Instructor:

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Most weeks, I hold office hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3-5pm. I am also available at other specific times by appointment.

Course Description and Goals:

This course provides an introduction to the study of topics related to happiness and the positive aspects of human experience. The first part of the course will focus on the basic areas of research in positive psychology and the methods that researchers use to study happiness, while the second half will broaden the focus to include big-picture issues and real-world application.

By the end of this course, I hope you will gain the following:

- An understanding of key concepts in positive psychology
- Hands-on experience with many of these concepts
- A solid sense of how to distinguish between science and intuition on a topic about which most people have a strong intuitive basis
- Experience reading, digesting, and talking fluently about the content of empirical sources
- A toolkit for putting scientific findings and theories into real-world practice

Assignments and Materials:

All readings will be available on Moodle in PDF format.

Class Structure:

Class will be largely discussion-based, with a substantial amount of that discussion being student-led (see below). In the final weeks of the semester, you will work on a group project, which will culminate in a class presentation and a written proposal (see also below).

Assignments:

1. Leading Discussions (20%) – Two times over the course of the term, you will sign up for a class meeting and lead a brief (~20 minute) discussion on some specific aspect of the readings. You are required to:
   - Meet with me before class so that we can coordinate to reduce redundancy.
   - Write a 1-2 page paper on the readings, due before the beginning of class.
   - Follow up with another 1-2 page paper (due the following class meeting) in which you reflect on the points brought up in class during your discussion, highlighting what, if anything, changed about your viewpoint as a result.

I recommend that you sign up for one discussion at the beginning of the course and one towards the end so that you have time to receive feedback before presenting the second
time. Please note that you are not expected to do a response paper (see #4) on days when you lead class.

2. **Hands-on Exercises (10%)** – There are 4 “sets” of hands-on exercises listed on the syllabus – 3-4 exercises per set. These will provide you a way to gain first-hand experience with the topics we are discussing in class. You will select and sign up for one exercise per set (4 total); in addition to completing this assignment and being prepared to discuss your experience in class on the day it is due, you will send me a brief reflection (~1 page) on your experience prior to the due date.

3. **Class Participation (20%)** – The success of this class depends heavily on the regular attendance and active participation of everyone involved. Thus, you will be expected to make regular contributions to class discussion in-class, on the online forums (available for follow-up discussions after class has met), or both. If you miss class, you are expected to earn your participation for that day on the forums. If you know in advance that this may be a problem for you, please meet with me ASAP. Halfway through the course, I will provide you with feedback on your participation.

4. **Response Papers (20%)** – To help you prepare for class discussions, you will write a BRIEF (~1 substantial paragraph; no more than 1 page) response to the readings prior to each class meeting. Responses can include questions or ideas about the readings themselves, ideas for future research, personal or real-world applications, references to the popular media, connections with other classes, or anything else that piques your interest. Response papers will be given one of four possible grades:
   - *Check plus* (the equivalent of an A): Response conveys that the student did the reading, AND they did something interesting/insightful with it
   - *Check* (the equivalent of a B): Response conveys that the student did the reading, but he/she didn’t do much with the material other than summarize
   - *Check minus* (the equivalent of a C): Response conveys that the student at least glanced over the reading, but understanding is incomplete or superficial
   - *Zero*: Response paper was not submitted, or it is clear from the response that the readings were not completed

You will submit responses to me via Moodle by 5pm the night before class. Papers submitted after 5pm but before the day’s class will be accepted, but cannot earn greater than a *check*. Papers submitted after the day’s class meeting will not be accepted. If you are sick or otherwise miss class, you are still expected to submit a response paper.

5. **Real-World Application Project (30%)** – You will spend the second half of the semester working on a group project in which you select a topic from the “Basic Science” section of course for further study. Your group will generate an idea for a real-world application of the research in that topic and develop, in detail, a plan for implementing your group’s idea. A key requirement of this project is that your idea must be **feasible**. You will produce a timeline and budget, based on investigative work to determine feasibility. In places where an aspect of the proposal is not feasible without outside funding, you must propose potential funding sources or fund-raising options. In the last week of class, you will give a group presentation on your project (~30 minutes), and your classmates will workshop the idea to give you constructive critiques. Your group will take those critiques and use them to put together a final proposal, which you will turn in to me by the last day of finals. To summarize, this project has three graded components:
   - Your personal reflection about the process of designing the project, working in your group, etc. (written only by you)
   - Your group’s written proposal
   - Your group’s presentation/workshop
If any aspect of the above assignments is unclear to you, please feel free to email me or raise your questions during class.

Policies:

**Paraphrasing, Citations, and Plagiarism**
You will be asked to do a good deal of writing for this course. *I expect all writing to be in your own words.* You must always paraphrase - I would much rather see a paper be written in language that is too informal than a paper that is full of jargon - and even when you paraphrase, you must include citations for any ideas that are taken from things you have read. If you are unsure how to describe an idea in your own words, come talk to me, or take a stab at it and make a note in the paper using “comments” so that we can talk about it later. Students caught plagiarizing will be penalized harshly.

**Non-Discrimination Policy**
Hiram College is committed to equality of opportunity and does not discriminate in its educational and admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. The College will not tolerate harassment, prejudice, abuse, or discrimination by or of any of its students, faculty, or staff.

