

**Psychology 455 – Positive Psychology
Summer 2010**

Professor: Dr. John R. Z. Abela
Office: Tillett Hall, Room 503
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 8:45AM – 9:45AM
E-mail: abela@rci.rutgers.edu

Class Time: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:10AM – 12:05PM
Livingston Classroom Building, Room 109

Required Textbooks:

Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2002). *The Resilience Factor*. New York: Broadway Books.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic Happiness*. New York: Free Press.

Content:

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. This field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

Positive Psychology has three central concerns: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. Understanding positive emotions entails the study of contentment with the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future. Understanding positive individual traits consists of the study of the strengths and virtues, such as the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom. Understanding positive institutions entails the study of the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance. This course combines didactic instruction and experiential learning in its coverage of each of these three issues central to this field

Tentative Syllabus:

Tuesday, June 1

Lecture Topic: Introductory Lesson
Homework: *Approaches to Happiness Questionnaire*

Wednesday, June 2

Lecture Topic: The Three Paths to Happiness
Homework: *Developing a Target Strength*
Music and Poetry related to the Pleasant, Good, and Meaningful Lives
Fordyce Emotions Questionnaire and General Happiness Questionnaire
(<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>)

Thursday, June 3

No Class

Monday, June 7

Lecture Topic: Positive Emotions
Readings: *Authentic Happiness, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4*
Presentations: *Music and Poetry related to the Pleasant, Good, and Meaningful Lives*
Homework: *Cultural and Personal Artifacts*

Tuesday, June 8

Lecture Topic: Countering the Negativity Bias
Presentations: *Cultural and Personal Artifacts*
Homework: *Blessings Journal*
Gratitude Questionnaire (<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>)

Wednesday, June 9

Lecture Topic: Sensory Savoring and Mindfulness
Reading: *Authentic Happiness, Chapter 7*
Homework: *Savoring Exercises*

Thursday, June 10

Lecture Topic: Expressing Gratitude
Readings: *Authentic Happiness, Chapter 5*
Film: *It Could Happen to You*
Homework: *Gratitude Letter/Visit*
VIA Signature Strengths (<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>)

Monday, June 14

Lecture Topic: Identifying Strengths
Readings: *Authentic Happiness, Chapters 8 and 9*

Tuesday, June 15

Lecture Topic: Identifying Strengths

Wednesday, June 16

Lecture Topic: Building Strengths
Presentations: *Gratitude Letter/Visit*

Thursday, June 17

Lecture Topic: Five Kindnesses in One Day
Film: *Pay It Forward*
Homework: *Five Kindnesses in One Day*
Compassionate Love Scale and Close Relationships Questionnaire
(<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>)

Monday, June 21

Lecture Topic: Positive Communication: Active Constructive Responding
Presentations: *Five Kindnesses in One Day*
Homework: *Optimism Test (<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>)*

Tuesday, June 22

Lecture Topic: Optimism
Readings: *Authentic Happiness, Chapter 6*
The Resilience Factor, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Wednesday, June 23

Lecture Topic: Inter-Generational Transmission of Strengths
Film: *Joy Luck Club*
Homework: *Family Tree of Strengths*

Thursday, June 24

Lecture Topic: ABC Model and Thinking Traps
Readings: *The Resilience Factor, Chapters 4 and 5*
Homework: *Worksheets*

Monday, June 28

Lecture Topic: Detecting Icebergs
Readings: *The Resilience Factor, Chapter 6*
Homework: *Worksheets*

Tuesday, June 29

Lecture Topic: Challenging Beliefs
Readings: *The Resilience Factor, Chapter 7*
Homework: *Worksheets*

Wednesday, June 30

Lecture Topic: Putting it in Perspective
Readings: *The Resilience Factor, Chapter 8*
Homework: *Worksheets*

Thursday, July 1

Lecture Topic: Real Time Resilience
Readings: *The Resilience Factor, Chapter 9*

Monday, July 5

No Class

Tuesday, July 6

Lecture Topic: Developing a Target Strength

Presentations: *Developing a Target Strength*

Homework: *Meaning in Life Questionnaire* (<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu>)

Wednesday, July 7

Lecture Topic: Family Tree of Strengths

Presentations: *Family Tree of Strengths*

Homework: *Meaning Passages*

Readings: *Authentic Happiness, Chapter 14*

Thursday, July 8

Exam

Requirements:

Grades will be based on six in class presentations (30%); journal exercises and entries (50%); and a final exam (20%).