

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
Psychology 266
Spring 2014

Instructor: Angela Duckworth
Office: 3701 Market Street #215
Office Hours: Mondays 8:30 – 9:30AM in my office
Email: duckworth@psych.upenn.edu (but since I get hundreds of emails per day, please make sure to cc: your assigned TA on all correspondence)

TAs: Since this class is large (about 180 students), each student will be assigned a primary TA for questions and concerns about class, office hours, etc. TA assignments are done by LAST name. Assignments are as follows:

- **Last Names A – F:** Brian Galla, gallabrian@gmail.com
- **Last Names G – L:** Hayley Goldenthal, hayleygo@sas.upenn.edu
- **Last Names M – R:** Sarah Patrick, sarah.patrick.22@gmail.com
- **Last Names S – Z:** Victoria Young, vsyoung91@gmail.com

Office Hours: Office hours for TAs will be held in the windowed conference room on the second floor of 3701 Market Street. Office hours are as follows:

- Brian, Wednesdays 11AM – 12PM
- Hayley, Thursdays 5 – 6PM
- Sarah, Tuesdays 11AM – 12PM
- Victoria, Mondays 5 – 6PM
- Office hours for Dr. Duckworth will be held in her office (see above).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Positive psychology encompasses the 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. In addition to the substantive content of positive psychology, attention will be given to the standard research methods that are so critical to research in this field (as well as in psychological science more generally).

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

LECTURES, READINGS, REFLECTION PAPERS

Lectures will be held on Monday and Wednesday from 2:00 - 3:30 PM in Stiteler Hall, B6. PowerPoint slides will not be posted – rather, I expect you to take notes in class. Each lecture will conclude with an interactive class discussion, initiated by student questions and comments to which I will respond, and to which other students are welcome to respond. I reserve the right to “cold call” students from the class roster. Because Positive Psychology is a vibrant area of contemporary research, we will have several guest lectures this semester, and their material will be included in quizzes and the final exam.

TEXTBOOK

Peterson, C. (2006). *A Primer in Positive Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READING

In addition to your textbook, readings will include relevant original scientific papers. These readings are listed on the syllabus and posted on the class Canvas website under Readings (<https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/>). Any assigned readings outside of the textbook (e.g., essays by Maya Angelou) will be posted on Canvas. Note that readings marked with an asterisk (*) are **optional**.

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:

Quizzes (60%): There will be 5 short quizzes on material covered in lectures (including guest lectures and discussion of Positive Psychology activities and their associated reflection papers) as well as required readings. The format will be multiple, multiple choice and short answer questions. In calculating your final grade, I will drop your lowest quiz score. So, each quiz ends up counting for 15% of your final grade. If you miss a quiz, this will be the one whose grade is dropped. **There are no make-up quizzes.**

Final Exam (40%): A comprehensive final exam will include material from the entire course. The format will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. 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. The final exam will be Monday, May 5 from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM (location TBD). University policy holds that students may not be required to take more than two final exams in one day, and may reschedule the *middle* exam in the event that they have three scheduled final exams on the same day. As there are no final examinations scheduled before this exam time, makeup exams will not be offered for students with more than two exams on this date.

Reflection Papers: In advance of certain lectures, you will complete a specific Positive Psychology activity and then write a 1-page reflection paper (maximum of 250 words) on the experience. **You will be required to post your 1-page reflection paper onto your respective Canvas discussion board by the due-date listed in the syllabus.** Reflection papers will not be accepted via email. Late papers will not be

accepted. Write something you are proud to share with others because all papers will be viewable by all students in the class, and note that occasionally papers will be read aloud in lecture. These papers will 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 (up to a full percentage point) according to quality and promptness.

Discussions are interactions not only with ideas but also with classmates, and thus you are required to respond to at least two of your classmates' (in your discussion group) papers with thoughtful comments by the following Monday. This is a useful way for you to develop (and for me to observe you mastering) additional course concepts, and for you to better connect with the thinking of classmates.

