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), 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. In addition, you should buy the following books at Amazon.com, or wherever you buy books on the web:
4) Buddha (1993). Dhammapada. Thomas Byrom (trans.) Boston: Shambhala (Other additions acceptable, but not as beautiful)
6) Maslow: religions, values, peak experiences

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
   K&H (Keyes & Haidt): Introduction
   Haidt: 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)

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. 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.
Do: Hand in your tentative plan for your final project.
--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]
--Nolen-Hoeksema on Rumination, TBA
Do: Spend at least 40 minutes on websites about meditation, e.g.,: www.shinzen.com. Or www.mkzc.org/beginzen.html or 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
--Turkington, C. & Kaplan, E., “All About Prozac”, downloaded from Webmd.com

10/6) C6: Hedonics and the Setpoint
Sage: Gibran: Pleasure
--Wrzesniewski, Roizin, & Bennett: Working, Playing, and Eating [Flourishing, Ch.8]
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]
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]

--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


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

Sage: Gibran: Work

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

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

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


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

Optional reading:

11/3) C10: Growth by adversity

Sage: go to 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]


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]


--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?


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: 


--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)
Do: take the long VIA signature strengths test, at 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.