

**Department of Psychology — Columbia University**  
**Happiness Studies Seminar**  
**PSYC UN3661**  
Spring 2020  
3 Points

Instructor: Tal Ben-Shahar  
Class Meets: Mondays 10:10am – 12pm  
Room: ???  
Office Hours: Mondays 3pm-5pm  
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**Course Bulletin Description:** The aim of the course is to introduce students to the field of happiness studies. Drawing on research from the field of psychology, systems thinking, psychology, neuroscience, and other disciplines, the course explores key components of personal, interpersonal, and societal happiness.

**Full Description:** The aim of the course is to introduce students to the field of happiness studies through the lens of Wholebeing (Wholeperson Wellbeing). Drawing on systems thinking, psychology, neuroscience, and other disciplines, the course explores wellbeing in five interconnected realms: spiritual, physical, intellectual, relational, and emotional. Students are exposed to research to help them explore the key components of personal, interpersonal, and societal happiness. The seminar is open to both undergraduate and graduate students.

### **Course Objectives**

1. Students will appreciate the value of understanding happiness as wholeperson wellbeing (wholebeing) and articulate the SPIRE model with its five elements of wellbeing: spiritual, physical, intellectual, relational and emotional.
2. Students will learn to apply a systemic, rather than a symptomatic, lens to solving problems and accentuating the positive.
3. Students will evaluate the relevance of the twelve principles for schools, organizations, and society, and apply these principles in the classroom, the workplace, and the community.

### **Role in the Psychology Curriculum**

This course will be open to undergraduates and can be counted as an elective for students pursuing the Psychology major or concentration.

### **Assignments and Grades**

1. Leading class discussion (20% of grade). Every student will be required to lead class discussion, alongside another student, twice during the semester. This means providing a ten-minute introduction on the reading, and then co-leading the

discussion with the instructor. Preparation for each class comprises two reading pieces as well as at least two online, pre-recorded, hour-long lectures.

2. Class attendance and participation (20% of grade). Students are expected to attend each class (unless providing a legitimate reason for their absence) and actively participate in the discussion.
3. I AM reflections (30% of grade). Students are to submit a 1-2 page *I AM* reflection by 8pm each Sunday based on the weekly readings and videos. The *I* stands for “Interesting,” and is about finding something that captured the student’s interest or that the student found intriguing. The *A* stands for “Actionable,” and is about finding something that the student wants to apply in your life. The *M* stands for “Meaningful,” and is about something that the student finds important, significant.
4. Final project (30% of grade). The final project is a 12-15 minute presentation on any topic related to happiness—one discussed in class, or not. At the end of the semester students need to submit the written text, the script, of the presentation (approximately 2,000 words). In addition, students will need to submit slides that go along with the presentation (either in PowerPoint format or Word). The presentation is an opportunity to bridge between the Ivory Tower and Main Street, to synthesize between rigor and fun, between research and accessibility. It should refer to empirical work from refereed journals, articles mentioned or recommended in class, as well as others. To spice up the presentation, students can include stories, film excerpts, and exercises. Other than the research as the foundation, students can use any idea that you have to make the presentation more effective and interesting. Students will have a public event where they will present their final project. Prior to that each student will have opportunities to present their final project to fellow students and receive feedback.

## **Weekly Topics and Reading List**

Week 1: Introducing Happiness Studies & the Wholebeing Approach

- Watch lectures 1, 2 and 3.
- Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King and Ed Diener, “The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?” in *Psychological Bulletin*, 2005.  
<http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~sonja/papers/LKD2005.pdf>
- David Myers and Ed Diener, “The Scientific Pursuit of Happiness,” in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2018.

Weeks 2: Purpose (S1)

- Watch lectures 4 and 5.
- Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane Dutton, “Crafting a Job: Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work,” *Academy of Management Review* (2001), 26 (2), 179-201.
- Andrew Carton, “‘I’m Not Mopping the Floors, I’m Putting a Man on the Moon’: How NASA Leaders Enhanced the Meaningfulness of Work by Changing the Meaning of Work,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2017.

Weeks 3: Mindfulness (S2)

- Watch lecture 6 and 7.

- Kirk Warren Brown and Richard Ryan, “The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and its Role in Psychological Well-Being,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2003.

[https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2003\\_BrownRyan.pdf](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2003_BrownRyan.pdf)

- Tang, Y. Y., Holzel, B. K., & Posner, M. I., “The Neuroscience of Mindfulness Meditation,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* (2015), 16, 213-225.

