



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Course Information

Course Title: Living the Good Life: The Psychology of Happiness

Course Number: Psyc234, Section 0101

Term: Spring 2022

Credits: 3

Course Dates: From Jan 25, 2022 - May 10, 2022

Course Times: Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00-3:15 PM

Classroom: ESJ 0224

Professor: Carole W. Sebenick, PhD (she/her)

Phone: 703-951-7977

Email: sebenick@umd.edu

Graduate TA: Gloria Kim, B.S. (she/her)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00 AM-1:00 PM (contact Gloria at hkim1230@umd.edu to schedule Zoom meeting or to request in-person appointment)

Description of Course

What are the secrets to living a happy life? Can happiness be found within the context of war, a depressed economy, violence, illness, and other major stressors? Are some people born happier than others? This course will teach you the scientific process that psychologists use to study happiness (and related emotional variables) and give you the opportunity to practice applying that process in various ways. You will develop a complex and objective understanding of happiness --both as a psychological and cultural construct and as a factor of consideration in your own development.

Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- identify why and how psychologists (and professionals in related disciplines) study happiness;
- identify differences in how happiness is experienced, expressed, and defined across cultures, genders, age groups, social groups, and life conditions;
- describe biological aspects of happiness, positive and negative mood states, and stress; demonstrate understanding of the interplay of physical and emotional well-being;
- describe factors that shape an individual's happiness; how adversity affects happiness and health; and how happiness affects motivation, performance, creativity, and social relationships;
- summarize principles of positive psychology, mindfulness, and cognitive-behavioral therapy; and
- implement a plan for improving your own happiness by applying psychological research and best practices.

Required Resources

1. Diener, E. & Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. ISBN 978-1-4051-4661-6
2. Napawan, A. (2021). Happiness workbook: A CBT-based guide to fostering positivity and embracing joy. Emeryville, CA: Rockridge Press. ISBN 978-1-64876-806-4.
3. Practicing Happiness Journal (Sebenick, 2022). You are expected to maintain a journal of reflections on your practice of “happiness interventions” (strategies to improve mood, reduce stress, and shift mindset) that will be used throughout the semester. A copy will be provided to you; you are invited to modify/elaborate/decorate to meet your needs.
4. Other readings, audio recordings, and video recordings will be assigned. Links are featured in Canvas modules.

Reminder about audio and video recordings: Technology offers many educational and experiential resources but also exposes us to opportunities for businesses to capture our attention and attempt to profit. Use of materials from external sources does not imply my endorsement of advertisements or of specific host websites; I am inviting your scholarly consideration of the instructional content only. To limit distractions of non-related content, I encourage you to use full-screen viewing of videos, to skip through ads, and to avoid scrolling through comments, etc.

Recommended Application

*The Tapping Solution® app team has generously provided free access to the premium version of this guided meditation app to all students in my class section who wish to use it and who register for the app using their umd.edu or terpmail.umd.edu email address within the first two weeks of class. **Disclaimer:** *I have no personal, professional, or financial relationship to the company and receive no incentives for your use. You may receive advertisements about future purchase of an app subscription after free semester-long access from the company, sent to the email address you provide for the complimentary subscription.*

Course Structure

This course has 15 week-long units, comprised of (a) two weekly class meetings—one focused primarily on theory and real-world applications, and the second involving a “deep dive” into research findings, (b) out-of-class Canvas discussion groups that are mandatory, (c) personal practice of cognitive/behavioral strategies, and (d) out-of-class reading and graded assignments.

Expectations

This course is a “hands-on and minds-on” class. Each member of the class is important. Students are expected to engage in intellectual and experiential learning activities, maintain attitudes consistent with intellectual curiosity and collegial cooperation, and demonstrate skills consistent with the science of psychology.

It is imperative that you participate regularly.

Class meetings will feature lecture, discussion, and activities that are crucial to your learning and your preparation for graded quizzes and development of graded assignments. Come to class prepared with your class journal and notes you have taken on the “Study” components of the homework assignments. The specific content of the journal is yours alone; it will not be graded or shared with classmates; but it may serve as an important personal reference for your participation in class discussion.

