

**Positive Psychology  
PSY455  
Summer 2018**

**What (Course):** PSY 455, Positive Psychology, Credit Hours: 3  
**When:** Mondays 6:00-10:00pm, 6/3-7/1  
**Where:** Science & Engineering Resource, Room 202  
118 Frelinghuysen Rd, Piscataway, NJ 08854  
**Who (Instructor):** Christopher D. Hughes, MA, MS  
Doctoral Candidate, Rutgers University  
**Email:** CDH118@Gsapp.Rutgers.edu  
**Office Hours:** By appointment, A233 Psychology Building, Busch Campus

**Course Materials**

Readings for this course will be empirical journal articles and book chapters that will be posted to Sakai; no text book required.

**Course Website**

The course website is available through Sakai. There, I will post the schedule, resources, readings, assignments, discussion boards, and announcements.

**Course Description & Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to positive psychology—the study of topics related to happiness and the positive aspects of human experience. This course will review the core concepts, topics, research, basic interventions, and real-world applications of positive psychology. Material will be presented through scholarly journal articles, book chapters, video clips, didactic lectures, class discussions (online and in class), experiential exercises, and student presentations.

The goal is that by the end of this course to have provided students with: an understanding of the key concepts and primary research areas of positive psychology; experience reading, digesting, discussing, and critiquing scholarly/empirical sources; an appreciation for how to distinguish between science and intuition in a topic riddled with personal history and biases; hands-on experience in applying many core concepts in the real life; and a skill set for applying scientific findings and theories into real-world contexts.

**Teaching Philosophy**

As an instructor, I seek to engender a learning environment that is non-judgmental, open-minded, reflective, active and engaging. Thus, allowing facilitation of discussion and expression of alternating viewpoints. You should feel free to express your opinion without worry of judgment from others. I will begin topics with brief didactic lectures to make sure everyone is up to speed and then try to fill the majority of the time with interactive class discussions. This applies to both in class *and* online discussions.

**Classroom Decorum**

**Arrive on time!** Be present both in body and mind. Participation is paramount to the proper functioning of the class. Please be respectful of your instructor and fellow classmates. This means: do not make disparaging comments to classmates, refrain from using social media during class, turn off cell phones upon arrival to class, and refrain from side conversations—if they pertain to the

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class material, please don't rob the rest of the class from the opportunity to share in your learning by not sharing your thoughts/questions with the whole class; if they do not, wait until after class to have them.

### **Academic Honor Code**

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Integrity Policy published by Rutgers. This policy is based on the premise that students must: (1) acknowledge and cite all use of ideas, results or words of others; (2) acknowledge all contributors of work; (3) submit work that is his/her own without the aid of impermissible materials or collaboration; (4) obtain data and results ethically and report with accuracy; (5) treat all students in a manner that preserves their integrity; and (6) uphold the ethical and professional code in accord with the profession you pursue. It is imperative that all students abide by the Academic Integrity Policy to maintain the integrity of the University community. (Paraphrased from <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy>)

***Under no circumstances will cheating or plagiarism be tolerated.***

### **Special Considerations for Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all qualified person should have equal opportunity and access to education, regardless of the presence of any disabling conditions. If you have a documented disability and need special permissions, please contact the Office of Disability Services for Students, Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Ave., Suite A 145, Piscataway, NJ 08345 (Phone: 848.445.6809) and notify me during the first week of class. I will do whatever I can to accommodate your legitimate needs. All information and documentation of disability is strictly confidential.

### **Medical, Mental Health, and Personal Emergencies**

If you miss class due to a medical or personal emergency, please discuss your situation with me as soon as possible (preferably prior to missing class). I may ask that you supply me with a note from the emergency dean. Do not wait until the end of the semester or until the problem has been resolved to contact me.

