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COUN 195.R01: Special Topics - The Art and Science of Happiness

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COUN 195: The Art and Science of Happiness (3 credits)
SYLLABUS – UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA – Spring 2021
Department of Counseling

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION: John Sommers-Flanagan, Ph.D. – Contact me via email (preferred) at john.sf@mso.umt.edu or via cellphone (if needed) at 406-721-6367

OFFICE HOURS: Being off-campus, I've discovered that standard Zoom Office Hours don't work well. Consequently, all my office hours are by appointment. Just email me and we'll set up a Zoom or phone conversation. If I happen to be on campus, I'm good with meeting face-to-face as long as we follow University of Montana mask and distancing protocols.

TA INFORMATION: Daniel Salois, M.A. - Email at: daniel.salois@umconnect.umt.edu

SCHEDULED CLASS MEETINGS: Class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00pm to 2:20pm. Our first class is on Tuesday, January 12. The final examination meeting is on Tuesday, April 27, from 1:10pm to 3:10pm.

COURSE CONTENT AND DESCRIPTION: Over the past 20 years, research on happiness has flourished. Due to the natural interest that most Americans have for happiness, research findings (and unfounded rumors) have been distributed worldwide. Every day, happiness is promoted via online blogs, newspaper and magazine articles, Twitter posts, Instagram videos, TikTok, and through many other media and social media venues. Ironically, instead of increases in national happiness, most epidemiological research indicates that all across the U.S., children, adolescents, adults, and seniors are experiencing less happiness, more depression, and higher suicide rates. To help sort out scientific reality from unsubstantiated rumors, in this course, we will describe, discuss, and experience the art and science of happiness. We will define happiness, read a popular happiness book, examine scientific research studies, try out research experiments in class, engage in extended happiness lab assignments, and use published instruments to measure our own happiness and well-being. Overall, we will focus on how happiness and well-being are manifest in the physical, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, spiritual/cultural, behavioral, and contextual dimensions of our lives.

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNER OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to theories and strategies of positive psychology and the pursuit of happiness. Specific learner objectives include:

1. Identify evidence-based strategies for pursuing happiness and well-being
2. Apply evidence-based strategies for pursuing happiness and well-being
3. Directly experience evidence-based strategies for pursuing happiness and well-being
4. Discuss evidence-based strategies for pursuing happiness and well-being

TEACHING METHODS:

- Lectures/class demonstrations
- Guest lectures/student presentations
- Class activities and discussions
- Experiential lab participation
- Examinations and homework assignments
- Individual happiness consultation meetings

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: If you're a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, contact me privately to discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised I may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted Disability Services, located in Lommasson Center 154, please do so in order to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://life.umt.edu/dss>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/AS/APSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

READINGS: Bono, T. (2020). *Happiness 101: Simple secrets to smart living & well-being*. Grand Central Life & Style. [Note: This book was previously published under a different title. Both versions are the same. Here's the alternative title: Bono, T. (2018). *When likes aren't enough: A crash course in the science of happiness*. Grand Central Life & Style.]

We will have many additional readings, podcasts, and video viewing assignments. These are listed in this syllabus and will be posted, with links, on Moodle. If you have any issues regarding access to the course readings and resources, please contact John or Dan for accommodations or alternative assignments.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: As the semester rolls out, you will complete many small course assignments. The list of assignments will look overwhelming, but they're nearly all small and based on several theoretical propositions, all of which posit that many small (everyday) changes in behavior will add up and substantially contribute to your well-being and lead you toward the philosophic goal of a "well-lived life." These assignments are based on empirical research, moral philosophy, positive psychology theory, and psychotherapy theories. One major goal of this class is to use science-based approaches to get you to behave in ways that are likely to increase your personal well-being. Additionally, we want you to complete your assignments using an experimental mindset; each assignment has a chance of improving your mood or wellbeing . . . and so we want you to reflect on your reactions to the assignments. Finally, the overarching goal is that this new emphasis on an orientation to wellness will build itself into habitually healthy

physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and emotional ways of being.