ACTIVITY	ATTITUDE	DEMONSTRATE
Assess	Being open to new perspectives	Understanding of scientific concepts
Study/Research	Thinking critically	Ability to summarize and critique research-based literature
Experience	Staying attentive and engaged	Ability to apply learning to real-life situations and needs
Reflect and Contribute	Treating others with respect and equity	Contribution to others’ learning

Tips for Success

1. **Participate.** Discussions are a critical part of the course. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and instructor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** Make time for your learning and practice. Give yourself plenty of time to complete assignments including extra time to handle any technology related problems. Chart out a routine for your weekly accomplishment of each component of the Assess-Study-Experience homework assignments.
3. **Use ELMS-Canvas regularly.** Canvas is your week-to-week, step-by-step guide to the semester activities, assignments, and feedback/grades. Become familiar with it and log in often.
4. **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** Canvas ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.
5. **Ask for help if needed.** If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, IT Support. If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to your instructor or GTA, and your classmates, for support.

Course Evaluation

Please submit a course evaluation through CourseEvalUM to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. You will be notified when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for this semester’s courses. Please go directly to the [Course Eval UM website](#) to complete your evaluations.

Major Assignments

The key to being productive in this course is BALANCE. While you may be eager to work well ahead of assignment due dates, you are encouraged to be patient with your learning process in the course. Homework and assignments build upon each other. The goal of the course is mastery of content through intellectual and experiential learning over time. That said, please utilize good time management to avoid procrastination.

Canvas Group Discussions

You have been assigned randomly to a Canvas Discussion Group. Because the class size is large, Canvas discussions provide important ways to share your experiences and ideas with your peers. On 5 occasions during the semester, you will be assigned graded discussion topics.

Happiness Intervention Practice and Reflective Writing

Scholarly and experiential curiosity is key to getting the most out of this class. Your class journal will guide you through weekly happiness-intervention assignments for *daily* practice. When utilizing happiness-intervention strategies, you are expected to reflect on your experience and record thoughts/feelings/opinions in a journal that will be provided to you in the first week of class.

At two points in the semester, you will submit a one-page Personal Reflection Summary about your happiness-intervention practices, evaluating the usefulness/suggestions for change/preference, etc.

Quizzes

Three (3) multiple-choice quizzes will be administered during class time throughout the semester; each will assess knowledge of important concepts covered prior to the quiz.

Research Article Review and Critique

You will find 3 research-based articles on happiness among a population of your choice. Once the articles and population have been approved by your instructor, you will select one of the articles to summarize and critique; writing a 3-page paper, you will demonstrate your knowledge of APA style and your ability to engage in scholarly analysis.

Extra Credit Options

You may earn extra credit (5% or 25 points) by writing a one-page critique of The Tapping Solution® to be completed and submitted to their app team prior to the last week of class. I will collect all critiques and compile them with no identifying information before they are submitted to the app team.

Also, you may earn extra credit (5% or 25 points) by writing a one-paragraph summary/critique of your experience consulting with either the [UM Writing Center](#) or the UM Librarian for Psychology, Emily Dienert (edeinert@umd.edu) regarding your article search and Article Review and Critique assignments.

Grading Structure

Graded Assignments

Assignment and points	Percentage %
Syllabus Quiz (25 points)	5%
Group Discussion Questions (5 @ 10 points each)	10%
Reflection Summary Paper (2 @ 50 points each)	20%
Quizzes (3 @ 50 points each)	30%
Approval of research topic/articles (50 points)	10%
Article Review/Critique (125 points)	25%
Total (500 points; possible +50 pts extra credit)	100%

Grades

Final Grade Cutoffs			
	(-)		(+)
A	90.0%	94.0%	97.0%
B	80.0%	84.0%	87.0%
C	70.0%	74.0%	77.0%
D	60.0%	64.0%	67.0%
F	<60.0%		

A+, +, A, A- denotes excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship.

B+, B, B- denotes good mastery of the subject and good scholarship.

C+, C, C- denotes acceptable mastery of the subject.

D+, D, D- denotes borderline understanding of the subject, marginal performance, and it does not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree.

F denotes failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.

