

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

An Experiential Course

Instructor: *Tayyab Rashid*
Prerequisites: *Psychology 1101*
Thursdays: *5:25-8:00 p.m.*

Psychologists have traditionally treated mental illness from a perspective of repairing damaged habits, damaged drives, damaged childhoods and damaged brains. Psychology is not only the study of human weakness and damage. It is also a study of strengths, optimism, happiness, hope and resiliency. This introductory course will surveys core human character strengths and virtues. The course is largely experiential and includes a lot of classroom activities. It presents practical ways of using one's character strengths, in promoting and maintaining well-being and happiness. There are no traditional exams. Grade will be based on class participation, watching movies on character strengths and writing weekly reaction papers and a personal signature enhancing project.

Primary Source of Readings

Learned Optimism (Seligman, 1990)

The American Psychologist, 55, 2000.

Handbook of Positive Psychology, 2002 Snyder & Lopez (Eds.): Oxford

Course Outline

Class/date	Topic/Readings, Films and Activities
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Each Class begins with a brief five minute relaxation exercise and ends with a 5-10 minute meditation.

Class One	<p><i>Positive Psychology: An Introduction</i> AP 5-14 Activities: <i>VIA</i>-Pre-test,</p>
Class Two	<p><i>Happiness</i> AP 15-23, 56-67 Film: Fried Green Tomatoes (1991) Activity: <i>VIA</i>-Pre-test Feedback and Strength Building Project explained.</p>
Class Three	<p><i>Flow</i> The Concept of Flow, Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi- HBPP (89-105) Films: Billy Elliot (2000), Legend of Vance Begger (2000) Activity: Write your previous Flow Experiences, Write factors which impede your flow currently and how to eliminate them.</p>
Class Four	<p><i>Subjective Well-being</i> AP: 34-43 Films: Forest Gump (1994), Dr. Zhivago (1965), Out of Africa (1985, Fanny and Alexander (1983) Activities: Completing Satisfaction with Life Scale and Discussion on assigning importance to what variable which really matter in life satisfaction, discuss hedonic treadmill and Kaheman's notion of remembering vs experiencing happiness. Watching clips from Forest Gump</p>
Class Five	<p><i>Hope</i> Hope Theory, Snyder, Rand & Sigmon-HBPP, 257-276 Films: Gone with the With the Wind (1939), Life is beautiful (1998-Italian), Good Will Hunting (1997) Activities: Snyder's Hope Scale and Discussion Watching clips from Gone with the Wind, One Door Closes, One Door Opens activity</p>
Class Six	<p><i>Optimism</i> AP: 44-55, Optimism, Carver & Scheier-HBPP, 231-243 Films: Ordinary People (1980), Pelle the Conqueror (1987) (1986), Little Lord Fauntleroy (1980), My Fair Lady (1964) Activities: <i>Attributional Style Questionnaire</i> and Discussion Clips from Ordinary People and Discussion</p>
Class Seven	<p><i>Positive Illusions and Playfulness</i> AP: 99-109 Film: Life is beautiful (1998-Italian), Patch Adams (1999) Activities: Charting Positive Illusion about Distressing Events and discussion, Devising a list of playful activities you always wanted to do, but has not done.</p>

