

# **Positive Psychology**

**(Online)**

**331:02**

**Wednesdays 6-10 pm**

**Summer 2021**

**Section B6**

**What (Course):** Positive Psychology, 01:830:455:B6:02868

**Where:** Zoom Meeting Room

It is highly recommend downloading Zoom (<https://zoom.us/download>) prior to our first class meeting. Although Zoom has a web client that allows participants to join without downloading, having the software already downloaded to your device is more reliable.

**Topic:** Positive Psychology Class - Wednesday Nights

**Who (Instructor):** May Yuan, M.S.

**Email:** [may.yuan@rutgers.edu](mailto:may.yuan@rutgers.edu)

**Office Hours:** By Appointment.

## **Course Materials**

No textbook is required. Readings for this course will be empirical journal articles and book chapters that will be posted to Canvas. Free online videos and podcasts will also be incorporated into weekly assignments to add variety and engagement.

## **Course Website**

The course website is available through Canvas, where we will post the syllabus, announcements, readings and video/podcast links, journal activities, forum for student postings, and grades. Canvas is also where students can submit their final assignments.

## **Course Description & Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to positive psychology—the scientific study of happiness and those things that make life most worth living. This course will review the core concepts, topics, research, basic interventions, and real-world applications of positive psychology. Ideally, students will gain the following: 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; hands-on experience in applying many core concepts in real life; and a skill-set for applying scientific findings and theories into real-world contexts. Material will be presented through scholarly journal articles, book chapters, video clips, didactic lectures, class discussions (asynchronous and synchronous), experiential exercises, and student presentations.

## **Teaching Philosophy**

As instructors, we seek to engender a learning environment that is open-minded, respectful, reflective, and active. Students should feel free to express their opinions without worry of judgment from others. We will present concepts through a variety of formats and activities as a way to foster engagement and deeper learning. Active participation in discussions and activities is encouraged in order for students to gain as

much as possible from this course. Knowledge is only *potential* power. If the knowledge is not put to use, it quickly fades. So participation is key!

### **Classroom Decorum**

Arrive to the Zoom meetings on time. Be present both in body and mind. Participation is paramount to the proper functioning of the class. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates and instructor. This means: turning your video camera on, listening with your eyes and ears, turning off cell phones, not making disparaging comments to classmates, and refraining from side conversations. Please remember that you are on camera and so we ask that you dress appropriately (i.e., as you would if you were having an in-person class). Additionally, we are aware that four hours is a long time to meet online. We have taken this into consideration and will give several brief breaks throughout the class.

### **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 08854 (Phone: 848.445.6800) and notify us during the first week of class. We will do whatever we can to accommodate your 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 us as soon as possible (preferably at least one week prior to missing class) and provide us with a note from the doctor or dean upon your return.

**\*\*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, which is recorded, is paramount, as we will cover a *substantial* amount of material each class. Considering the discussion-based nature and small size of the class, your absence would be noticed. More importantly, attendance is necessary in order to succeed in this course. If you must miss a class, notify us at least one week in advance, gather all notes, assignments and class content from a classmate, and complete the make-up assignment (likely a 5-page synthesis of the week's readings and assignments, in addition to the required online work). Given that there are only 6 in-person classes, and class attendance and participation make up a substantial percentage of the final grade, each absence will significantly reduce the final letter grade and three or more absences will result in a failing grade.

## **Grading:**

- **In-class participation (40% of final grade) (40 points)**
  - Eligible to earn up to 8 points per class
  - Includes attendance, sharing insights during in-class discussions, and participation in group design projects
  - NOTE: Attendance and participation will be tracked for classes 1-5; Class 6 is your final presentation. You will be graded on that separately.
- **Journal Assignments (20% of final grade) (20 points)**
  - Eligible to earn up to 4 pts per journal assignment
  - Journal assignments are due for weeks 1-5
    - Week 1 is not due until AFTER our first class
- **Online Forum (10% of final grade) ( 10 points)**
  - Eligible to earn up to 2.5 pts per weekly forum
  - Forum posts are due for weeks 2-5
- **Final Paper (20% of final grade) (20 points)**
  - Literature Review due week 5
- **Final Presentation (10% of final grade) (10 points)**
  - PowerPoint Presentation to be presented week 6

**Total possible points: 100**

*The final letter grade will be based on the total number of points you earn out of 100*

<b><u>%</u></b>	<b><u>Grade</u></b>
89.5-100	A (4.0)
84.5-89.49	B+ (3.5)
79.5-84.49	B (3.0)
74.5-79.49	C+ (2.5)
69.5-74.49	C (2.0)
59.5-69.49	D (1.0)
<59.49	F (0.0)

