Positive Psychology

Prof. Traver

Spring 2019

Office: Sage 3201 Email: [traveh@rpi.edu](mailto:traveh@rpi.edu)

Office Hours: Mon and Thurs 8:30-9:45a Class Schedule: Mon and Thurs

12-1:50p Ricketts 203

Course Web Site: LMS: Post of all lecture slides, grades, and any updates

Course Description

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of human happiness, well-being, and strength of character. One of the underlying themes in this course is resiliency. Engaging in course activities will empower you to be more resilient in everyday life, especially when life throws you a curveball. This course takes an empirical approach to helping individuals use the science of flourishing to enhance their lives.

Main Goal

* To become more resilient

How do we get to our main goal (Subgoals)

* To develop an understanding of the key concepts in positive psychology
* To distinguish between science and intuition regarding topics in positive psychology
* To explore your own strengths
* To become more authentic in your everyday life
* To understand how to use positive psychology techniques in your own life.
* To understand the importance of culture in positive psychology
* To become more mindful in everyday living

Required Textbook

Lopez, S.J., Pedrotti, J. R., and Snyder, C.R. (2019). *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Exploration of Human Strengths,* 4th ed. Sage: Washington, D.C.

The Arbinger Institute (2009). *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Achor, Shawn (2010). *The Happiness Advantage*. Random House: New York.

Recommended Reading

Angelou, Maya (2008). *Letters to My Daughter*.

Rodgers, Holly (2016). *The Mindful Twenty-Something: Life Skills to Handle Stress and Everything Else,* New Harbinger Publications

**Assignments** (All assignments must be submitted on LMS and are due at class time, unless otherwise specified)

1. **Quizzes (150 points total)**

* 3 multiple choice quizzes (non-cumulative), each worth 50 points
* No final exam
* There are NO make-up quizzes (exceptions for death in the family, interviews, sports games, and such; exceptions must be documented and you must inform me PRIOR to the quiz)
* You are welcome to visit me during office hours to discuss your quiz.
* Excused Absences are processed by Student Experience office
* Dates of Quizzes
  + Quiz 1 February 14th
  + Quiz 2 March 21st
  + Quiz 3 April 18th

1. **Personal Mini-Experiments/Exercises (90 points; 15 points each)**

* Choose 6 mini-experiments/exercises
  + There are many throughout your textbook
  + You could also create your own
* 5th mini-experiment/exercise is required by all: No electronics for 2 days (use your phone/laptop/computer for contacting people to get assignments done, to do assignments, etc., but refrain from using any social media…no videos, no Facebook, no movies, no TV, no videogames, etc.)

**DUE Dates:**

Sept 28th Mini-Experiment #1

Oct 16th Mini-Experiment #2

Oct 23rd Mini-Experiment #3

Nov 9th Mini-Experiment #4

Nov 27th Mini-Experiment #5 No Electronics

Dec 7th Mini-Experiment #6

**Late Policy: 5 points will be deducted for each day your assignment is late**

1. **Gratitude Journal OR Letters To My Daughter Review OR**

**OR 6 Week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (60 points)**

**Gratitude Journal**

* 5 days/week write a brief description of 3 things you are grateful for and explain why.
* Length is not important. I want you to think about things that happened in the day that you are glad happened. It can be as simple as the sun was out and you took a walk, or you received a call from your grandmother and she made you happy, or you completed an assignment ahead of time, you thought about the sacrifices you and/or your parents are making to pay for your tuition, or whatever you were grateful for. If you are having trouble getting started, then start with one thing per day, and increase over time. Try not to repeat the things stated on previous days.
* Do this for 6 weeks.
* LMS will have 6 entries for the gratitude journal. Pick one day each week (e.g., Friday), and submit your entries for that week (your 5 days of journaling). You must write daily gratitude entries for a minimum of 5 days per week.
* What your Friday submission should look like:
  1. Monday: I was grateful that my mom took me and the kids out to dinner. It was a busy day and going out to dinner reduced my stress level. I was grateful that it snowed today so that I can go skiing tomorrow with fresh snow. I was also grateful for the snow because it was beautiful to see the snow in the trees.
  2. Tuesday: Glad my kids did all their homework on their own…quieter for me! Thankful my oldest was such a good big brother to his sister when he was helping her skiing today. Thankful for a good pair of skis!
  3. Wednesday: Thankful for Lanzi’s salad dressing because it makes a salad really taste awesome. Grateful the man I love is in my life even though he is so far away.
  4. Thursday: Thankful I have a good job so I can provide a good life for my kids. Grateful for my parents…they are the kindest, most thoughtful people I know. Thankful Smartwool was developed so I can stay warm skiing.
  5. Friday: Grateful my kids like broccoli and spinach and carrots and all kinds of fruit so they can get good nutrients. Thankful for garlic because it makes broccoli and spinach taste really good! Thankful for my friend Gina because we have such a great time skiing, exercising, and hanging out together.
  6. **DUE DATES:**
* Week 1: January 25th
* Week 2: February 1st
* Week 3: February 8th
* Week 4: February 15th
* Week 5: February 22nd
* Week 6: March 1st

**Letters To My Daughter Review by Maya Angelou**

* Read the book (obviously!)
* Angelou: Discuss the positive psychology themes mentioned throughout her letters. Discuss what resonated with you, what you found interesting, or just touched your heart.
* Paper should be 5-7 pages double spaced. Submit on LMS
* **Due: April 18th**