Extra Credit for Final Exam: To earn up to 3 extra credit points (e.g., raising an 82% score to 85%) on your final exam, you may complete up to 3 hours of Experimetrix credit by participating in research studies. See Research Participation Instructions on Canvas. Note that I cannot promise that Experimetrix studies will be available at the end of the semester, so please plan ahead and do not complain if you cannot find studies at the last minute! Also, take note that there is sometimes a delay of a couple of days before your Experimetrix credit is assigned by the corresponding researcher. So, in cases of missing credit, your first step is to contact the Experimetrix researcher rather than your assigned TA. In lieu of Experimetrix, you are also able to submit a one-page single-spaced review of any of the optional articles denoted in the syllabus with an asterisk (1 review per extra credit point) by **April 23rd**.

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

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 a re-grade request *in writing* no more than one week after work was returned (late requests will NOT be considered). Specifically, slip your written request for a re-grade under my office door. If you submit a request, your work will be re-graded in its 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 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 or directly after lecture, whichever is more effective for you. 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

Wednesday, 1/15/14: History and overview of Positive Psychology

Textbook Chapters 1 and 2

Wednesday, 1/22/14: Positive emotion

Textbook 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.

REFLECTION PAPER #1: Positive Introduction

Tell me about yourself. 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.

Monday 1/27/14: Life satisfaction

Textbook Chapter 4

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

Wednesday 1/29/14: Individual differences: Why are some people happier than others?

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

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.

REFLECTION PAPER #2: Three Good Things

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.

Monday 2/3/14: Guest lecture by Eran Magen on supportive listening

House, J., Landis, K., & Umberson, D. (1988). Social relationships and health. *Science*, 241, 540-545.

M. Wardy (2011, August 3). Waking up full of awesome. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from: <http://blog.pigtails.com/2011/08/waking-up-full-of-awesome/>

Rafaeli, E., & Gleason, M. E. . (2009). Skilled support within intimate relationships. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 1(1), 20-37.

Wednesday 2/5/14: Is it possible to increase 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.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 57-62.

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

QUIZ #1

Monday 2/10/14: A positive psychology of relationships: Love and social connectedness

Textbook Chapter 10

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

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.

Wednesday 2/12/14: Character strengths and virtue

Textbook Chapter 6

REFLECTION PAPER #3: Being a better friend

Find at least 2 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. Do the same with supportive listening. 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?

Monday 2/17/14: Guest lecture by Barry Schwartz on the paradox of choice

Schwartz, B. (2000). Self-determination: The tyranny of freedom. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 79-88.

Wednesday 2/19/14: Optimism and Resilience

Textbook Chapter 5

* 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.

* 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.

REFLECTION PAPER #4: Assess your reciprocity style. If you would like to receive feedback, you may also have at least 10 other people provide informant ratings on you (optional). Comment on this experience.

www.giveandtake.com

Monday 2/24/14: Happiness and material wealth

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 803-855. (**Note that the assigned article is long in part because it contains many tables and figures. Do not be daunted by its length!**)

* 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 2/26/14: Guest lecture by Adam Grant (2 – 2:45pm)

QUIZ #2

Monday 3/3/14: Self-esteem and self-efficacy

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

* 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.

Wednesday 3/5/14: Guest lecture by Laura Kubzansky on positive health

DeSteno, D., J. J. Gross, et al. (2013). "Affective science and health: The importance of emotion and emotion regulation." *Health Psychology: Official Journal of the Division of Health Psychology, American Psychological Association*, 32(5), 474-486.

*Kubzansky, L. D. and R. C. Thurston (2007). "Emotional vitality and incident coronary heart disease: benefits of healthy psychological functioning." *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 64(12), 1393-1401.

REFLECTION PAPER #5: The *This I Believe* project invites essays that capture the core personal values that define their lives. In under 500 words, write a statement of personal belief. Tell your story. Be specific. See <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/> for guidelines and feel free to (optionally) submit your essay to NPR.

Monday 3/10/14 and Wednesday 3/12/14: Spring Break – No Classes**Monday 3/17/14: Genius and grit**

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

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.