## **Extra Credit**

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

## Guidelines for Receiving Full Credit

- **Participation:** Active participation is encouraged as it promotes understanding, analytical thinking, intellectual growth, and cultural sensitivity. Let's take advantage of the wealth of viewpoints we have available in the room. Successful participation during the live classes requires that students come to class having read, watched, and participated in the out-of-class assignments, and that each individual respects the diversity of viewpoints. Comments that interfere with participation will not be tolerated. Key points are listed below:
  - Arrive to the Zoom meetings on time and turn on the video camera (although mute your video when you are not speaking to the class).
  - Listen with eyes and ears (cell phones off and away).
  - Stay on topic and advance the conversation with respectful and relevant questions and insights.
  - Regularly participate, multiple times per class.
  - Complete any in-class tasks or assignments you are asked to do.
- **Group Design Projects:** 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. In small groups, you will apply principles of user-centered design and positive psychology to create projects, products, or experiences that can be applied to the real world. Key points are listed below:
  - Be respectful of all group members.
  - Plan for equal participation of group members and cohesiveness in the presentations.
  - Design feasible interventions that are user-friendly and incorporate principles from the course material.
  - Develop creative interventions that are innovative and have potential to have substantial impact.
  - Present ideas in a clear and creative manner (e.g., use of prototypes are welcome).
- **Discussion Forum** Each week, each student will be required to post at least two discussion questions to Canvas based on that week's readings/videos. Additionally, you will be required to post a thoughtful response to at least one other student's discussion question. Key points are listed below:
  - Submit 2 questions and 1 response **BEFORE** class.
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the reading.
  - Ask thoughtful questions that prompt discussion (Note: Thoughtful questions generally ask unanswered questions from the reading; may address methodological issues; apply readings to novel topic/setting; applies/relates readings to personally relevant topic).
  - Responses to questions and previously posted responses demonstrate an understanding and thoughtful consideration of the question and incorporate the readings into the answer.
- **Journal Reflections:** Each week, you will be required to participate in 1-3 experiential activities in which you will take part in a hands-on activity (which can include assessing/evaluating yourself on a topic from the course or participating in a positive psychology intervention) and write a 1-2 page reflection on the experience. Specific activities and journal prompts will be posted to Canvas. Key points are listed below:
  - The reflections are submitted prior to the start of class.
  - Journal reflections are the equivalent length of 1-2 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1-inch margins.

- The reflections demonstrate thoughtful participation in/completion of the activity and they incorporate the readings/topics for the week into the activity and reflection.
- **Final Project (PowerPoint Presentation & Literature Review):** The final project consists of designing a positive psychology intervention and study proposal. There are two main components to this project, including a 3-4 page literature review that establishes the rationale for the intervention, and a PowerPoint presentation describing the study design and methodology (i.e., the setting and sample, the intervention groups/conditions, the independent and dependent variables and the respective measures, and hypotheses), and the implications (i.e., why the study is important). The study design will be a randomized controlled trial (RCT), which is the gold standard design for determining causality and frequently used to assess the impact of positive psychology interventions. Key points are listed below:
  - Use APA format for 3-4 page literature review (and 12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins) submitted by the 5<sup>th</sup> class, on **Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>**.
  - Use 5-10 relevant peer-reviewed references, preferably published within the past 10 years, and clearly synthesize the material in the literature review in a way that provides a clear rationale for the intervention.
  - Demonstrate preparation (i.e., clear and concise 5-10 slide PowerPoint presentation and well-rehearsed presentation) and submit the PowerPoint prior to the start of the last class on **Wednesday, July 7<sup>th</sup>**.
  - Develop a feasible intervention idea that is user-friendly and incorporates principles from the course material.
  - Develop a creative intervention that is innovative and has potential to have substantial impact on society.
  - Incorporate a study design (i.e., RCT in the case of this course) that will reflect our ability to gauge the intervention's impact.

### Tentative Course Schedule

<b>IN-PERSON MEETINGS, DATE</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>READING (READ <u>BEFORE</u> CLASS)</b>
Wednesday, 6/2	Introduction to Positive Psychology & The Course	Week 1 Readings from Canvas
Wednesday, 6/9	Resilience: Post-Traumatic Growth & Achievement	Week 2 Readings from Canvas
Wednesday, 6/16	Happiness Traps	Week 3 Readings from Canvas
Wednesday, 6/23	Cognitive Strategies to Increase Flourishing	Week 4 Readings from Canvas
Wednesday, 6/30	Behavioral Strategies to Increase Flourishing (and <b>Literature Reviews</b> due)	Week 5 Readings from Canvas
Wednesday, 7/7	Applications of Positive Psychology (Psychotherapy, Education, Business, Military, Policy) (and <b>Individual Presentations</b> )	Week 6 Readings from Canvas