**6 Week Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Program**

* Must complete 10 minute mindful meditation daily
* Submit weekly reports on LMS describing your experiences including the struggles, epiphanies, challenges, and successes
* There are plenty of apps and websites to help you learn how to do mindful meditation. Some of those include korumindfulness.org and the Koru app, Headspace, Calm
* If you wanted to spend money (I am NOT recommending you do so!) you could try Mindfulness for Beginners <http://www.mindfulnesstrainingonline.com/>
* **Must start this by March 11**

1. **The Happiness Advantage by Shawn Achor (60pts)**

* There are 6 classes where we discuss the book
* There are 6 quizzes (MC, T/F/, fill in the blank), 10 points each
* We will have a short class discussion and then break into groups so you can share your thoughts on the book with classmates.
* Discussion Dates
  + Principle 1 February 7th
  + Principle 2 February 21st
  + Principle 3 February 28th
  + Principle 4 March 14th
  + Principle 5 March 28th
  + Principle 6 April 11th

1. **Self-Deception (60pts)**

* **Discussion of Book and your essays: March 14th**
* **Essays Due March 18th**
* Choose 1 instance where you or someone else overcame self-deception (were acting out of the box) and describe the events along with outcomes.
* Choose 1 instance where you or someone else succumbed to self-deception (were acting in the box). Describe the situation, process of blame, collusion, and outcomes.
* **Important**: Begin your essay by defining self-deception as we have discussed it in class (Note: Wikipedia will not be of assistance here!)
* *Length:* Students ask all the time how long their description should be. You should describe the events leading up to the situation, what you did/what happened, and then describe the outcomes. Then talk about what you learned from that situation. Quality, not quantity is what matters. You could probably describe one reflection in ½ page single space if you write succinctly. Submit hard copy and one on LMS as well.

1. **Attendance (30pts)**

* I will be taking attendance at various times throughout the semester.

Attendance

* Required

Course Website

* LMS
* All lecture slides posted to LMS
* All grades posted to LMS
* If I have to cancel a class last minute, I will send an email through LMS

Other Websites

<https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/learn-more/readings-and-videos/video-lectures-leading-scholars>

Grading A 410-450 B+ 400-404 C+ 355-359 D+ 310-314

A- 405-409 B 365-399 C 320-354 D 270-309

B- 360-364 C- 315-319 F 0-269

Attendance Policy

Excused Absences are processed by Student Experience office (4th floor Academy Hall, x8022). It is beneficial for students to attend each lecture since there is course material covered in lecture that is not in the textbook. I feel that students are mature enough to make the important choice to attend lecture so that attendance is not taken. At each exam, please be prepared to show your student ID.

Academic Integrity

Student-teacher relationships are built on mutual respect and trust. Students must be able to trust that their teachers have made responsible decisions about the structure and content of the course and that they are conscientiously making their best effort to help students learn. Teachers must be able to trust that students do their work conscientiously and honestly, making their best effort to learn. Acts that violate this mutual respect and trust undermine the educational process. The Rensselaer Handbook of Students Rights and Responsibilities defines various forms of Academic Dishonesty and you should make yourself familiar with these. In this class, all assignments that are turned in for a grade must represent the student’s own work. Your collaborative project should reflect an equivalent amount of effort by each group member.

**Course Calendar**

Date Topic Chapter

January 10th Introduction to Course

January 14th Welcome to Positive Psychology 1

January 17th Gratitude

January 21st No Classes Holiday

January 24th Classifications and Measures

January 28th Role of Culture 4

January 31st Living Well at Every Stage of Life 5

February 4th Living Well at Every Stage of Life 5

**February 7th**  **Discuss Mini-Experiment #1**

**The Happiness Advantage: Discussion of Principle 1**

February 11th The Principles of Pleasure 6

**February 14th Quiz 1 (Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5)**

February 18th No Classes Holiday

February 19th Tuesday Making the Most of Emotional Experiences 7

**February 21st**  Making the Most of Emotional Experiences 7

**The Happiness Advantage Discussion of Principle 2**

**Mini-Experiment #2 Due**

February 25th Seeing Our Futures Through SE, Optimism, Hope 8

**February 28th**  Seeing Our Futures Through SE, Optimism, Hope

**Mini-Experiment #3 Due**

**The Happiness Advantage Discussion of Principle 3**

March 4th – 8th Spring Break

March 11th Wisdom and Courage 9

**March 14th**   **Leadership and Self-Deception Discussion**

**The Happiness Advantage: Discussion of Principle 4**

**March 18th** Wisdom and Courage

**DUE: Deception Essay Due**

**March 21st Quiz 2 (Chapters 6-9)**

March 25th Mindfulness, Flow and Spirituality 10

**March 28th**  Mindful Eating and Exercise

**The Happiness Advantage: Discussion of Principle 5**

**Mini-Experiment #4 Due**

April 1st Empathy and Egotism 11

April 4th Attachment Love and Flourishing 12

April 8th Attachment, Love and Flourishing 12

**April 11th**  **Mini-Experiment #5: No electronics Due**

**The Happiness Advantage Discussion of Principle 6**

Arpil 15th Preventing the Bad and Promoting the Good 14

**April 18th**  **Quiz 3 (Chapters 10, 11, 12, 14)**

**April 22nd**  **Discussion Mini-Experiment #6**, Review of Course

**April 25th**  **The Happiness Advantage Discussion of Principle 7 and Ripple Effect**