

Positive Psychology

Basic Course Information

Course: 01:803:455: Positive Psychology
Instructor: Gwyne White
Location: Livingston: TIL-253
Time: Tuesday & Friday; 1:00- 5:00PM

My Contact Information

Email: gwyne.white@rutgers.edu
Office: Tillett Hall 411
Office hours: By appointment

Course Overview

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

Goals: (1) To provide a broad, engaging overview of positive psychology theory and research and (2) to encourage critical thinking about positive psychology, particularly as it impacts your daily life.

Readings: The readings include book chapters, empirical journal articles, and review articles, provided on the Sakai site.

Course Evaluation

Attendance and participation in discussions are essential in this course.

Attendance: You are expected to attend **every** class and arrive **on time**. Missing 3 classes will result in an automatic Fail (F) for the course.

If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will not be allowed to join class, and will receive a 0 for both attendance and the in-class work. You will lose points for sleeping, texting, obviously not paying attention or being rude to fellow classmates.

Quizzes: Each class there will be a quiz on the assigned readings due for that day. These quizzes are graded for the day pass/fail (e.g. 60% or greater equals pass) and for the course (e.g. failing 5 out of 10 quizzes results in a 0 for your quiz grade). There are no make-ups for missed in-class quizzes.

Journal assignments: For each class after the first you will have a journal assignment in which you will be asked to write a page on a particular topic relating to Positive Psychology. You will then summarize your thoughts in a PowerPoint slide which you will submit to me. These assignments will be due into me on **Monday and Thursday by 9AM** so that I can compile them for presentation in class. I will present everyone's slide in class at the start however, each slide will be deidentified. You must submit a slide by the deadline to get credit. However, you can ask that I not present your slide.

Extra credit: If you wish to receive .33 points of extra credit you may show me your full page journal response to the prompt on the day it was due (if you show me every entry as it was due you will receive an extra 3 points in the course [.33 x 9] – these points are added in after your total score from assignments has been computed).

- If you ask me how many extra credit points you have I will take ALL YOUR points away. Keep track yourself and trust that I am taking care of things on my end. If there is an error at the end (e.g. when I tell you how many points you have on the LAST DAY OF CLASS) we can discuss it then.
- If you ask me for more extra credit points I will take ALL YOUR points away. This is the extra credit. You will get no more.

Written assignment: You will have 2 written assignments during the course of this class. For both you will find a peer reviewed empirical article of your choice (published between 2005 - 2015) relating to positive psychology and submit a 2-page paper which reflects a review of the content of your chosen article and your analysis of what this article means to the field of positive psychology.

Presentation: You will work with a group on 1 of the 6 possible topics to produce a 40 minute presentation (approximately 30 slides) to provide the rest of class an understanding of your topic area as it relates to positive psychology.

Final paper: As an individual you will write a paper on the same topic as your presentation. The paper is a minimum of 5 pages and requires a thesis statement, a review of positive psychology, a review of your topic area, a review of your topic area as it relates to positive psychology. Incorporated within this are 2-3 peer reviewed articles that support your thesis and at least 1 reading assigned as part of this class.

Late & make-up policy:

Late work will not be accepted. I generally do not allow make-ups unless an extreme circumstance occurs. If an extreme circumstance occurs you must provide a written note from your dean in order to be eligible for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments are determined on a case by case basis.

Withdrawal policy:

If you decide not to complete the course it is **your responsibility** to notify the college of your intention to withdraw before the deadline.

Plagiarism:

All work that students turn in must be their own work. Students *should not* work collaboratively on assignments without prior approval from the instructor. Any outside sources (including help from other people) must be appropriately referenced in all written work. Turning in someone else's work as your own is completely unacceptable. This includes downloading information from the web and pasting or copying it into your paper. We routinely check Google, Wikipedia and other popular websites to check for plagiarism. Additionally, we require that your paper be turned in as electronic as well as hard copies so that we can check for plagiarism by matching content to information on the web. Any student who plagiarizes will, *at the very least*, receive a failing grade for the course. More severe consequences (e.g., expulsion) are also possible. More about academic integrity can be found at <http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>.

Students with disabilities:

Any student who feels he or she needs accommodation for a physical or learning disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (151 College Ave, Suite 123; phone 732-932-2848) and read more about Rutgers' policy at <http://disability/services.rutgers.edu> . If you request accommodations for this course, you will need a letter from Disability Services. This letter must be provided to me *by our second class*, at which point you may make a request for course-specific accommodations. The Chair of Undergraduate Psychology and I will review your request and may choose to modify it before it is approved.

Grading Policy:	1. Quizzes	15%
	2. Journal assignments	15%
	3. Written assignment	10%
	3. Presentation	30%
	4. Final Paper	30%
	5. Extra Credit	+3points possible

Your final grades will be based on the point totals below. This is non-negotiable.

The points needed for your final grade are as follows:

90-100 = A
84-89 = B+
80-83 = B
74-79 = C+
70-73 = C
60-69 = D
59 or Below = F

Schedule of Topics & Readings

Date	Topics	Readings Due
Tues 5.26 Class 1	Introduction: Syllabus Expectations Positive Psychology	
Fri 5.29 Class 2	Happiness	Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 Gabel & Haidt, 2005
Tues 6.02 Class 3	Prevention & Promotion	Weiss, A, Bates, TC & Luciano, M (2008) Diener, E. & Diener, C. (1996) Dunn et al. (2008) Lyubomirsky, S. et al (2011)
Fri 6.05 Class 4	Mindfulness	Gillham et al. 2007 Perry et al. 1995 Durlak et al. 2011
Tues 6.09 Class 5	Creativity Humor	Brown & Ryan, 2003 Rozin & Royzman, 2001 Garland et al. 2010
Fri 6.12	No Class	Freedom!
Tues 6.16 Class 6	Forgiveness Gratitude Movie: Secret Lives	Goldman, 2013 Verhaegen_2005 Dietrich & Kanso, 2010
Fri 6.19 Class 7	Character Strengths Resilience Pro-social	Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008 Toussaint & Friedman, 2008
Tues 6.23 Class 8	Optimism Movie: Pollyanna	Proctor, Maltby & Linley, 2011 Meyerson et al., 2011
Fri 6.26 Class 9	Review Final Project Presentations	Peleg et., 2009
Tues 6.30 Class 10	Final Project Presentations	McNulty & Fincham, 2012

Due Dates

Date	Due	Form
Tues 5.26		
Thurs 5.28	Slide for Journal entry 1	PowerPoint slide via dropbox
Fri 5.29		
Mon 6.01	Slide for Journal entry 2	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Tues 6.02		
Thurs 6.04	Slide for Journal entry 3	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Fri 6.05	Written assignment 1	Assignments
Mon 6.08	Slide for Journal entry 4	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Tues 6.09		
Fri 6.12	No Class	
Mon 6.15	Slide for Journal entry 5	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Tues 6.16		
Thurs 6.18	Slide for Journal entry 6	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Fri 6.19	Written assignment 2	Assignments
Mon 6.22	Slide for Journal entry 7	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Tues 6.23		
Thurs 6.25	Slide for Journal entry 8	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Fri 6.26	Presentations	Dropbox & in-class presentation
Mon 6.29	Slide for Journal entry 9	PowerPoint slide via Dropbox
Tues 6.30	Presentations Final Paper	Dropbox & in-class presentation Dropbox