**\*\*NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change, with proper notice, throughout the semester.**

## **Course Requirements**

### **Attendance Policy**

Given the condensed time period of this course, attendance is paramount as we will cover a *substantial* amount of material each class. I will take attendance, but given the discussion based nature and small size of the class your absence would be noticed regardless. More importantly, attendance is necessary in order to succeed in this course. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me at least one week in advance (with the exception of illness or emergency as described below), to get all notes, assignments and class content from a classmate, and to do whatever make-up assignment I deem necessary (likely a 2 page reflection on *each* of that week's articles/chapters). Furthermore, given that there are only 5 in-person classes, each of your first two absences will reduce your final grade by one letter grade, and you will fail the course if you miss 3 or more classes.

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### **Participation** (5 weeks at 40pts each; total 200 points)

This class is relatively small and intimate. While such a setting can be intimidating, I encourage (and grade) participation. Active participation promotes understanding, analytical thinking, intellectual growth, and cultural sensitivity. Let's take advantage of the wealth of viewpoints we have available in the room. Finally, successful participation in class requires that each individual respects the diversity of viewpoints, so comments that interfere with participation will not be tolerated.

### **Readings & Videos**

Please complete readings and watch the videos ahead of lecture as specified below in the course syllabus. As this is a hybrid class you will be required to do a substantial amount of work outside of class. The majority of class time will be spent discussing the material assigned for that week—if you have not done the readings/watched the videos it will not be possible to participate in the discussions.

### **Reading Quizzes** (5 weeks at 20pts each; total 100 points)

Weeks 1-5 will begin with a quiz designed to assess the extent to which students did the readings and understood the key concepts of the material for that week.

### **Discussion Questions** (5 weeks at 40 points each; total 200 points)

Each week (Including the first week of class) each student will be required to post at least one discussion question based on that week's reading to Sakai. Additionally, you will be required to post responses to two other discussion questions.

#### *D.Q.'s Grading Rubric:*

##### Posted Question (20pts)

Check Plus (16-20pts): Demonstrates an understanding of the reading and asks a thoughtful question that prompts discussion. Good questions generally: Ask unanswered question from the reading; Address methodological issues; applies readings to novel topic/setting; Applies/relates readings to personally relevant topic.

Check (11-15pts): Demonstrates an understanding of the reading and asks a basic/obvious question

Check Minus (6-10pts): Asks a general question that fails to demonstrate either an understanding or thoughtful consideration of the reading.

Zero (0pts): Does not post a serious discussion question

##### Responses (2 per week at 10pts each)

Full Credit: Answers to the question and/or previously posted responses to it in a manner that shows an understanding of the question, incorporates the reading to the answer, and demonstrates thoughtful consideration of the question.

### **Experiential Activities & Journal Reflection Assignments** (5 weeks at 40pts each; total 200 points)

Each week (Including the first week of class) you will be required to participate in 1-3 experiential activities in which you will take part in a hands-on activity (either assessing/evaluating yourself on that week's topic or participating in an intervention based on that week's topic) and write a 1-2 page reflection on the experience. Specific activities and journal prompts will be posted to Sakai one week prior to their due date.

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### *Journal Grading Rubric:*

Journal entries will be graded based on the following criteria: the entry is completed in full and submitted on time and demonstrates thoughtful participation in/completion of the activity and incorporates the readings/topics for the week into the activity and reflection.

### **Leading Discussions (50 points)**

Each week a student [or small groups of students depending on the class size] will be responsible for presenting a summary of one that week's articles and lead the class discussion on it. When your turn comes, you should be prepared to explain the background, method, main results, and conclusion of the article, make it relate to the rest of the readings for the week, and come up with a couple thoughtful discussion questions for the class. This assignment will be explained further and articles will be selected/assigned on the first day of class.

### *Discussion Leader Grading Rubric:*

Discussion Leading will be graded on the following criteria: Student leader submits a 1-2 page summary of the article and 3-5 possible discussion questions/prompts to the instructor on the Monday before the discussion; The student leader summarizes the essential aspects (question, methodology, results, implications, and limitations) of the article prior to discussion; The student leader engages the class in discussion with opening and follow-up questions while effectively managing time and other students' participation/comments.

