

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
Psychology 166
Spring 2009

Instructor: Angela L. Duckworth
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Wednesday 500-600PM

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Friday 11AM-Noon

Course description:

Positive psychology is the scientific study of positive experience, positive individual traits, and the institutions and practices that facilitate their development. This course reviews the history of positive psychology and the contributions this new field has made to several traditional research areas in psychology. Areas of controversy (e.g., what is happiness, how should we measure it, what determines it, can and should we deliberately increase it) will be critically examined with consideration given to conflicting viewpoints and their respective empirical support.

Lectures:

Lectures will be held on Monday and Wednesday from 2:00-3:20PM, in College Hall 200. PowerPoint slides in PDF format for the lectures will also be posted (after lecture) on Blackboard under Course Documents.

Recitations:

Attendance at a biweekly 50-minute recitation section is strongly encouraged, and the material covered in recitation section will be included in examinations. In advance of these recitations, you will complete homework assignments which typically require you to do some activity and then write a 1-page, single-spaced paper on the experience, due by 11PM on the Friday before your recitation via Blackboard but you must also bring a hard copy to class All recitation sections will be held in the Positive Psychology Center conference room, on the second floor of 3701 Market Street. Please show your Penn ID to the guard in the lobby of this building. When you submit recitation assignments on Blackboard, please use the following format: first three letters of the day of the recitation, the digits of the hour (e.g., 9 for 9AM and 11 for 11AM) or first 3 or 4 digits for recitations that start on the half hour (e.g., 930 for 9:30AM and 1030 for 10:30AM), an "R," the number of the recitation (week of Jan. 26 = 1, week of Feb. 9 = 2, etc.), last name, and first name. Example: For the first recitation, if John Doe were in the Monday 4-5pm section, his first assignment would be named "Mon4R1DoeJohn.doc." Your recitation paper should also have the following heading in the top left-hand corner of your paper:

First name Last name (e.g., John Doe)
Psych 166
Date
Recitation assignment (e.g., Gratitude letter)

Recitation times: You will sign up for one of the following recitation meetings and only attend alternative recitation meetings in the event of dire emergency: Monday 10-11am, Monday 4-5pm, Tuesday 11am-noon, Tuesday noon-1pm, Tuesday 5-6pm, Wednesday 4-5pm, Wednesday 5-6pm, Thursday 930-1030am, Thursday 1030-1130am, Thursday 4-5pm, Friday 11am-noon.

Text:

Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional required reading:

Each week, relevant original scientific papers are listed on the syllabus and posted on the class Blackboard website under Course Documents (<https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/>). Any assigned readings outside of the textbook (e.g., essays by Maya Angelou) will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading:

Grading is probably the least palatable of a teacher's responsibilities. Nevertheless, it serves a role in providing feedback to you and the institution about your performance. Your final grade for this course will be based on the following:

1. Written assignments (30%): Where specified in the syllabus, you will complete a total of eight one-page, single-spaced reflection papers. Bring your completed paper with you in hard-copy to your scheduled recitation section. Papers must be turned in by 11PM on the Friday before your recitation via Blackboard but you must also bring a hard copy to class. Any assignment received late will automatically receive a full letter grade deduction. Any assignment received more than 48 hours after this time will not be graded. There are no exceptions to this policy.
2. Short tests (30%): On 2/16, 3/18, and 4/13, there will be three short, objective tests on material covered in lecture, in readings, and in recitation sections. The format will be multiple choice and short answer. In calculating your grade, I will drop your lowest quiz score. A missed quiz will be the one whose grade is dropped. There are no make-up quizzes.
3. Final exam (40%): A comprehensive final exam will cover the entire course. A makeup final exam will be granted only if the student has a valid medical excuse (letter from a doctor or other health official) for the time of the exam.

I will use the following standard scale for assigning letter grades:

- A+ = 97 and higher
- A = 93 and higher
- A- = 90 and higher
- B+ = 87 and higher
- B = 83 and higher
- B - = 80 and higher

Re-grading:

If you have a question or concern that there was an error in grading any of your work, you must submit your request to me (duckworth@psych.upenn.edu) in writing to have the work regraded, no more than one week after work was returned. No requests will be considered beyond this date. If you submit a request, your work will be regraded in entirety, and the final grade could be higher or lower than your original grade.

Plagiarism:

Be sure you understand the University's guidelines on Academic Integrity before submitting any assignment. See me or someone from the Office of Student Conduct (<http://www.upenn.edu/osc>) if you have any questions, especially about plagiarism (what it is and how it can be avoided).