**Communication with Parents**
Hiram College encourages students to speak directly with faculty regarding course content and performance. Students are also encouraged to speak with their parent(s), particularly if the student remains dependent on parent(s) for financial support. Faculty may choose to speak with parents, but generally, faculty will require a written FERPA waiver to be signed by the student before speaking with a student’s parent. FERPA waivers may be found at the Registrar’s Office in Teachout-Price, or online at [http://www.hiram.edu/current/offices/registrar/ferpa2.html](http://www.hiram.edu/current/offices/registrar/ferpa2.html).

**Disability Support Services for Students with Special Needs**
To arrange for support services, a student must submit appropriate, current, detailed documentation to the Director of Counseling, Health and Disability Services (CHDS) together with the completed online service request form: [http://www.hiram.edu/current/studentservices/disabilityservices.html](http://www.hiram.edu/current/studentservices/disabilityservices.html). After verification and with the student’s consent, the Director of CHDS will notify the student’s faculty of the appropriate accommodation services. Faculty are not permitted to make accommodations without the authorization of the Director of CHDS. Hiram College adheres to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to provide requested services for disabled students as specified by the requirements contained in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy guidelines. The Director CHDS is located in the Julia Church Health Center (330-569-5952) P.O. Box 67, Hiram OH 44234.

**Academic Dishonesty**
There are many forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, the giving or receiving of help in any form on an examination, the sale or purchase of papers and test materials, the abuse of computer privileges and regulations, the misuse or abuse of online or library resources, and any other action which debases the soundness of the educational process. Any student who violates the integrity of the academic process will be subject to punishment, including possible dismissal from the College.

Hiram College believes that the development of intellectual honesty is at the heart of a college education. The process of education is severely compromised if we cannot depend on the academic integrity of each member of the community. Moreover, the principles of academic honesty are aligned closely with the principles of good scholarship and research, principles of critical thinking and reasoning, and the standards of professional ethics. Thus, students who fail to practice academic honesty not only risk losing the trust of the academic community, they also
fail to develop the most essential skills and abilities that characterize a college graduate.

Faculty members, librarians and staff are expected to report all instances of academic dishonesty to the Associate Dean of the College, who will provide advice on an appropriate action.

**Grade Appeals**

Academic performance is to be judged solely by individual faculty members. Grades are not subject to alteration based on the amount of effort exerted by, or past performance of, a student. Faculty are expected to provide performance criteria (such as attendance policies, deadlines, assignment expectations, etc.) as part of course syllabi or distributed assignments, but assessment of student performance in meeting said criteria is for the individual faculty member to determine. If a student believes that criteria were ignored, or that work submitted was not included, the student should consult the “Student Academic Responsibilities and Performance” section of the Hiram College Catalog at home.hiram.edu. Therein is provided the process for grade appeals. Please note that all grade appeals reside wholly with the professor alone until the official posting of grades by the Registrar.
Course Schedule (NOTE: Topics are subject to change)

I. Foundations

Mon, 1/9 – Positive Introductions and Syllabus Overview

Wed, 1/11 – History and Background


Fri, 1/13 – Defining Happiness


Mon, 1/16 – NO CLASS; MLK DAY

Wed, 1/18 – Measuring Happiness


Fri, 1/20 – Determinants of Happiness, Part 1: Hedonic Adaptation and the Role of Circumstances


Mon, 1/23 - Determinants of Happiness, Part 2: Volitional Behavior, Free Will and Self-Determination Theory


II. Basic Areas of Positive Psychology

**Wed, 1/25 – Positive Emotions, Part 1: The Broaden and Build Theory**


**Fri, 1/27 – Positive Emotions, Part 2: Applications**


**Mon, 1/30 – Living in the Present: Flow vs. Mindfulness**


**Wed, 2/1 – Resilience, and Post-Traumatic Growth**


**Fri 2/3 – Optimism**


**Mon, 2/6 – Positive Aging**


**Wed 2/8 – Character Strengths, Part 1 (Defining and Assessing)**


**Fri 2/10 – Character Strengths, Part 2 (Strengths vs. Weaknesses; Caveats)**

Haidt, J. (2002). It’s more fun to work on strengths than weaknesses (but it may not be better for you). Unpublished manuscript, http://people.virginia.edu/~jdh6n/strengths_analysis.doc


**Mon 2/13 – Money and Happiness: Altruism and Materialism**


**Wed 2/15 – Creativity**


**Fri 2/17 – Self-Discipline and Grit**


**Mon 2/20 – Gratitude**


- Skip: Sections 3.1, 3.2.1, 3.2.4, all of section 4 (we will come back to this later)


**Wed 2/22 – Capitalization**


**Fri 2/24 – Curiosity + Novelty**


**Mon 2/27 – Empathy and Forgiveness**


EMPATHY


**Wed 2/29 – Positive Health**


**Fri 3/2 – Meaning**


**SPRING BREAK**

**III. Applications + Big Picture Issues**

**Mon 3/12 – Religion and Spirituality**


**Wed 3/14 – Culture and Well-Being**


**Fri 3/16 – Positive education**


**Mon 3/19 – Positive workplaces**


**Wed 3/21 – Positive psychology and public policy; Need for national indicators of well-being?**


Links to the Gallup world poll (posted on Moodle)

**Fri, 3/23 – Self-help**


**Mon, 3/26 – Clinical Applications, Part 1: Positive psychotherapy**


**Wed, 3/28 – Clinical Applications, Part 2: Future directions**


**Fri, 3/30 – Special Considerations and Caveats re: Increasing Happiness**


**Mon, 4/2 – Presentations**

**Wed, 4/4 – Presentations**

**Fri, 4/6 – Presentations + Wrap-Up**