The list below is a general list of assignments along with their respective point values. Detailed descriptions of your assignments are included following the SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS. On Moodle, the class topics and assignments are scheduled week by week (Moodle calls these “sections”). Specific protocols for the active learning assignments will be on Moodle at least 10 days before the assignments are due. Reading, podcast, and video titles and links are included on the SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS in this syllabus and in the Moodle weekly sections.

1. **Initial and Final Happiness Assessment Packets (20 points each; 40 points total)**
2. **Active Learning Assignments (15 assignments at 5 points each; 75 total points)**
3. **Three (3) Quizzes and one (1) Final Quiz (30 points each; 120 points total; the quizzes and final quizzes will be open book Moodle quizzes based on assigned readings, podcasts, and videos)**
4. **Class attendance/participation (40 points)**
5. **Lab attendance (30 points)**
6. **Midterm and final activity reflection papers (15 points each; 30 points total)**
7. **Eight individual personal happiness consultations (40 points).**
8. **I will announce extra credit opportunities throughout the course (maximum = 20 points)**

CLASS AND LAB ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICY: Attendance is expected. We will take attendance at all classes and labs. One way we will do this is by asking one or more attendance/participation questions during each class/lab session. Either through the Zoom Chatbox or via email, you’ll need to answer these questions to get attendance credit. **For class:** You can miss two classes and not lose any points. After that, you lose 10 points per absence until all of your class attendance points are gone. **For labs:** You can miss one lab and not lose any points. After that, you lose 10 points per absence until all of your lab attendance points are gone.

Absence Policy: We count all absences as absences, regardless of whether the absences were for legitimate reasons. Our reasoning is that we can’t judge which absences should be “excused” and which should count. Therefore, as long as you’re not in the virtual room (or view the video and answer the participation question), you get an absence. However, we also want to be fair. If you’re motivated, you always can earn your absence points back. All you have to do is to contact Dan, and he will provide you with a “make-up” assignment.

GRADING PROCEDURES: There are 375 possible points in this class. Grades will be assigned on a percentage basis (with some modification or curving depending upon overall class performance).

- A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%;
- C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-77%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 63-66%;
- D- = 60-62%; F = Below 60%

If you have concerns about grading procedures or require special assistance for any reason, please contact John or Dan ASAP so we can address your concerns.

APPROXIMATE SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS: (The schedule below is an approximation: The actual schedule will vary based on a number of different factors):

Date	In-Class Topics	Assignments Due – All due dates are midnight MST or MDT.
1/12	Intro to happiness; syllabus overview	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 1 – Happiness, the Holy Grail</p> <p>HOMEWORK 1: Music and Emotion (happy songs; due 1/16; 5 points)</p>
1/14	New Year’s Resolutions and the Science of Goal-Setting	<p>READING: Time magazine – Fogg on goal-setting: https://time.com/5756833/better-control-emotions-better-habits/</p> <p>LISTEN: Hidden Brain, December 30, 2019 episode: Creatures of Habit: https://www.npr.org/transcripts/787160734</p> <p>HOMEWORK 2: Witness something inspiring . . . and describe it in about 200 words (due 1/18) about what you witnessed over the MLK weekend and what it meant to you (5 points).</p> <p>ASSESSMENT 1: Happiness survey packet (do this online; due on 1/21; 20 points)</p>
1/19	Your Happy Place: The Context of Happiness	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 2 – Common Denominator of Happiness</p> <p>READING: Seven dimensions handout – SF</p> <p>WATCH: CBS – Forest Bathing video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOMEFNyLPag</p> <p>HOMEWORK 3: Three Happy Places (due 1/23; 5 points)</p>
1/21	Physical Happiness	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 3 – Healthy Mind, Healthy Body</p> <p>LISTEN: The Practically Perfect Parenting Podcast, Episode: Teens and Depression -- https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/teens-depression/id1170841304?i=1000383659996</p> <p>HOMEWORK 4: Three Good Things (due 1/25; 5 points)</p>
1/26	Happiness and the body	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 4 – Sweet Dreams</p> <p>LISTEN: Science vs. Podcast – All Aboard the Snooze Cruise https://gimletmedia.com/shows/science-vs/o2hx57</p>

