



INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology 266

Spring 2016

When:	Mondays 2-4 p.m.
Where:	Annenberg 110 (220 South 36 th Street)
Instructor:	Scott Barry Kaufman, Ph.D. sbk@psych.upenn.edu (the TA should be the first point of contact) Office hours: Monday 12-1 p.m. at the Positive Psychology Center 3701 Market Street, 2 nd floor, Suite 217
TAs:	Elizabeth Hyde (hydee@sas.upenn.edu) Recitation section: Wednesday, 5-6 pm (GSE building 203) Office hours: Wednesday, 3:30-4:30 p.m. (3701 Market Street, Suite 211) Taylor Kreiss (taylorkreiss@gmail.com) Recitation section: Monday, 12-1 p.m. (GSE building 203) Office hours: Tuesday, 3 pm-4 pm in Annenberg Atrium Jordyn Feingold (jordyn.feingold@gmail.com) Recitation section: Monday, 5-6 p.m. (College Hall 314) Office hours: Monday, 4 -5 pm (Annenberg Atrium)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Positive psychology encompasses the study of positive experiences, positive character strengths, positive relationships, and the institutions and practices that facilitate their development. Positive experiences include the mental states of flow and mindfulness and emotions about the *present* (pleasure, contentment, laughter), *past* (e.g., nostalgia, satisfaction, pride), and *future* (e.g., hope, optimism). The distinction among the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life will be drawn. The positive character traits include wisdom, courage, compassion, love, humanity, justice, temperance, self-efficacy, resilience, grit, *sisu*, imagination, creativity, and spirituality/transcendence. The classification of these virtues is explored. Positive relationships include the factors that enhance meaning and well-being among couples, family, friends, co-workers, and the community. Positive institutions are exemplified by positive education, positive work environments, healthy families, humane leadership, and the development of civic virtues.

This course also reviews the history of positive psychology and the contributions this new field has made to several traditional research areas in psychology. Consideration will be given to conflicting viewpoints and their respective empirical support, including the benefits of balancing positive with negative emotions, the measurement and development of happiness, and the implications of deliberately

attempting to increase it. Throughout the course we will also engage in experiential learning and practical exercises to increase well-being, which will inform our theoretical and empirical understanding of important questions in positive psychology.

GOALS OF THIS COURSE

The mission of this course is to provide an up-to-date understanding of theoretical and empirical advances in positive psychology. More generally, my hope is that this course enhances your appreciation of how the scientific method can advance understanding of the human condition.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand and articulate key concepts, findings, and controversies in the emerging field of positive psychology
- Understand the research methods (including measures, interventions, and research paradigms) used in positive psychology research
- Evaluate evidence for the validity, both internal and external, of empirical claims in contemporary positive psychology research
- Articulate from first-hand experience with positive psychology activities a perspective on how positive psychology is (or is not) relevant to your life

RECITATIONS

Each of you must be enrolled in one of the three available recitation sections. Rather than have groups of 50 students meet each week, we have decided to break each recitation section in half, with groups of 25 meeting every other week. Our intention with this approach is to foster meaningful discussion of positive psychology concepts and to allow time for optional sharing of reflection papers (see more on those below). Recitation is your chance to come prepared to ask your TAs any questions you may have about lecture or reading materials. Additionally, we hope meeting in smaller groups will encourage us to bond over the course of the semester and get know each other on an individual level!

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

- Peterson, C. (2006). *A Primer in Positive Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kaufman, S.B. (2013). *Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Haidt, J. (2005). *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Optional:

- Nettle, D. (2006). *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

The textbooks are available through the Penn Bookstore, and are also widely available from various online retailers. A copy of the textbooks are also available for use through Rosengarten Reserve (located on the ground floor of Van Pelt Library).

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:

Exams (60%): There will be 2 (non-cumulative) exams on material covered in lectures (including guest lectures) as well as required readings. The format will be essay. Each exam will count toward 30% of your grade. Completion of all 2 exams is mandatory. Those with a very legitimate excuse for missing an exam will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For those with three final exams scheduled on the same day, you will need to reschedule the middle exam, according to University policy.

Brief Reflection Papers (30%): During the course of the semester, you will complete 10 positive psychology activities and then write a **1-page reflection paper** (maximum of 500 words) on the experience. Please upload your reflection to Canvas by Sunday nights at 11:59 pm. Reflection papers will not be accepted via email or handed in class. Out of respect for your TAs, who will be grading 50 papers per week, please do your best to submit reflections by the due date. **We will not be accepting late reflections, and there will be no make-ups. However, we will drop your single lowest reflection paper grade at the end of the semester.** Write something you are proud (and comfortable) to share with others, and bring a copy of your reflection to class, because occasionally papers will be read aloud in lecture. Each brief reflection is worth 3 points and will be graded on the following scale: (3) excellent reflection, thoughtful and insightful, (2) satisfactory, (1), incomplete or not relevant to the topic, and (0) not submitted. These papers will also be reviewed with scrutiny in the case of borderline grades at the end of the semester so that final grades can be rounded up or down according to quality and promptness.