Student Role:

I expect you to do the readings continuously *ahead* of the lectures. So, for each of the lecture topics, do the reading indicated below that topic in advance. Do not expect a good learning experience if you do not keep your part. Cramming before exams assures an unsatisfactory class experience. (Incidentally, cramming has been shown empirically to be an inefficient strategy for learning.) Let's make class a creative experience – I am looking forward to learning from your astute questions (informed by the readings) and comments.

Your participation in recitation discussions will be considered in resolving borderline grades. As your textbook emphasizes, positive psychology is not a spectator sport. Second, PowerPoints will be posted after class, not beforehand. I realize that many of you like to take notes on printouts of the slides, but I assure you that class will be more engaging if you allow it to unfold without foreknowledge of every point.

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Wednesday, 1/14/09: History and overview of Positive Psychology

Textbook chapters 1 and 2

Monday, 1/19/09: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – no class

Wednesday 1/21/09: Pleasure and positive experience

Textbook chapter 3

Frederickson, B. L. (2002). Positive emotions. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 120-134). New York: Oxford University Press.

Johnson, K. J., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2005). "We all look the same to me": Positive emotions eliminate the own-race bias in face recognition. *Psychological Science*, *16*, 875-881.

Monday 1/26/09: Happiness and life satisfaction

Textbook chapter 4

Diener, E., & Diener, C. (1996). Most people are happy. *Psychological Science*, *7*, 181-185.

Jamison, K. R. (2004). Incapable of being indifferent. In *Exuberance: The passion for life* (pp. 3-21). New York: Knopf.

Recitation week of 1/26/09: Upload a one-page, single-spaced positive introduction to Blackboard by 11PM on Jan. 23 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy which you will read in recitation. See pp. 25-28 in textbook. Read Maya Angelou's essay "Philanthropy" for a model of a positive introduction.

Wednesday 1/28/09: Why are some people happier than others?

Lyubomirsky, S. (2001). Why are some people happier than others? The role of cognitive and motivational processes in well-being. *American Psychologist*, *56*, 239-249.

Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, *13*, 81-84.

Monday 2/2/09: Happiness and income

Note that the two assigned articles are long in part because they contain many tables and figures. Do not be daunted by their length!

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, *131*, 803-855.

Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2008). *Economic growth and subjective well-being: Reassessing the Easterlin paradox*. Paper presented at the Institute for the Study of Labor, 1-77.

Wednesday 2/4/09: Happiness and health

Friedman, H. S., Tucker, J. S., Tomlinson-Keasey, C., Schwartz, J. E., & et al. (1993). Does childhood personality predict longevity? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *65*, 176-185.

Danner, D. D., Snowdon, D. A., & Friesen, W. V. (2001). Positive emotions in early life and longevity: Findings from the nun study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*, 804-813.

Harker, L., & Keltner, D. (2001). Expressions of positive emotion in women's college yearbook pictures and their relationship to personality and life outcomes across adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*, 112-124.

Monday 2/9/09: Savoring, Chocolate, and other Pleasures – guest lecture by Robert Weinberg and Eric Matzke, Directors of City Food Tours

McCullough, M. E. (2002). Savoring life, past and present: Explaining what hope and gratitude share in common. *Psychological Inquiry*, *13*, 302-304.

Davidson, R. J., Kabat-Zinn, J., Schumacher, J., Rosenkranz, M., Muller, D., Santorelli, S. F., Urbanowski, F., Harrington, A., Bonus, K., & Sheridan, J. F. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *65*, 564-570.

Recitation week of 2/9/09: Read the following chapter and complete in advance of recitation a savoring exercise: Bryant, F. B., & Veroff, J. (2006). Chapter 8. Enhancing savoring. In *Savoring: A new model of positive experience* (pp. 198-215).

Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Specifically, stop and notice the next time something pleasurable occurs. Savor this event using suggestions from the Bryant and Veroff chapter and/or the five suggestions on page 71 in your textbook. Write a one-page, single-spaced reflection on this exercise, explaining what you did, your savoring strategy, your subjective experience, and your insights from this exercise. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Feb. 6 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation.

Wednesday 2/11/09: Maximizing vs. satisficing – guest lecture by Swarthmore Professor Barry Schwartz

Schwartz, B., Ward, A., Monterosso, J., Lyubomirsky, S., White, K., & Lehman, D. R. (2002). Maximizing versus satisficing: Happiness is a matter of choice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(5), 1178-1197.

Schwartz, B. (2004). Chapter One. Let's go shopping. In *The paradox of choice: Why more is less* (pp. 9-22). New York: HarperCollins.

Monday 2/16/09: Happiness and public policy - Quiz 1

Diener, E. (2006). Guidelines for national indicators of subjective well-being and ill-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 7*, 397-404.