[https://www.awakeatwork.net/sites/default/files/Tang\\_1426855548\\_1%20-final.pdf](https://www.awakeatwork.net/sites/default/files/Tang_1426855548_1%20-final.pdf)

#### Weeks 4: Mind & Body (P1)

- Watch lectures 8 and 9.
- Alia Crum and Ellen Langer, “Mind-Set Matters: Exercise and the Placebo Effect,” *Psychological Science*, 18 (2), 165-171 (2007).

[https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/3196007/Langer\\_ExcercisePlaceboEffect.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/3196007/Langer_ExcercisePlaceboEffect.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

#### Weeks 5: Adherence to Nature (P2)

- Watch lectures 10 and 11.
- Patrick Callaghan, “Exercise: a neglected intervention in mental health care?” *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 2004.
- Michael Irwin, “Why Sleep Is Important for Health: A Psychoneuroimmunology Perspective,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 2015.

#### Weeks 6: Curiosity (I1)

- Watch lecture 12 and 13.
- Tod Kashdan, et al. (2018), “The five-dimensional curiosity scale: Capturing the bandwidth of curiosity and identifying four unique subgroups of curious people,” *Journal of Research in Personality*, 2018.
- Francesca Gino, et al. “Why Curiosity Matters,” *Harvard Business Review*, 2018.

<https://hbr.org/2018/09/curiosity>

#### Weeks 7: Deep Learning (I2)

- Watch lectures 14 and 15.
- Chad Burton & Laura King, “Effects of very brief writing on health: The two minute miracle,” in *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 2007.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5d44/60d7c5afaede2b79e52dd94926b9dd079fb8.pdf>

- Danielle Watson, “Teaching Teachers To Think: Reflective Journaling As A Strategy To Enhance Students Understanding And Practice Of Academic Writing,” in *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 2010.

#### Weeks 8: A fulfilling Life (R1)

- Watch lectures 16 and 17.
- Shelly Gable, Gian Gonzaga & Amy Strachman, “Will You Be There For Me When Things Go Right?” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2006.

<http://coachingtowardhappiness.com/pdf/WillYouBeThereForMeWhenThingsGoRight.pdf>

- Adam Grant, In the Company of Givers, in *Harvard Business Review*, 2013.

<https://hbr.org/2013/04/in-the-company-of-givers-and-takers>

Weeks 9: Beginning with the Self (R2)

- Watch lectures 18 and 19.
- Heidi Riggio, et al., “Self-Efficacy in Romantic Relationships: Prediction of Relationship Attitudes and Outcomes,” in *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 2013.
- Dana Weiser & Daniel Weigel, “Self-efficacy in romantic relationships: direct and indirect effects on relationship maintenance and satisfaction,” in *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2016.

Weeks 10: Embracing Emotions (E1)

- Watch lecture 20 and 21.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3122271/>
- Laura Redwine et al., “A pilot randomized study of a gratitude journaling intervention on HRV and inflammatory biomarkers in Stage B heart failure patients,” in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 2016.

Weeks 11: Thoughts & Deeds (E2)

- Watch lectures 22 and 23.
- Stefan Hoffman, et al. The Efficacy of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A Review of Meta-Analyses,” in *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 2013.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3584580/>
- Yair Amichai-Hamburger, “The Future of Online Therapy,” in *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2014.

Week 12: Schools, Organizations, Society

- Watch lectures 24, 25 and 26.
- Ed Diener, Shigehiro Oishi, and Louis Tay, “Advances in Subjective Well-Being Research,” in *Nature Human Behavior*, 2018.
- Daniel Hojman and Ivaro Miranda, “Agency, Human Dignity, and Subjective Well-Being,” in *World Development*, 2018.

Week 13: Summary and final projects

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**Class Policies**

Diversity & Inclusion. My aim is to foster a learning environment that supports a diversity of perspectives and experiences and honors your identities. Please reach out to me with any concerns or suggestions you may have to better address your learning needs and to improve the effectiveness of this course. I look forward to working together to create a classroom community built on mutual respect and inclusivity.

Students with Disabilities. Students with special needs who may require classroom/assignment accommodations should make an appointment with me before or during the first week of class. You should also contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Lerner Hall before the start of the course to register for these accommodations. The procedures for registering with ODS can be found at <http://health.columbia.edu/services/odsor> by calling (212) 854-2388.

Academic integrity. As members of this academic community, we are responsible for maintaining the highest level of personal and academic integrity: “[E]ach one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.... The exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited. In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects... [and] you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent” (from the Columbia University Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity). Plagiarism—whether intentional or inadvertent—is a serious violation of academic integrity. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism and/or how to properly cite sources, please come to me. I am more than happy to help. Similarly, if you put yourself in a situation, e.g., starting an assignment very late, in which you think your best option might be to cut some corners, see me. It is far better to have a few points deducted from a paper than to compromise your academic integrity and potentially put your academic standing in jeopardy.