Meta-Reflection Paper (10%): Due on 5/1/16 at 11:59 pm, you will be required to submit a more extensive reflection (maximum 2000 words), reflecting on your overall engagement with the positive psychology activities, how your well-being and flourishing has changed (or not changed) throughout the semester, and what you've learned about yourself and others by taking this course.

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

A+ = 97 and higher; A = 93-96; A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B - = 80-82

RE-GRADING

If you have a question or concern that there was an error in grading any of your work, **you must submit a re-grade request in writing to a TA no more than one week after work is returned** (late requests will NOT be considered).

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 regarding plagiarism (what it is and how it can be avoided).

STUDENT ROLE

For each of the lecture topics, do the reading indicated below that topic in advance of the lecture. 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

LECTURE 1: Introduction to Positive Psychology

Wednesday, 1/13/16

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapters 1 & 2
- Haidt, Chapter 1
- Seligman, M.E.P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.
- Maya Angelou, Philanthropy. *Letter to My Daughter*.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #1: Positive Introductions

Write a one-page, single-spaced positive introduction. See pp. 25-28 in textbook. Read Maya Angelou's essay "Philanthropy" for a model of a positive introduction.

LECTURE 2: Emotions

Monday, 1/25/16

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapter 3
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2005) The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. In F. A. Huppert, N. Baylis, & B. Keverne (Eds.), *The science of well-being* (pp. 217-238). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Updated thinking on positivity ratios. *American Psychologist*, Advance publication online.
- Kashdan, T., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2014). *The upside of your dark side* (Chapters 3 & 4). New York, NY: Hudson Street Press.

Optional:

- Fredrickson, B. L., & Losada, M. F. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist*, 60, 678-686.
- Brown, N. J. L., Sokal, A. D., & Friedman, H. L. (2013). The complex dynamics of wishful thinking: The critical positivity ratio. *American Psychologist*, 68, 801-813. doi: 10.1037/a0032850
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 803-855.
- Ciarrochi, J.V., Chan, A.Y.C., & Caputi, P. (2000). A critical evaluation of the emotional intelligence construct. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28, 539-561.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #2: Pleasure vs. Philanthropy Experiment

You will plan and carry out two activities: A pleasurable activity and a philanthropic activity. For the pleasurable activity, plan something fun that you expect to make you feel happy. The only restriction¹ is that this must be an activity that you intentionally plan (not something that you were going to do anyway, or that simply transpires as the week goes on). For the philanthropic activity, plan something that will improve someone else's well being. It could be a secret/anonymous good deed. It could involve giving the gift of time (tutoring, helping a family member or neighbor, etc.). It could involve using your unique talents and strengths to do something special for someone. Again, make sure this is something you plan intentionally (not something you were going to do anyway). In your reflection paper, briefly describe what you did, and then reflect on the similarities and differences between these two experiences.

¹*It should also probably be legal. :)*

LECTURE 3: Well-Being

Monday, 2/1/16

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapters 4 & 9
- Haidt, Chapters 5 & 10
- Baumeister, R.F. et al. (2013). Some key differences between a happy life and a meaningful life. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8, 505-516.
- The Differences Between Happiness and Meaning in Life. *Scientific American*.
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 57-62.
- Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, 13, 81-84.

Optional:

- Will following positive psychology advice make you happier and healthier? *Mind the Brain*. Abe, J. A. A. (2015). A longitudinal follow-up study of happiness and meaning-making. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1-10.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #3: Gratitude Letter

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 or over the phone to the person you are thanking. If you are horrified at this proposition, you can simply send your letter or even keep it to yourself. Optionally, include the gratitude letter itself when you turn in your reflection (just attach it to the same document).

LECTURE 4: Guest Lecture: Lizzy Hyde and Taylor Kreiss

Monday, 2/8/16

Readings:

- NONE

Optional:

- Why Do We Experience Awe? *The New York Times*
- Piff, P. K., Dietze, P., Feinberg, M., Stancato, D. M., & Keltner, D. (2015). Awe, the small self, and prosocial behavior. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 108(6), 883.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #4: Savoring

Stop and notice the next time something pleasurable occurs. Savor this event using one or more of the 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. Bring a hardcopy to recitation. Optionally, bring the object of your savoring (chocolate? music? poem?) to share with your classmates.

