

# Flourishing

Psychology 403, Professor Jon Haidt  
Fall 2004, University of Virginia  
Wed. 9:15-11:45, Gilmer B001

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**Course description:** People are like plants: if you get the conditions just right, they will usually flourish. So what are those conditions? We will try to answer this question from two perspectives. We will look primarily at the latest research in social and positive psychology on happiness, virtue, and personal growth. We will also look at some of the Great truths, @ the insights into mind and heart that poets and philosophers have bequeathed to us. At each meeting I will lecture for 10-20 minutes, and the remaining time will be discussion.

**Contact Info:** The best way to reach me is by email ([haidt@virginia.edu](mailto:haidt@virginia.edu)), or by coming to my office hours, Tues 5-6, Wed. 4:00-6:00, in Gilmer 304.

**Course Requirements:** About 40% of the grade will be based on your level of involvement with and contribution to class. In addition, you will be asked to write a number of papers, none of them ordinary research papers. These will include: 1) Several short papers after doing positive psych activities. 2) A midterm paper on Finding Great Truths. 3) A substantial final paper: Improving yourself, and proving it. In addition, everyone will participate in some sort of class research project.

**Readings:** Articles will be made available on our class webpage: [toolkit.virginia.edu/PSYC403-1](http://toolkit.virginia.edu/PSYC403-1). In addition, you should buy the following books at Amazon.com, or wherever you buy books on the web:

- 1) Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness*. New York: Free Press.
- 2) Keyes, C. L. M., & Haidt, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well lived*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- 3) Franklin, B. (1962). *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. (Any edition is acceptable)
- 4) Buddha (1993). *Dhammapada*. Thomas Byrom (trans.) Boston: Shambhala (Other additions acceptable, but not as beautiful)
- 5) Burns, David (1999). *Feeling good: The new mood therapy*. Avon Books.
- 6) Maslow: *religions, values, peak experiences*

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## 9/1) C1: Introduction: Flourishing and the great truths

**Sage:** Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Bk II. (Analyze his psych. claims).

**Do Before Class:** Take Strengths Self-Test, print out your 24 strengths

## 9/8) C2: Positive Psychology and Self-Improvement

**Sage:** Ben Franklin, *Autobiography* [skim 1st half, but read 3rd quarter carefully, on virtues and moral perfection]

**Scientists:** Seligman: AH (Authentic Happiness) Preface, and Ch:1-4

    BK&H (Keyes & Haidt): Introduction

    BHaidt: AThe Sage and the Scientist@, Introduction and Ch. 1

    --Burns: Read introduction and ch. 1-3 (you can skim ch. 1&2, which are very elementary)

**Do Before:** Imagine your ideal self. Write your own self-improvement plan (a la Franklin)

**Optional reading:** Aarts, H., & Dijksterhuis (2000). Habits as knowledge structures: Automaticity in goal directed behavior. *JPSP*, 78, 53-63.

## 9/15) C3: Getting the right appraisals

**Sage:** Epictetus, *Manual for living* [print it from web, link provided]

**Scientists:** Seligman: AH Ch.5 & 6

--Haidt, Sage and Scientist, Ch. 2 (life itself is but what you deem it)

--Burns, most of the book, Chapters 4-16 (ch. 9 & 15 are optional)

**Do:** 1) Cognitive Therapy Exercises on yourself. Catch and analyze 10 automatic thoughts. (Use the DTR record on our web page). 2) Sign up on [www.authentichappiness.com](http://www.authentichappiness.com). Take at least the scales from Seligman Ch. 5&6

**Optional reading:**

### 9/22) C4: Happiness: what is it, what causes it?

**Sage:** Nozick, "Happiness" Ch. 9 of: The examined life.

**Scientists:** Buss, David M. (2000). The Evolution of Happiness. *American Psychologist*, 55, 15-23.

--Diener, Ed (2000). Subjective Well-Being: The Science of Happiness and a Proposal for a National Index. *American Psychologist*, 55, 34-43.

--Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

**Do:** Hand in your tentative plan for your final project.

**Optional reading:** Myers, David G. (2000). The Funds, Friends, and Faith of Happy People. *American Psychologist*. 55, 56-67.

--Ryff & Singer on Well-being

--Economists: chapters from Robert Frank; Richard Layard

### 9/29) C5: Calming the mind, meditation and prozac [Hand in your self-improvement plan]

**Sage:** Buddha, *Dhammapada* [whole book]

**Scientists:** Shapiro, S., Schwartz, G. E. R., & Santerre, C. (2002). Meditation and positive psychology. In *Handbook of Positive Psychology*.

--Nolen-Hoeksema on Rumination, TBA

--Kramer, P. (1993) Listening to Prozac, Ch. 1.

**Do:** Spend at least 40 minutes on websites about meditation, e.g., [www.shinzen.com](http://www.shinzen.com). Or [www.mkzc.org/beginzen.html](http://www.mkzc.org/beginzen.html) or [www.how-to-meditate.org](http://www.how-to-meditate.org). Read about meditation techniques. Meditate for at least 15 minutes, three days in a row.

**Optional reading:** Davidson, R. J., Kabat-Zinn, J. et al. (2003). Alternations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65, 564-570

--Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 84, 822-848.

--Turkington, C. & Kaplan, E., "All About Prozac", downloaded from Webmd.com

### 10/6) C6: Hedonics and the Setpoint

**Sage:** Gibran: Pleasure

**Scientists:** Kahneman, D. (1999). Objective happiness. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 3-25). New York: Russell Sage.

