Positive Psychology

PCO4113
Fall 2018

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Office: PSY002 | Office Hours: By Appointment

Objectives

My objective? For you to be able to have thoughtful discussions with yourself and others about the following question: *what makes life worth living?*

Formal Objectives that I’m told I should have:

- Understand the basic principles of positive psychology
- Understand the major areas within positive psychology that have received a considerable amount of attention in the literature
- Understand the role of relationships in achieving a happy life
- Understand how to use positive psychology techniques in your own life
- Understand the strengths and positive life experiences of your peers

TL;DR: Understand what *really* makes people happy.

What You’ll Need

**Reliable access to UF’s Canvas System**

Canvas will be our hub for communication. Here I will post announcements, lectures, and any relevant content that supplements what we discuss in class.

If you aren’t familiar with Canvas (can be nightmarish to navigate), I recommend heading over as soon as possible to [http://elearning.ufl.edu](http://elearning.ufl.edu) to familiarize yourself.
Here is a Quickstart Guide provided by UF. It is also great for those of us who suffer from insomnia... give it a try.

(Recommended) Textbook


While this textbook is not required for this course, I highly recommend students interested in this topic purchase it. It provides deep background to many of the themes we discuss as well as additional topics that a 16-week course just doesn’t give us time to touch.

A Journal?

I see great value in bringing a notebook, journal, anything that allows you to record your thoughts/notes during class. Usually people bring laptops to class (I did/do too); however, this class is different from most. I believe dragging a pen across a piece of paper will help maintain mindfulness in each moment. I believe literally crossing your t’s and dotting your i’s will encourage awareness. Also, studies show you retain more when you write versus type. Just a recommendation (nudge nudge).

How You’ll Be Graded

Canvas will calculate your final letter grade based on your performance in the following:

1. **Biweekly Reflection Papers (70 points out of 150= 47%)**

This semester, I hope to be your guide on a journey of self-discovery. The content for this course is personal, and if you are paying attention, it will also be challenging. I believe that one of the key ingredients to understanding my opening question to this syllabus is awareness, of yourself and others. To encourage you to reflect on your journey, there will be biweekly reflection papers (biweekly= every other week). I am not in the business of telling you how to have reactions. Just write a one-page, double spaced reflection (12 pt font, times new roman) about anything related to your journey: observations, insights, testing of ideas, epiphanies, etc. There will be seven papers total.

~I don’t want to test your knowledge, I want you to experience it.~
2. **Strengths Experience (30 points out of 150= 20%)**

Exploring human strengths is one of the core components of Positive Psychology. For this assignment, you will take a survey to discover yours!

1. Prior to class on 9/12, complete the VIA Survey of Character Strengths at http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/
2. Print out your survey results and bring them to class on 9/12.
3. During class, you will interview a peer for 20 minutes and then be interviewed for 20 minutes.
   - During these interviews, the goal is to understand what is “best” about your peer, which in positive psychology language is labeled signature strengths. You will also have specific questions to ask that are posted on Canvas.
   - You will give your signature strengths printed survey to your peer (and receive your peer’s survey).
4. Based on the interview and survey, you will complete a one page, double spaced, 12 pt times new roman, paper describing what is best about your peer. This is due in Canvas 9/19.
5. You will be graded out of 30 points on completion of the paper, proper formatting and grammar, and attending the class interview.

3. **Gratitude Experience (30 points out of 150= 20%)**

1. Think of someone who has done something important and wonderful for you, yet who has not been properly thanked.
2. Reflect on the benefits you receive from this person, and write this person a letter expressing your gratitude for all this person did for you. This letter can be over one page if needed.
3. Arrange to deliver the letter to the individual personally. This assignment must be completed in person. You will arrange this visit in advance, not telling the person exactly why you are coming, but making sure it is just a one-on-one visit. You will read your letter aloud and spend some time with the person talking about what you wrote.
4. You will write a one-page paper about this experience. The paper is to be no more than one page, 12 pt times new roman, double spaced, 1-inch margins, in black ink.
5. You will briefly present to the class your experiences with the assignment on 11/14.
6. Your gratitude letter and your one-page paper on the experience are due on 11/14 in Canvas.
7. You will be graded out of 30 points on completion of the assignment and on proper formatting and grammar, not on the content of the letter or experience.
4. **Beautiful Day Experience (20 points out of 150= 13%)**

1. Map out a beautiful day.
2. Live and savor it
3. Write about what it was like (one page, double-spaced, 12 pt times new roman). Submit in Canvas (due 10/24).

~It is unfortunate that some equate self-care with being selfish. Instead, I call it being self-full.~

In the end, your final course grade will reflect how many total points (out of 150) you accumulate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>135-150</td>
<td>≥ 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>122-134</td>
<td>88.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>120-121</td>
<td>80-87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>117-119</td>
<td>78.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>105-116</td>
<td>70.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>102-104</td>
<td>68.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>90-101</td>
<td>60-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>89 and below</td>
<td>≤59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Pass**

Show up every week. Take part in class discussions. Complete the assignments. Change your life. Cake.

**The Fine Print**

**Academic Honesty**
“Cheating is defined in the UF Handbook, and it is the student’s responsibility to be familiar with its many forms (including plagiarism). If a student is caught cheating, the first offense will result in a zero for that exam or assignment and a record of the event will be placed in a temporary file with the Office of Student Affairs. The second offense will result in an “E” for the course, and the student will go before the Honor Court. As a result of completing registration at UF, every student has agreed to the following statement: “I understand that UF expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

**Disability Accommodations**
“Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the
instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.”

**Late Work Policy**
Behavioral incentive (they work): each late-day levels a 10% point deduction (e.g., a reaction paper submitted two days late can at best receive a 8/10).

**Customer Satisfaction**
“Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.”

**Schedule below**
**Tentative Schedule**

Tentative is important— the schedule is subject to change. Announcements will be posted if/when this happens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/22</td>
<td>Intro/What is Positive Psych?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>Mindfulness/ Who is Happy?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>Character Strengths/ Being Positive</td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>Open Mindedness <em>Strengths Interviews</em></td>
<td>Printed out strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Formation of Relationships/Cues</td>
<td><em>Strengths Experience</em> Reflection Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9/26</td>
<td>Good relationship cognitions/ Personalities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Maintaining Satisfactory Relationships</td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>Maintaining Satisfactory Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>Meaning in Life/ Goals</td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/24</td>
<td>Religion/ Altruism</td>
<td><em>Ideal Day Experience</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10/31</td>
<td>Happy Halloween 😊</td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>Forgiveness <em>Gratitude Presentations</em></td>
<td>Reflection Paper <em>Gratitude Experience</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>Enjoy Thanksgiving 😊</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>11/28</td>
<td>Career Development and Working</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/5</td>
<td>ACT (therapy)</td>
<td>Final Reflection Paper</td>
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</table>