- Class Eight** ***Creativity, Giftedness & Industry***
 AP: 137-158
Films: Shine (1996), Amadeus (1984), Awakenings (1990)
Activity: Critical Thinking Exercise
- Book review on *The Learned Optimism* due**
- Class Nine-a** ***Judgment, Wisdom & Fairness***
 AP: 122-136
Films: Little Buddha, The Devil's Advocate (1997), The Emperor's Club (2002), Philadelphia (1993)
Activity: Brainstorming ways to keep perspective constant through daily joys and hassles.
- Class Nine-b** ***Emotional Intelligence & Prudence***
 The Positive Psychology of Emotional Intelligence, Salovey, Mayer & Caruso - HBPP, 159-171
Films: Driving Miss Daisy (1989), K-Pax (2001) The Five Senses (2001-Canadian), Scent of a Woman (1992)
Activities: Watching muted clips from movies depicting E.I
 Withholding powerful and decisive argument that win the discussion but hurt someone
- Class Ten** ***Spirituality***
 Spirituality, Pargament & Mohoney-HBPP, 646-659
Films: Contact (1997), Apostle (1997), Priest (1994, British), Dead Man Walking (1995)
Activity: Watching Wyne Dyer's Video *There is a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem*
- Class Eleven-a** ***Love & Kindness***
 Love, Hendrick & Hendrick, HBPP, 472-484,
Films: The English Patient (1996), Sophie's Choice (1982), Bridges of the Madison County (1995), Iris (2001), My Fair Lady (1964)
Activity: Explore Character Strengths of your significant other (have them take VIA)
 Write five small but meaningful gestures of your loved one
- Class Eleven-b** ***Gratitude & Zest***
 Gratitude and the Science of Positive Psychology, Emmons & Shelton, HBPP, 459-471
Film: Sunshine (2000), My Left Foot (1993)
Activity: Write a letter of gratitude to someone whom you have never properly thanked
- Class Twelve** ***Modesty & Forgiveness***
 The Psychology of Forgiveness, McCullough & Witvliet, HBPP, 446-458
Films: Pay it Forward (2000), Terms of Endearment (1983), Gandhi (1982).
Activity: Write three bad memories, anger associated with them and their impact in maintaining resentment and then write about possibility of forgiveness.
- Class Thirteen** ***Altruism & Empathy & Social Intelligence***
 Empathy and Altruism, Batson, Ahmed, Lishner & Tsang, HBPP, 485-498
Films: Children of a Lesser God (1986), As Good As it gets (1997)
Activity: Gift of Time (Using your Character Strengths in serving community)
- Class Fourteen** ***Positive Psychology at Work – Leadership, & Teamwork***
 Positive Psychology at Work, Turner, Barling & Zacharatos, HBPP 715-730,
Films: Lawrence of Arabia (1962), Dances with Wolves (1990), LA Confidential (1997), Eron Brokovitch (2000), A Few Good Men (1992)

Activity: Explore Character Strengths of your colleagues, Clips from Lawrence of Arabia and class Discussion.

Class Fifteen *Curiosity, Self-Regulation & Positive Youth Development*

AP: 170-183

Films: Finding Forester (2001), Good Will Hunting (1997), Dead Poet Society (1989), October Sky (1999)

Activity: Design a Community Based Positive Youth Development Project

Cross-cultural Positive Psychology

Putting Positive Psychology in a Multicultural Context, Lopez et al., 700-714, HBPP

Films: Koyla (Czech) Colors of Paradise (2000- Iranian), Salam Bombay (1988-Indian) Cinema Paradiso (Italian)

Activities: Strength Presentations,

Meditation

Putting it together

Readings

The American Psychologist, 2000, 55, Number 1. (AP)

Learned Optimism (LO)

Martin Seligman. Pocket Books, 1992

Handbook of Positive Psychology, (HBPP)

C. R. Snyder & Shane J. Lopez, Oxford, 2002.

Where to Get More Information

www.positivepsychology.org

Grading

30 points for class participation. Two points per class.

1 point for attendance, 1 for active participation per week

30 points for 15 reaction/review papers. 1 point for submitting review on time, 1 point for quality of reaction/review paper should reflect integration of readings and film critique regarding the assigned topic.

No points for late submissions.

20 points for the book review on *The Learned Optimism*

20 points for polishing one of your character strengths, brief presentation in the final class.

90-100= A, 89-85= A-, 84-80=B+, 79-75=B, 74-70=B-, 69-65=C, Below 65= F

The Course was part of my dissertation and was first taught at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, NJ in the Spring 2002. It won Outstanding Syllabus Contest in 2002 organized by Positive Psychology Teaching Task Force and New Jersey Psychological Foundation's Minority Scholarship Award (2002).