LECTURE 5: Love and Social Connectedness

Monday, 2/15/16

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapter 10
- Haidt, Chapter 6
- The Art of Loving, Fromm, E. (2000). Chapter 1. *The Art of Loving: The Centennial Edition*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Optional:

- Tennov, D. (1998). Chapter 1. *Love and limerence: The experience of being in love*. Scarborough House.
- Stavrova, O., & Luhmann, M. (2015). Social connectedness as a source and consequence of meaning in life. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1-10.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #5: Active-Constructive Responding

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). See pp. 271-272 in textbook. 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. In particular, how does the experience of active constructive responding differ from that of supportive listening?

LECTURE 6: Positive Health & Medicine

Guest Lecture: Jordyn Feingold

Monday, 2/22/16

Readings:

- Is an Optimistic Mind Associated with a Healthy Heart? *Scientific American*.
- Seligman, M. E. (2008). Positive health. *Applied psychology*, 57(s1), 3-18.
- Crum, A. J., Corbin, W. R., Brownell, K. D., & Salovey, P. (2011). Mind over milkshakes: mindsets, not just nutrients, determine ghrelin response. *Health Psychology*, 30(4), 424.
- Crum, A. J., & Langer, E. J. (2007). Mind-Set Matters Exercise and the Placebo Effect. *Psychological Science*, 18(2), 165-171.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #6: Three Good Things

Carry out the 3 Good Things activity **five days in a row**. Each night, briefly write down a) 3 things that went well that day, and b) why each good thing took place (e.g. "I had a great time at dinner with new friends from my dorm...this happened because I've been proactive about reaching out to new people, even if I'm feeling shy or weird about it."). See pp. 38-39 in your Peterson textbook for more guidance.

LECTURE 7: Guest Lecture: Paul Rozin

Monday, 2/29/16

Readings:

- Rozin, P., Kabnick, K., Pete, E., Fischler, C., & Shields, C. (2003). The ecology of eating smaller portion sizes in France than in the United States help explain the French paradox. *Psychological science*, 14(5), 450-454.
- Wrzesniewski, A., Rozin, P., & Bennett, G. (2003). Working, playing, and eating: Making the most of most moments. *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived*, 2, 185-204.

Assignments due:

- NONE

Monday, 3/7/16

*****SPRING BREAK*****

LECTURE 8: Compassion**Monday, 3/14/16****Readings:**

- Haidt, Chapter 3
- The Psychology Podcast: Dr. Kristin Neff on the Healing Power of Self-Compassion
- Klimecki, O. M., Leiberg, S., Lamm, C., & Singer, T. (2012). Functional neural plasticity and associated changes in positive affect after compassion training. *Cerebral Cortex*, bhs142.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #7: Self-compassion Letter

Bring to mind a recent difficult experience, or some kind of stress or suffering that is present in your life. It could be your willpower challenge, or a setback you've had in reaching a goal.

Write a self-compassion letter to yourself, in the second person, about this experience, using the following guidelines. You may want to do this exercise after practicing breath focus meditation or compassion imagery. Allow yourself to remember the situation or think about your stress/suffering. Then acknowledge your feelings or thoughts, as well as what you (were or are) hoping for and needing. E.g., "Dear Kelly, I know that you are feeling [sad/afraid/angry/disappointed in yourself, etc.]. You were really [looking forward to.../trying your best to..., etc.]" Write about both the stress/suffering and the core need underneath it: a desire for health, safety, love, appreciation, connection, achievement, etc. Offer a message of common humanity. [E.g., all humans make mistakes, sometimes fail, get angry, experience disappointment, know loss, etc.] Mentor yourself with some compassionate advice or encouragement. What would you say to a loved one in this situation? Someone you believed in and wanted the best for? After writing the letter, consider reading it out loud to yourself, or putting it away for some time and bringing it out when you need self-compassion. This letter-writing exercise been shown to provide increases in happiness. When study participants wrote a self-compassionate letter to themselves for seven days in a row, they still experienced increased happiness six months later, when compared to a control group. (Shapira, et al, 2010)

Monday, 3/21/16***** EXAM #1 *******LECTURE 9: Flow and Mindfulness****Monday, 3/28/16****Readings:**

- Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological inquiry*, 18(4), 211-237.
- McMillan, R. L., Kaufman, S. B., & Singer, J. L. (2013). Ode to positive constructive daydreaming. *Front. Psychol*, 4(626), 10-3389.
- Schooler, J. W., Mrazek, M. D., Franklin, M. S., Baird, B., Mooneyham, B. W., Zedelius, C., & Broadway, J. M. (2014). The middle way: Finding the balance between mindfulness and mind-wandering. *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, 60, 1-33.