		<p>WATCH and Practice: Progressive Muscle Relaxation video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihO02wUzgc</p> <p>HOMEWORK 5: Identify, practice, and report on YOUR FAVORITE relaxation method (due 1/30; 5 points)</p>
1/28	Cognition I: You are what you think.	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 5 – Attention Training</p> <p>WATCH: Steven Hayes on “What are you going to do with difficult thoughts?” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o79_gmO5ppg&list=PLeuYJUTX ITbdKeEW4FKo_oC64pDxah1c&index=2&t=61s</p> <p>LISTEN: Hidden Brain, December 16, 2019 episode: Did that Really Happen? https://www.npr.org/2019/12/16/788422090/did-that-really-happen-how-our-memories-betray-us</p> <p>HAPPINESS CONSULTATIONS: Meet with your happiness consultant for your first goal-setting and planning meeting by Friday, January 29.</p> <p>Quiz 1 Opens on Moodle (due, midnight on 2/1; 30 points)</p>
2/2	Cognition II – Visual Imagery and Cognitive Rehearsal	<p>READING: S-F Blog – Positive thinking is NOT rational thinking</p> <p>WATCH: Barbara Fredrickson, Broaden and Build video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7dFDHzV36g</p> <p>HOMEWORK 6: Best possible selves assignment (due 2/6; 5 points)</p>
2/4	Cognition III: Flow, Savoring, and Mindfulness	<p>READING: Online Csikszentmihalyi article: https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi/</p> <p>WATCH: FLOW video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXD8QjpQrFc</p> <p>LISTEN: Hidden Brain, December 14, 2020, Minimizing Pain, Maximizing Joy.</p> <p>HOMEWORK 7: Practice Savoring (due 2/8; 5 points)</p>
2/9	Lab 1: Icebreakers and Goal-setting	Meet with your assigned Lab Group

2/11	The Happy Spirit – Part I	<p>READING: Eastern Happiness article on Moodle</p> <p>WATCH: Bill O’Hanlon on “The African Violet Queen” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9sVg36PKQs</p> <p>HOMEWORK 8: Experimenting with gratitude (due 2/15; 5 points)</p>
2/16	Lab 2: Monitoring and talking about thoughts.	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
2/18	Spirituality II: LKM and Acts of Kindness	<p>READING: Check out the website and blog https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-kindness-blog/2943-50-kindness-ideas-for-random-acts-of-kindness-day</p> <p>HOMEWORK 9: Acts of kindness assignment (due 2/22; 5 points)</p>
2/23	Lab 3: Cultivating optimism	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
2/25	Spirituality III Possible Spirituality Panel	<p>READING: Time article on religion and spirituality https://time.com/4856978/spirituality-religion-happiness/</p> <p>HOMEWORK 10: Assignments are minimal this week so you can practice the six minutes a day meditation (due 3/1; 5 points).</p>
3/2	Lab 4: Mindfulness meditation	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
3/4	Student Break – No Class Today	Turn in midterm course reflections (due 3/7, 15 points)
3/9	Lab 5: Talking about Gratitude	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
3/11	Social I: Social Connection	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 10 – Social Connection</p> <p>WATCH: Nicholas Christakis on Social Networks https://www.ted.com/talks/nicholas_christakis_the_hidden_influence_of_social_networks?language=en</p> <p>HOMEWORK 11: Do Natural Talent Interviews (due 3/15; 5 points)</p>
3/16	Student Break – No Class Today	
3/18	Social II: Solving social comparison (and achievement)	<p>READING: Bono – Chapter 6 – Failing Better</p> <p>READING: Online article on social comparison:</p>

		<p>https://positivepsychology.com/social-comparison/</p> <p>HOMEWORK 12: Take the VIA Strengths Test: https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths (Due 3/22; 5 points)</p>
3/23	Lab 6: Mindfulness meditation practice	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
3/25	<p>Social Connection III</p> <p>LISTEN: Radiolab on The Golden Rule https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/segments/golden-rule</p>	<p>READING: Atlantic article on social connection: https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/10/social-connection-makes-a-better-brain/280934/</p> <p>WATCH: Angela Lee Duckworth on GRIT: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H14bBuluwB8</p> <p>WATCH: Brene Brown on Trust: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SqFiTeka_I</p> <p>QUIZ 3: Opens 3/25 on Moodle; due by midnight 3/28</p>

