al. (2020). From shattered goals to meaning in life: life-crafting in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1-6.

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 17th: 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 20th

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