- Kashdan, T., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2014). *The upside of your dark side* (Chapter 5). New York, NY: Hudson Street Press.
- Sheldon, K. M., Prentice, M., & Halusic, M. (2014). The experiential incompatibility of mindfulness and flow absorption. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1948550614555028.
- Who Enters Flow? *Psychology Today*.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #8: Create a Flow Experience

First, briefly reflect and write about previous flow experiences you've had. Consider a) what has facilitated these experiences, b) what impedes them, and c) how you could solve these obstacles to flow. Then, intentionally set yourself up for a flow experience, to the best of your ability (no need to write about it, but do it!).

LECTURE 10: Finding Your Character Strengths and Virtues

Monday, 4/4/15

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapters 6 & 7
- Haidt, Chapter 8
- Which Character Strengths Are Most Predictive of Wellbeing? *Scientific American*.

Assignments due:

- Reflection #9: Strengths Exercise

First, complete the VIA strengths test (on www.authentichappiness.org). Then, find 3 new ways to use your top strengths this week. Can you use these top strengths to help you be a better student? A better friend/family member? To overcome some obstacle? To create a positive experience? Please write about the 3 new ways you used your top strengths this week.

LECTURE 11: Intelligence & Talent

Monday, 4/11/16

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapter 8
- Kaufman, Chapters 1 & 2

Assignments due:

- Reflection #10: This I Believe

The *This I Believe* project invites essays that capture the core personal values that define people's lives. In under 500 words, write a statement of personal belief. Tell your story.

Be specific. And be prepared to (optionally) read this in recitation—if essays are under 500 words, they should take 3 minutes per person. At the end, if there is time, we will discuss what this exercise revealed. See <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/> for guidelines and to submit your essay to NPR, if you would like to.

LECTURE 12: Creativity & Genius

Monday, 4/18/16

Readings:

- Wired to Create-Chapter 1 (Imaginative Play)
- Kaufman, Chapter 12

Assignments due:

Reflection #11: Doors Closing/Opening Writing OR Do Cognitive Therapy on Yourself (catch 10 automatic thoughts)

This week you have two options (choose one):

(1) Resilience: *Use cognitive techniques that are employed in resilience training and therapy. At least 10 times, do a thought record. Remember that this involves 5 steps:*

A. Activating event: *What event or situation made you feel bad?*

B. Belief: *What belief or thought popped into your mind?*

C. Consequence: *What was the consequence of that thought? How did you feel? How did your body feel? How did you react to this situation?*

D. Dispute: *(This is the most important step!) Compare the evidence for/against the thought you had. Can you see a thinking trap there? Can you find another way to look at the situation?*

E. Energization: *How do you feel now? How do you want to react now?*

(2) Posttraumatic growth: *Write about a time when you faced significant adversity or loss. Write first about the doors that closed due to that adversity/loss. What did you lose? Then, write about the doors that opened in the aftermath of that adversity/loss. Are there any new ways of acting, thinking, relating, etc. that have become more possible now?*

LECTURE 13: The Future of Positive Psychology

Monday, 4/25/16

Readings:

- Peterson, Chapter 12
- Haidt, Chapter 11

Assignments Due:

- Reflection #12: Best Possible Self

Write for at least 20 minutes about your best possible self. Imagine that, 20 years from now, you have grown in all the ways you would like to, and things have gone as well as you can imagine. What is your best possible self like? What does he/she do on a daily basis? What do others say about him/her? Note that you do not need to share great detail about this best possible self in your reflection paper (although you are welcome to); rather, the reflection paper is meant to focus on the experience you had while reflecting on the best possible self.

Sunday, 5/1/16 (11:59 p.m.)

***** Meta reflection *****

In 4-6 double-spaced (no less than 4, no more than 6 with standard formatting) pages, reflect on how your well-being and flourishing has changed (or not changed) over the course of the semester. Reflect on why these changes occurred (or did not occur). How did your engagement with the positive psychology activities in this course impact your well-being? Were there other factors outside of this course that impacted your well-being? What have you learned about yourself and others by taking this course?

You may mention how the reflection exercises impacted your well-being, but this is more than just a synthesis of your reflections - we want you to reflect on your well-being as a whole, which has many more components than the exercises we had you try.

Thursday, 5/5/16

***** Exam #2 *****

EXTRA CREDIT

To earn up to 3 extra credit points in the course, you may complete up to 3 hours of Sona Systems credit by participating in research studies. See Research Participation-ForStudents.pdf. Alternatively, you may submit a one-page single-spaced review of any of the following articles (1 extra credit point per review, up to 3 extra credit points) by the last class of the semester (4/25/16):

- Rethinking Work (Barry Schwartz)
- The Surprising Benefits of a Quiet Ego (Scott Barry Kaufman)
- An Important but Rarely Discussed Lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment (Scott Barry Kaufman)
- The Emotions that Make Us More Creative (Scott Barry Kaufman)