3/30	Lab 7: What's Good About You and Strengths	Meet with your assigned Lab Group HOMEWORK 13: Do family constellation for next Lab (due 4/4).
4/1	Emotions: You are what you feel	READING: Bono – Chapter 9 – Managing Bad Days READ AND WATCH: Three-step emotional change technique https://johnsommersflanagan.com/2017/03/12/revisiting-the-3-step-emotional-change-trick-including-a-video-example/ HOMEWORK 14: Start emotional journaling (discuss in lab and submit “What I learned from journal summary” due 4/16)
4/6	Lab 8: Family constellations and communication skills	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
4/8	Emotions II – Becoming resilient	READING: Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt on “The coddling of the American mind”: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/ LISTEN: This American Life – 10 sessions
4/13	Lab 9: Emotionally expressive journaling	Meet with your assigned Lab Group
4/15	Happiness and behavior. Putting it all together	READING: Bono, Chapter 8, - The Time Paradox HAPPINESS CONSULTATIONS II: Final meeting and debriefing for extra credit with happiness consultant by end of this week. HOMEWORK 15: Forgiveness due 4/19
4/20	Lab 10: Farewell Lab	Meet with your assigned Lab Group ASSESSMENT 2: Complete Post-test Assessment Packet online (20 points)
4/22	Final Exam Review and Prep	Finish up all assignments Turn in final course reflections (due 5/1, 15 points)
4/27	Final Exam	Final Pub Quiz 4: Live 4/27 (and recorded) answers are due by midnight 5/1

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: Each of the course assignments that count for points are described below.

- 1. Initial and Final Happiness Assessment Packets (20 points each; 40 points total):** During the first and 14th weeks of class you'll be given a happiness assessment packet. These packets will take about 15 minutes to complete. We will use these assessments for two purposes. First, you will use them to deepen your understanding of yourself and for goal-setting. Second, if you give us permission, we'll anonymize your questionnaire responses, input them into a statistical program, and use the results for research. These questionnaire packets are graded pass (20 + 20 points = 40 points) or not pass (0 points). To get your fifty points, you need to answer all the items on the questionnaires.
- 2. Active Learning Assignments (15 assignments at 5 points each; 75 total points):** These are all short assignments designed to get you in the habit of incorporating various happiness-related activities into your life. Each assignment will be posted on Moodle at least 10 days before they're due. These assignments are graded pass (5 points) or not pass (0 points). To get your five points you need to complete the bare minimum of thoughtful and meaningful responses.
- 3. Quiz and Final Quiz scores (30 points each; 120 points total):** There will be three quizzes and one final pub quiz, all worth 30 points. These are all open book Moodle quizzes based on the assigned readings, podcasts, and videos. The quizzes aren't designed to be tricky, but just to make sure that you're tracking the content of the materials we're covering outside class. They will consist of multiple choice and short answer responses.
- 4. Class attendance (40 points):** The class attendance policy and procedure is described above.
- 5. Lab attendance (30 points):** There will be ten small group lab sessions held on Tuesdays, beginning 2/9 and ending 4/20.
- 6. Two reflection papers (15 points each; 30 points total):** Because we're interested in tracking what's important to you, what's working in this class, and what positive changes you're noticing in yourself and in your life, we want you to intentionally reflect on the course assignments and to share with us what's meaningful to you. At mid-semester and during finals week, you'll be prompted to answer four questions for reflection.
- 7. Personal happiness consultations (40 points).** Similar to COUN 242 (Intimate and Family Relationships), this course focuses not only on academic content, but also on the application of this content to your lives. To help facilitate this, all students need to complete an assignment explicitly designed to help you with your personal goal-setting and attainment. Option 1 is for you to attend eight 50 minute "happiness consultation" sessions with a graduate student in counseling. These sessions will focus on personal goal-setting and can be as shallow or as deep as you like. Because you'll be working with a graduate student in counseling, all sessions will be recorded so the counseling students can get feedback on the development of their counseling skills. Although these sessions will most likely be conducted via Zoom, in some cases, face-to-face meetings in the counseling

lab may be arranged.