### **Group Presentations (100 points)**

Part of the mission of positive psychology is to disseminate and apply a body of rigorous research in a way that actually better people's lives. To that end, imagine that you are the head of a company, a therapist, an education administrator, an urban planner, a social worker, a legislator, or supreme leader of the world, as well as a disciple of the positive psychology movement. Considering your wealth of knowledge regarding the ways that people make decisions, the processes underlying happiness, and the conditions under which people flourish, how would you approach your task?

In small groups, you will create a plan on how to apply positive psychology to in the real world and give a presentation on your plan to the class on the final day of class.

You will be required to submit an outline of your presentation on the third week of class.

### **Final Paper (200 points)**

Choose one broad topic from those covered in the course, and write a 10-12 page (not including title page and references) *research proposal*. You should apply the information discussed in the course, and you must also do outside research and incorporate other literature - primarily recent empirical journal articles - into your paper. Remember that, while some of these topics relate heavily to the "real world," your paper will be graded largely on your ability to clearly relate your chosen topic to empirical psychological research. You will be graded on creativity, writing style, your lit review, and the quality of your proposed study (methodology is very important, as we will emphasize throughout the course). You will deliver a brief presentation on your paper on the last day of class. The final paper will be due on the final week of the class via Sakai's 'TurnItIn' to check for plagiarism.

You will be required to submit a brief summary of your specific paper topic on the second week of class. You will be required to submit a literature review for your paper on the fourth week of class. You will be required to submit an outline of your paper on the fifth week of class.

### Extra Credit

Extra credit is not planned for this class. However, I may provide students with the opportunity to boost their grade with extra credit assignments if I feel the opportunity is warranted.

### GRADING

There will be a maximum of **1,050** points for this course:

Attendance & Participation	200 pts
Reading Quizzes	100 pts
Journal Assignments	200 pts
Discussion Questions	200 pts
Leading Discussion	50 pts
Group Presentation	100 pts
<u>Final Paper</u>	<u>200 pts</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,050 pts</b>

The final letter grade will be based on the total number of points you earn out of 1,050. This means that **grades will not be rounded up** for any assignment, exam, etc. Also, final grades will not be rounded.

<u>%</u>	<u>Grade</u>
90-100	A (4.0)
87-89.99	B+ (3.5)
80-86.99	B (3.0)
77-79.99	C+ (2.5)
70-76.99	C (2.0)
60-69.99	D (1.0)
<60	F (0.0)

**Tentative Course Schedule****Copyright Statement**

Some course materials may be copyrighted and provided in compliance with the provision of the Teach Act. This means that these materials are intended for use only by students registered and enrolled in the course and for activities associated with and for the duration of the course. They may not be retained in another medium or disseminated further.

<b>IN-PERSON MEETINGS, DATE</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>READING (READ <u>BEFORE</u> CLASS)</b>
Monday, 6/3	Syllabus, Introduction to Course, and What is “Positive Psychology”?	Week 1 Readings from Sakai
Monday, 6/10	The Pursuit of Happiness and Limits to Self-Knowledge	Week 2 Readings from Sakai
Monday, 6/17	Attitudes and Interpretations: Optimism, Gratitude, & Meaning	Week 3 Readings from Sakai
Monday, 6/24	States of Consciousness: Flow, Mindfulness, & Savoring	Week 4 Readings from Sakai
Monday, 7/1	Barriers to Happiness: Choice and Maximization, Applied Positive Psychology, & Group Presentations	Week 5 Readings from Sakai

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**Group Presentation Rubric**