--Wrzesniewski, Rozin, & Bennett: Working, Playing, and Eating [Flourishing, Ch.8]

--Sheldon, K. M., Lyubomirsky, S. (in press). Achieving Sustainable New Happiness: Prospects, Practices, and Prescriptions.

--Kubovy, M. (1999). On the pleasures of the mind. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 134-154). New York: Russell Sage.

**Do:** Continue meditation; Give it a serious try, every day for the whole week. Or design a perfect day?

**Optional reading:** Lykken & Tellegen (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psych Science* 7

### 10/13) C7: Being Nice

**Sage:** Bible, Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the mount)

**Scientists:**

--Carnegie, D. (1936). Excerpts from : *How to win friends and influence people*. [Carnegie is an excellent social psychologist]

--Emmons, R. A. (2004) Gratitude. (Chapter from *Character strengths and virtues*).

--McCullough, M. (2004) Forgiveness (Chapter from *Character strengths and virtues*).

--Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.

**DO:** TBA... watch amelie? [link ahead to love, and to awe/beauty] Or: do a good deed

**Optional reading:** Trivers on reciprocal altruism? [read later parts, on moral emotions]

### 10/20) C8: Love and social support: Why we need others to flourish

**Sage:** Gibran, sections on Love and Friendship

**Scientists:** Seligman, AH ch.11 (love)

--Reis & Gable, Toward a positive psychology of relationships. [Flourishing Ch. 6]

--Taylor, S. E., Klein, L. C., Lewis, B. P., Gruenewald, T. L., Gurung, R. A., & Updegraff, J. A. (2000). Biobehavioral responses to stress in females: Tend-and-befriend, not fight-or-flight. *Psychological Review*, 107(3), 411-429.

--Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529. [This is a long paper, only the first 7 pages are assigned (p.497-503)]

**Do:** ??

**Optional reading:** -Handbook of positive psychology, ch. 39, Ryff & Singer: From social structure to biology

--Sternberg, R. J. (1988). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93. 119-135.

**10/27) C9: Work and engagement** [Hand in: short paper, your great truths];

**Sage:** Gibran: Work

**Scientists:** Auth. Happ: : AH: Ch.7 (incl. Savoring and flow) Ch.14 (meaning and purpose)

--Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi. Vital Engagement. [Flourishing ch.4]

--Emmons, Personal goals. [Flourishing Ch.5]

--R. Ryan & J. Bernstein (2004) "Vitality", Ch. 12 of Character Strengths and Virtues. (Peterson & Seligman, eds.)

**Do:** Watch movie: Fast, cheap, and out of control

**Optional reading:**

**11/3) C10: Growth by adversity**

**Sage:** go to [www.greatfailure.com](http://www.greatfailure.com), look around, and read the "commencement speech"

**Scientists:** Ryff & Singer: Flourishing under fire. [Flourishing, Ch.1]

--Wethington: Turning points. [Flourishing, Ch.2]

--Updegraff, J. A., & Taylor, S. E. (2000). From vulnerability to growth: Positive and negative effects of stressful life events. In J. Harvey and E. Miller.(eds.) *Loss and trauma: General and close relationship perspectives*. Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge. 3-28.[ONLY PRINT OUT 1<sup>ST</sup> 5 PAGES, (pgs 3-11 of the article)]

--Pennebaker, J. (2003). *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. New York: Guilford. Read Chapter 3.

**Do:** [movies about overcoming adversity? Admiration project?] One door opens? Write out how you have grown from setbacks? Write your uva narrative, make sense of your time here?

**Optional reading:**

**11/10) C11: Growth by awe and beauty**

**Sage:** Bhagavad Gita, Bk. 11

**Scientists:** Haidt: Elevation [Flourishing Ch.12]

--Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (2003). Approaching awe, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion. *Cognition and Emotion*, 17, 297-314.

--Maslow: Main text (p.3-58), and appendix A. Other appendices are optional

**Do:** Watch *Amelie*, after reading at least the Elevation article. [Or if you have seen *Amelie* already, you may watch *Patch Adams*, *Life is Beautiful*, *Pleasantville*, or *Harold and Maude*]. Note the ways that awe and responsiveness to beauty affect characters in these movies, and also the ways they affect you as a viewer. Or beauty movies, *koyaanisquatsi*?

**Optional reading:** Responses to Music: Braud (2001), or Panzarella (1980) in Brunk

**11/17) C12: growth by virtue:** What is morality, and how does it develop? Can we become better people by doing good deeds?

**Sage:** Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics Book II

**Scientists:**

--Damon, W. (1999). The moral development of children. *Scientific American*, August.

--Haidt, J., & Joseph, C. (in press). Intuitive Ethics. *Daedalus*.

--Piliavin: Doing well by doing good [Flourishing, Ch. 10]

**Do:** Seligman philanthropy vs. pleasure exercise

**12/1) C13: Strengths, Choice, Wisdom**

**Sage:** tba

**Scientists:**

- 1) Strengths: Seligman, AH Ch. 8-10, 13 (Strengths and virtues, finishing up the book)
  - 2) Choice: Schwartz, B. et al. (2002). Maximizing Versus Satisficing: Happiness Is a Matter of Choice. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83, 1178-1197
  - 3) Wisdom: Sternberg, R. J. (1998). A balance theory of wisdom. Review of General Psychology.
- Do: take the long VIA signature strengths test, at [www.authentichappiness.com](http://www.authentichappiness.com)

**12/8) C14: Class presentations. How have you changed?** [Final paper due on 12/9]  
No Reading; Student reports on final projects.