Important Calendar Reminders

First Day of Classes:	January 24
Schedule Adjustment Period:	January 24 to February 4
Drop a course with "W" deadline:	April 8
Spring Break:	March 20-27
Last Day of Classes:	May 10 (no final exam in this course)

Course Agenda

Week #	Topic	Deliverable
1	Introduction to course/What is happiness?	Syllabus Quiz
2	Why is this important now? How do we study happiness?	Sign up for Tapping Solution app Discussion Group Introductions
3	Cultural perspectives on happiness/Who is the happiest?	Group Discussion Q 1
4	Psychological constructs related to happiness	
5	Determinants of happiness/Nature vs. Nurture	Quiz #1
6	The stress response and healthy lifestyle behaviors	Group Discussion Q2
7	Motivation, performance, happiness & work	Personal Reflection Paper #1
8	Attitude, gratitude, rational thinking & self-regard	Group Discussion Q3 3 Research Articles for Approval
Spring Break		
9	Mindfulness	
10	Spirituality, sense of purpose, & meaning in life	Quiz #2 and Resubmit Articles (if needed)
11	The importance of social connectedness	Group Discussion Q4
12	Adversity and happiness	Article Summary & Critique
13	The impact of environment on happiness	Group Discussion Q5
14	Age, race, gender & happiness	Quiz #3
15	Pulling it all together	Personal Reflection Paper #2 Extra Credit Assignments

Adaptability is one key to success (and happiness!). This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed. You will be informed in advance of changes, but it is your responsibility to make note of changes and amend the syllabus for your own use.

Campus Policies

University Honor Code and Plagiarism

It is your duty to make sure that you understand what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and how to properly cite sources of information. Essentially, plagiarism is using someone else's work, words, or ideas and presenting them as your own. It is academic theft and a *serious* violation of the ethical standards that protect you, your classmates, the University, and the field of psychology. For more information, please see: <http://go.umd.edu/psycethics> and contact your instructor with specific questions/concerns.

Learning in the Time of COVID

The ongoing global pandemic has created stress and adaptations that are burdensome. We will work through this! Flexibility and communication are essential to making our time together productive, supportive, and enjoyable. **The University has issued campus-wide mandates for Covid-19 vaccinations+booster/approved waivers and universal wearing of face masks indoors at all times and outdoors when around others.** Instructors and guest contributors who can maintain safe distance and who are fully vaccinated may remove masks.



While consistent physical attendance is optimal, it is essential that you keep yourself healthy and other people around you protected. If you have *any* unusual physical-health symptoms (i.e., cough or cold symptoms), or if anyone you live with has symptoms, please stay home and consult your healthcare provider or the University Health Center (<http://www.health.umd.edu>; 301-314-8184). If you test positive for Covid-19, the University requests that you notify your instructor that you need to isolate and that you contact the [HEAL line](#) for further instructions.

Equity and Inclusion

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body. Your instructors are committed to fostering an equitable classroom environment. According to your comfort and preferences, you are invited to share how you want to be referred to, both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, they/them, she/her, etc.). Pronouns do not indicate gender identity; they are simply language that fits with an individual's personal and world views. Any aspect of another person's identity should not be assumed or imposed; we will practice behaviors of respect and inclusion, as well as patience with learning new behaviors.

As a human, behavior-centered discipline, psychology values a strong understanding of diversity. Diversity refers to differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other categories of identification that make each of us both unique and connected. The Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland is committed to creating an affirming climate in which all students, staff members, and instructors are inspired to achieve their full potential.

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with your instructor if you have questions.

Resources & Accommodations

Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The **Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS)** provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact the course instructor as soon as possible so that she has sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at adsfrontdesk@umd.edu. Information about **sharing your accommodations with instructors, note taking assistance** and more is available from the **Counseling Center**.

Reporting Racism and Other Forms of Hate and Bias

If you experience racism or other forms of bias or hate in this class or in any psychology course, please consider reporting the experience to your instructor and/or to the [Department of Psychology's Diversity and Inclusion Committee](#) (reports can be made anonymously). Please also report any incidents of hate and bias to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at <https://www.diversity.umd.edu/hbrp/>.

Help with Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording/accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in this course is encouraged to use the resources listed below for support.

Fostering Terp Success: <https://www.studentaffairs.umd.edu/fostering-terp-success>

UMD Campus Pantry: <http://campuspantry.umd.edu/>

UMD Student Crisis Fund: <http://www.crisisfund.umd.edu/>

Counseling Center: <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/CS/>



This is the old Testudo logo...a happy one!