	A (80-70pts)	B (69-60pts)	C (59-45pts)	F (<45pts)
Preparation	-All group members are fully prepared for the presentation  - Presentation was clearly rehearsed several times	-All group members are fully prepared for the presentation  - Presentation was rehearsed but not enough	-Most group members are fully prepared for the presentation  -Unclear whether or not the presentation was rehearsed	-Most group members are inadequately prepared for the presentation  - Presentation was clearly not rehearsed
Cohesiveness	-All members were clearly involved in all aspects of intervention design and presentation preparation	-Presentation was disjoint at times; members clearly worked on independent sections and integrated them later	-Presentation was largely disjoint; members clearly worked on independent sections and integrated them poorly	-Presentation was largely disjoint; members clearly worked on independent sections and made minimal efforts to integrate them
Visual Aids	-Visual aids were exceptionally organized and added greatly to the presentation	-Visual aids were organized, clear, helpful, and added somewhat to the presentation	-Visual aids were adequately organized, wordy, hard to read, and/or only somewhat helpful	-It is clear that minimal effort was put into the visual aids
Articulation	-Excellent, clear, and comprehensive explanation of all aspects of the intervention	-Most aspects of the intervention were clearly explained, but some minor details were unclear/missing	-Most aspects of the intervention were clearly explained, but some critical details were unclear/missing	-The intervention was poorly explained and/or many critical details were missing
Incorporation and Synthesis of Material	-Incorporates several different concepts covered in the class in a way that shows superior understanding of the concepts applied	-Incorporates multiple different concepts covered in the class in a way that shows adequate understanding of the concepts applied	-Incorporates only one or two concepts covered in the class and/or shows a poor or inaccurate understanding of the concepts included	-Includes only one concept covered in the class and/or is a completely inaccurate understanding of the concept evident
Creativity of Intervention	-Intervention demonstrates a superior thought and effort; is highly unique, innovative, and would have a substantial impact on society	-Intervention demonstrates a great deal of thought and effort; is somewhat novel, innovative, and would have a noteworthy impact on society	-Intervention demonstrates adequate thought and effort; is relatively novel, innovative, and/or would have a minor impact on society	-Intervention demonstrates minimal thought and effort, is neither unique nor innovative, and would have a negligible impact on society
Appropriateness and feasibility of intervention	-Intervention is realistic and could be implemented with relative ease	-Intervention is plausible and could be implemented with some effort	-Intervention is appropriate but relatively infeasible and would take substantial effort to implement	-Intervention is inappropriate and infeasible

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**Final Paper Rubric**

	A (170-140pts)	B (139-110pts)	C (109-70pts)	F (<69pts)
Writing Style & APA Format	-Paper is well written, in APA format, and has minimal grammatical/spelling errors	-Paper is well written, in APA format, and has minimal grammatical/spelling errors	-Paper is adequately written, generally in APA format, and/or has many grammatical/spelling errors	-Paper is poorly written, not in APA format, and/or has many grammatical/spelling errors
Organization	-Paper is highly organized, logical, and easily followed	-Paper is organized relatively well, logical, and easily followed	-Paper is poorly organized, illogical, and/or difficult to follow	-Paper is poorly organized, illogical, and/or difficult to follow
Methodology	-Proposed study's methodology is well thought out, sound and completely explained in thorough detail	-Proposed study's methodology is well thought out, sound and completely explained with some minor ambiguities	-Proposed study generally methodologically sound but has a few errors/oversights and/or major ambiguities	-Proposed study's methodology is illogical, poorly thought out, and/or inadequately explained
Explanation of Proposed Study	-Excellent, clear, and comprehensive explanation of all aspects of the proposed study and its rationale	-Most aspects of the proposed study are clearly explained, but some minor details are unclear/missing and/or the rationale is insufficient or unclear	-Most aspects of the proposed study are clearly explained, but some critical details are unclear/missing, and/or the rationale is insufficient or unclear	-The proposed study is poorly explained, many critical details are missing, and/or the rationale is insufficient or absent
Incorporation and Synthesis of Course Material	-Incorporates multiple concepts in a way that shows superior understanding of the concepts covered in the class as well as substantial independent research	-Incorporates multiple concepts in a way that shows complete understanding of the concepts covered in the class as well as substantial independent research	-Incorporates only one or two concepts covered in the class, shows a poor or inaccurate understanding of the concepts included, and/or minimal independent research	-Incorporates only one or two concepts covered in the class, shows a poor or inaccurate understanding of the concepts included, and/or no independent research
Creativity of Study	-Proposed study demonstrates superior thought and effort; is highly unique, innovative, and would have a substantial impact on the field	- Proposed study demonstrates a great deal of thought and effort; is novel, innovative, and would have a noteworthy impact on the field	- Proposed study demonstrates adequate thought and effort; is mildly novel, innovative, and/or would advance the field minimally	- Proposed study demonstrates minimal thought and effort, is neither unique nor innovative, and would have a negligible impact on the field
Appropriateness and Feasibility of Study	- Proposed study is realistic and could be conducted with relative ease	- Proposed study is plausible and could be conducted with some effort/resources	- Proposed study is appropriate but relatively infeasible and could not realistically be conducted	- Proposed study is inappropriate
Presentation of Research Proposal	-Presentation is well prepared and rehearsed, conveys all necessary information, and uses appropriate visual aids	-Presentation is well prepared and adequately rehearsed, conveys virtually all necessary information, and uses appropriate visual aids	-Presentation is well prepared but poorly rehearsed, fails to convey all necessary information, and/or uses poorly made visual aids	-Presentation is poorly prepared, poorly or not at all rehearsed, fails to convey several necessary information, and/or uses poorly made visual aids