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

Wednesday 3/19/14: Guest lecture by Paul Rozin on domain and culture: Maximizing life experiences and memories

Wrzesniewski, A., Rozin, P., & Bennett, G. (2003). Working, playing, and eating: Making the most of most moments. In C. I. M. Keyes, & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: The positive person and the good life*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

QUIZ #3

Monday 3/24/14: Guest lecture by Jon Baron on actively open-minded thinking

Baron, J. (2000). Ch. 1. What is thinking? In *Thinking and deciding* (pp.5-17). Cambridge: University Press.

Baron, J. (2000). Ch.9. Actively open-minded thinking. In *Thinking and deciding* (pp. 199-227). Cambridge: University Press.

Wednesday 3/26/14: Guest lecture by Marty Seligman on flourishing

Forgeard, M.J.C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M., & Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), 79-106.

*Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York, NY: Free Press.

REFLECTION PAPER #6: 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 letter (just attach it to the same document).

Monday 3/31/14: Interests and talents

Textbook Chapter 8

* 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.

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

Wednesday 4/2/14: Values

Textbook Chapter 7

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT 7: Goal-Setting Exercise

Learn about goal-setting and how to apply this knowledge to your own academic responsibilities. This Reflection Paper will be split into two parts, both of which will be completed on online surveys. We will send you a web link (via a canvas announcement) on the morning of Wednesday, 4/2/14 to complete Part A of the Reflection Paper. You MUST finish Part A by the end of the day (11:59pm, Wednesday, 4/2/14). Part A should take you about 30 minutes to complete.

Monday 4/7/14: Positive cultural influences

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

* 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.

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

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.

Wednesday 4/9/14: Flow and deliberate practice

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.

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.

QUIZ #4

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT 7: Goal-Setting Exercise

We will *e-mail* you a web link on the morning of Tuesday, 4/8/14 to complete Part B of the Goal-Setting Exercise. You MUST finish Part B by the beginning of class, Wednesday 4/9/14. Part B should take you about 15 minutes to complete.

Monday 4/14/14: Self-control

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

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

* Shnabel, N., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Cook, J. E., Garcia, J., & Cohen, G. L. (2013). Demystifying values-affirmation interventions: Writing about social belonging is a key to buffering against identity threat. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(5), 663-676.

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

Wednesday 4/16/14: Meaning and Purpose

Film: The Last Lecture

Schueller, S. M., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2010). Pursuit of pleasure, engagement, and meaning: Relationships to subjective and objective measures of well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 5(4), 253-263. doi: 10.1080/17439761003794130

Von Culin, K. R., & Duckworth, A. L. (in press). Unpacking grit: Motivational underpinnings of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Manuscript in preparation.

REFLECTION PAPER #8: On Wednesday, 4/16, please upload to canvas 3 things you would put in your "Last Lecture" if you were to give one today. Please write this paper within a day of viewing the Last Lecture in class. Due by no later than midnight on 4/17.

Monday 4/21/14: Positive Institutions

Textbook Chapter 11

Wednesday 4/23/14: Guest Lecture by Johannes Eichstaedt on proponents and opponents of positive psychology

Brown, N. J. L., Sokal, A. D., & Friedman, H. L. (2013). The complex dynamics of wishful thinking: The critical positivity ratio. *American Psychologist*, 68(9).

Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Updated thinking on positivity ratios. *American Psychologist*, Advance publication online.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Losada, M. F. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist*, 60(7), 678-686.

Monday 4/28/14: Gratitude

Emmons, R.A. & McCullough, M.E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389.

Wood, A.M., Froh, J.J., Geraghty, A.W.A. (2010). Gratitude and well-being: A review and theoretical integration. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30, 890-905.

REFLECTION PAPER #9: Choose either to do a good deed in secret (i.e., without the receiver knowing you were responsible) or, if you prefer, tip an enormous amount on your next purchase. Write about how this made you feel and what you think it made the recipient feel.

Wednesday 4/30/14: Putting it all together – Positive psychology in perspective

QUIZ #5

Diener, E. (2009). Positive Psychology: Past, Present, and Future. In C.R. Snyder & Shane J. Lopez (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.