OPTIONAL: Kahneman, D., & Krueger, A. B. (2006). Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 20*, 3-24.

OPTIONAL: Diener, E., & Tov, W. (in press). National subjective well-being indices: An assessment. In K. C. Land (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social indicators and quality-of-life studies*. New York: Springer, pp. 1-25.

Layard, R. (2007). Happiness and public policy: A challenge to the profession. In (pp. C24-C33). Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press.

Ryff, C. D., Singer, B. H., & Love, G. D. (2004). Positive health: Connecting well-being with biology. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences, 359*, 1383-1394.

*****Note that you should start your homework for next week's recitation this week.*****

Wednesday 2/18/09: Improving Attention and Working Memory with Mindfulness Meditation – guest lecture by Amishi Jha

Sreenivasan, K. K., & Jha, A. P. (2007). Selective attention supports working memory maintenance by modulating perceptual processing of distractors. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, 19*, 32–41.

Jha, A. P., Krompinger, J., & Baime, M. J. (2007). Mindfulness training modifies subsystems of attention. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience, 7*, 109-119.

Monday 2/23/09: Is it possible to increase happiness?

Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science, 7*, 186-189.

Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Scollon, C. N. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being. *American Psychologist, 61*, 305-314.

*****Note that you should start your homework for next week's recitation this week.*****

Recitation week of Monday 2/23/09: Complete the *Three Good Things* exercise on pages 38-39 in your textbook one week prior to this week's recitation. Read Maya Angelou's essay, "Porgy and Bess" before you complete the exercise. Write a one-page reflection paper on this experience. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Feb. 20 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation. Also note that we will have recitation next week because the following week is Spring Break.

Wednesday 2/25/09: Attempts at increasing happiness

Chapters 12 and 13 of Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). *Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 207-233.

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410-421.

Monday 3/2/09: Optimism and resilience

Textbook Chapter 5

Masten, A. S., & Reed, M.-G. J. (2002). Resilience in development. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 74-88). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist*, 59, 20-28.

Recitation week of 3/2/09: Complete the following assignment on three days this week (Monday, 2/23; Wednesday, 2/25; and Friday, 2/27). Use the following prompt to guide your writing. Find a place where you have a chance to write and take 15 minutes out of each day to do this exercise. Make sure to time yourself so you take the full 15 minutes. Your assignment is as follows: Please take a moment to think about your life in the future (say in X years). Imagine that everything has gone as well as it possibly could for you. Think of this as the realization of all your hopes, expectations, and dreams. Now, for the next 15 min, write about what you imagined. Use the instructions below to help guide you through this process:

1. Be as creative and imaginative as you desire.
2. Use whatever writing style you please, *but remember to imagine your ideal life in the future.*
3. Do not worry about perfect grammar and spelling.
4. Use as much detail as you want.

On Monday write about your best possible self 5 years in the future, on Wednesday write about your best possible self 15 years in the future and on Friday write about your best possible self 30 years in the future. For Blackboard you can either turn in this writing or write a separate 1-page reaction to this assignment. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Feb. 27 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation.

Wednesday 3/4/09: Self-esteem and self-efficacy

Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4, 1-44.

Judge, T. A., & Hurst, C. (2007). Capitalizing on one's advantages: Role of core self-evaluations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1212-1227.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.

*****Note that you should start your homework for next week's recitation this week.*****

Monday 3/9/09 and 3/11/09: Spring Break – no classes

Monday 3/16/09: Character strengths and virtue

Textbook chapter 6

Recitation week of 3/16/09: Take the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) on www.authentichappiness.com. Print out your results then use one or more of your signature strengths more frequently and more effectively in your daily life. Write a one-page paper on this experience. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Mar. 13 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation. See more detailed suggestions in your textbook pp. 158-162, but keep in mind that you can come up with your own ideas.

Wednesday 3/18/09: The character strength of self-control - Quiz 2

Baumeister, R. F., Vohs, K. D., & Tice, D. M. (2007). The strength model of self-control. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16, 351-355.

Mischel, W., Shoda, Y., & Rodriguez, M. L. (1989). Delay of gratification in children. *Science*, 244, 933-938.

Duckworth, A. L., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Self-discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. *Psychological Science*, 16, 939-944.

Monday 3/23/09: Values

Textbook chapter 7

Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. M. (1993). A dark side of the American dream: Correlates of financial success as a central life aspiration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(2), 410-422.

Wednesday, 3/25/09: Interests and talents

Textbook chapter 8

Silvia, P. J. (2006). Chapter 1. Interest as an emotion. In *Exploring the psychology of interest* (pp. 13-30). New York: Oxford University Press.