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### Participation Rubric

	A (33pts)	B (25pts)	C (10pts)	F (0pts)
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-displays an exemplary, helpful, positive and consistent attitude</li> <li>-graciously accepts feedback and is able to use it constructively</li> <li>-always respectful of others' opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-displays generally positive attitude</li> <li>-open to positive feedback</li> <li>-respects others' opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-displays inconsistent attitude</li> <li>-sometimes ignores/is unwilling to accept feedback</li> <li>-seemingly ambivalent about the opinions of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-displays passive or negative attitude</li> <li>-consistently resistant to/dismissive of others' feedback</li> <li>-disrespectful of others' ideas</li> </ul>
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-always on task</li> <li>-always displays mature behavior</li> <li>-on-time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-generally on task</li> <li>- always displays mature behavior</li> <li>-on-time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-often off task</li> <li>- usually displays mature behavior</li> <li>-5-15min late</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-rarely on task</li> <li>-regularly engages in disruptive, distracting, inappropriate behavior</li> <li>-more than 15min late</li> </ul>
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-proactively listens to instructor and fellow students when speaking</li> <li>-consistently able to respond to questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-usually listens to instructor and fellow students when speaking</li> <li>-usually able to respond to questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-sometimes listens to instructor and fellow students when speaking</li> <li>-sometimes able to respond to questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-rarely listens to instructor and fellow students when speaking</li> <li>- rarely able to respond to questions</li> </ul>
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-thoroughly prepared to discuss all material</li> <li>-clearly read and understood all the material assigned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-thoroughly prepared to discuss most material</li> <li>-clearly read and understood most of the material assigned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-adequately prepared to discuss most material</li> <li>-clearly only read some of the material assigned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-inadequately prepared to discuss most material</li> <li>-clearly did not read the material assigned</li> </ul>
Quality of Contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments are always relevant</li> <li>-comments are always insightful</li> <li>-comments always reflect a full understanding of assigned material, and previous remarks of the other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments are usually relevant</li> <li>-comments are occasionally insightful</li> <li>-comments usually reflect a basic understanding of assigned material, and previous remarks of the other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments are occasionally irrelevant</li> <li>-comments are generally simple</li> <li>-comments usually reflect a basic understanding of assigned material, and occasionally previous remarks of the other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments are rarely relevant</li> <li>-comments are not insightful</li> <li>-comments usually reflect a poor understanding of assigned material, and inattention to previous remarks of the other students</li> </ul>
Impact on Seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments consistently move the discussion forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments usually progress the discussion, but occasionally do little to move the discussion forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments occasionally progress the discussion, but usually do little to move the discussion forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-comments usually do little to move the discussion forward</li> </ul>
Frequency of Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-participates in the discussion at an exceptional frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participates in the discussion at an average frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participates in the discussion infrequently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participates in the discussion rarely</li> </ul>