Gardner, H. (1983/2006). Chapter 1. The idea of multiple intelligences. In *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (pp. 3-11). New York: Basic Books.

Monday 3/30/09: Flow, grit and deliberate practice

Nakamura, J. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2001). The concept of flow. In C.R. Snyder and S. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 89-105). New York: Oxford University Press.

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 1087-1101.

Ericsson, K. A., & Ward, P. (2007). Capturing the naturally occurring superior performance of experts in the laboratory: Toward a science of expert and exceptional performance. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16, 346-350.

Recitation week of 3/30/09: Write a letter of gratitude to someone you have not properly thanked (see pp. 31-34 in your textbook for an example and guidance on writing this letter). It is up to you whether you choose to read this letter in person to the person you are thanking, or over the phone, or not at all. Write a one-page reflection paper on this experience. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Mar. 27 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation. Optionally, include the gratitude letter itself as an attachment.

Wednesday 4/1/09: A positive psychology of relationships: Love and social connectedness

Textbook Chapter 10

Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E. A., & Asher, E. R. (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.

Harlow, H. F. (1958). The nature of love. *American Psychologist*, 13, 673-685.

Monday 4/6/09: The dynamics of successful relationships

Driver, J. L., & Gottman, J. M. (2004). Daily Marital Interactions and Positive Affect During Marital Conflict Among Newlywed Couples. *Family Process*, 43, 301-314.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Losada, M. F. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist*, 60, 678-686.

Wednesday 4/8/09: Positive institutions

Textbook chapter 11

Tough, P. (2008). A teachable moment. *The New York Times*.

Monday 4/13/09: Positive historical periods – Quiz 3

Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2001). Age and birth cohort differences in self-esteem: A cross-temporal meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5, 321-344.

Dickens, W. T., & Flynn, J. R. (2001). Heritability estimates versus large environmental effects: The IQ paradox resolved. *Psychological Review*, 108, 346-369.

Recitation week of 4/13/09: Before class, find at least 3 opportunities to use active-constructive responding with someone you know (it doesn't have to be the same person each time). Write a brief reaction paper containing details about the interactions you had, both in terms of what you did and how the other person reacted. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Apr. 10 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation. See pp. 271-272 in textbook.

Wednesday 4/15/09: Cultural influences

Aho, W. R. (1994). Is Sisu alive and well among Finnish Americans? In M. G. Karni & J. Asala (Eds.), *The Best of Finnish Americana* (pp. 196-205). Iowa City, Iowa: Penfield Press.

Sabbagh, M. A., Xu, F., Carlson, S. M., Moses, L. J., & Lee, K. (2006). The development of executive functioning and theory of mind: A comparison of Chinese and U.S. preschoolers. *Psychological Science*, 17, 74-81.

Chapter 1 of McClelland, D. C. (1961). *The achieving society*. Oxford, England: Van Nostrand, 1-13.

Monday 4/20/09: Genius

Simonton, D. K. (1994). *Greatness: Who makes history and why* (Vol. 502). New York City: Guilford Press, 10-16.

Cattell, J. M. (1903). A Statistical Study of Eminent Men. *Popular Science Monthly*. LXII, 359-377.

Wednesday 4/22/09: Positive childhoods

Bloom, B. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books. pp. 193-210, 533-549.

Sulloway, F. J. (1996). Born to rebel: Birth order, family dynamics, and creative lives. *New York, NY, US: Pantheon Books*, pp. 352-368.

*****Note that you should start your homework for next week's recitation this week.*****

Recitation week of 4/20/09: Secret Good Deed Exercise

How you act when no one notices is important, and in this exercise, students are asked to do something kind for someone else without attracting any attention to themselves or taking any credit whatsoever. The good deed can be small—like picking up trash in a neighbor's yard or putting a coin in an expired parking meter—but it should be done anonymously or secretly. If done for a stranger, the stranger may see the deed being done, but the do-gooder should fade away as quickly and quietly as possible. If done for a friend or family member, the recipient should not know who performed the deed. If asked about the good deed, the do-gooder should feign ignorance and change the subject. We are all pretty experienced at this vis-à-vis our bad deeds, so those skills can probably be used to good effect here. Write a one-page paper on this experience. Upload a copy to Blackboard by 11PM on Apr. 17 (Fri), and bring a hardcopy to recitation.

Monday 4/27/09: Putting it all together – Positive psychology in perspective

Linley, P. A., Joseph, S., Harrington, S., & Wood, A. M. (2006). Positive psychology: Past, present, and (possible) future. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 3-16.