Course Description: What contributes to satisfying, engaging, and meaningful living? What conditions allow people, couples, organizations, and countries to flourish? We will address these questions by examining and interpreting the latest research in psychology and neuroscience on well-being, character strengths, and relationships. Emphasis will be placed on the ways that scientists generate hypotheses regarding the nature of positive psychological processes and the methods by which these ideas are tested.

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH: We approach each topic in this class as scientists. The application of science to questions regarding well-being and character strengths carries with it the implicit assumption that these areas of human functioning can be empirically examined to develop a systematic body of knowledge. Social scientists adopt an attitude of open-minded skepticism. We are going to discuss challenging topics including definitions and theoretical models of happiness, the nature of love and creativity, personal growth through adversity, the value of religiosity, etc. To benefit from this class, you will have to balance 1) personal beliefs you already acquired about positive experiences, traits, and institutions and 2) the willingness to be open, explore, and experiment with new ideas and experiences.

Course Requirements: You will not get a good grade in this class without regular attendance (10% of your grade). You are expected to attend every lecture and be an active participant in class discussions, defined as being engaged and contributing to class (10% of your grade). You will be asked to write papers after doing positive psychological experiments (40% of your grade) and a final paper focusing on the creation and implementation of a positive intervention on yourself (40% of your grade). For short papers, do not email them to me. Please single-space your papers, print them out, and bring them to class on the due date. Late assignments within one day will lose a letter grade. No assignments will be accepted beyond one day after the due date.

Research. For 3% of grade, students are required to serve for 3 hours as participants in psychology studies. For students who choose not to participate, attendance at alternative lectures also meets this requirement.

Assigned Readings and Lectures: By participating in class, you are engaged in the learning process, assessing the ideas presented, and shaping the focus of the class. Class becomes more dynamic, interesting and rewarding when students actively share their ideas, objections, critiques, and questions. You are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and be prepared to make comments, raise questions, and offer opinions on the comments of others. Quality is far more important than quantity. Although I will lecture, a large portion of time will be devoted to discussion. I will periodically check to see whether articles have been read with quizzes (part of 10% participation grade).

Listserv: All students should join the class listserv to obtain course related information and participate in dialogue about topics related to positive psychology. Information about subscribing, posting messages, reading archives, etc. is available at the listserv website: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gmupp/ You should receive regular emails and not the digest feature (which will prevent you from getting attachments). To join, send e-mail to: gmupp@yahoogroups.com

Exams: The best way to learn is to actively work with course material as opposed to memorizing information to pass exams. Thus, I have little interest in formal exams. However, I reserve the right to employ unannounced evaluations of your knowledge of readings or brief position papers in which you summarize and react to readings for a particular class topic. When there are unannounced quizzes, there will be no make-ups. If there are extenuating circumstances, discuss this with me (ahead of time).

Grades: Your grade will be determined by your performance on all of the above, although improvement over the semester and class attendance and participation will help in borderline cases. DEMONSTRATED MASTERY GRADING SYSTEM: The quality of participation will be looked at favorably when there are questions of whether grades adequately reflect a student's knowledge, or when an average falls just below a cut-off. This can only work in your favor. This process was created as a consequence of watching many of my students and colleagues over the years perform poorly on tests despite class engagement,
general mastery of material, and intense efforts beyond requirements. Please respect this process by not asking for preferential treatment. Deserving individuals will be acknowledged.

The grading scale is as follows (I reserve the right to make it less stringent if necessary):

- **A** = 93-100
- **A-** = 90-92
- **B+** = 87-89
- **B** = 83-86
- **B-** = 80-82
- **C+** = 77-79
- **C** = 73-76
- **C-** = 70-72
- **D+** = 67-69
- **D** = 60-66
- **F** = less than 60

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course)    February 8
Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course)    February 25

**Students with Special Concerns**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Statement of Academic Integrity**

The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.

**Book and Readings**: Purchase the following from Amazon.com (for cheapest price):

Sheldon, K., Kashdan, T.B., & Steger, M.F. (2011) (Eds.). *Designing positive psychology: Taking stock and moving forward*. Oxford University Press. *(referred to as DPP under assignments)*

Articles will be available on the Class listserv webpage (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gmupp/) under “Files” or through the GMU library. To obtain articles, go to e-journals at GMU (the articles below are available as PDF files in the electronic library at GMU) and write in the title of the journal article (e.g., Journal of Personality and Social Psychology), find the article, and download the PDF file.

**Assignments.** Single-space assignments to save paper and write in a font no bigger than Arial 11.

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>Orientation Assignment for 2/1 (assessing happiness and interviewing people)</td>
<td>Read syllabus and join listserv DO NOT MISS ONLY CLASS ON SYLLABUS AND FINAL PROJECT</td>
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2/8 Why Are Some People Happier Than Others?
Assignment- write overview of self-enhancement plan (see final project handout). Due 2/9

Due Today: philanthropy vs. pleasure write-up.


2/10 Happiness Interventions
Assignment—kindness exercise and log.

Due Today: write-up of self-enhancement plan


DPP Chapter 26 Greater Happiness For A Greater Number: Is that possible? If so how? by Ruut Veenhoven

2/15 Positive Emotions

DPP Chapter 7 The Positive Psychology of Positive Emotions:
An Avuncular View by Shigehiro Oishi & Jaime Kurtz

DPP Chapter 8 The Future of Emotions Research within Positive Psychology by Sara B. Algoe, Barbara L. Fredrickson, & Sy-Min Chow

2/17 Positive Emotions II
Assignment—meditation/yoga/mindfulness exercise (due 2/24)
spend at least 40 minutes on websites about meditation, e.g., [www.shinzen.com](http://www.shinzen.com) or [www.mkzc.org/beginzen.html](http://www.mkzc.org/beginzen.html) or [www.how-to-meditate.org](http://www.how-to-meditate.org). Read about meditation/mindfulness techniques.

Meditate for at least 15 minutes, three days in a row.

Attend free yoga Class.

Keep log of attempts to be mindful during 2 activities per day for at least one week (besides meditation practice) and mood.

Write about what happened—2 pages; include log as appendix!!!
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| 2/22  | Calming the mind, meditation, drugs, and other methods                 | DPP Chapter 9- The Role of Hypo-egoic Self-processes in Optimal Functioning and Subjective Well-Being by Mark Leary & Jennifer Guadagno.  
DPP Chapter 10- Experiential Processing and the Integration of Light and Dark Sides of the Human Psyche by Kirk Brown & Melissa Holt |
| 2/24  | Mindfulness and experiential acceptance part II                       | Due today: mindfulness assignment                                                  |
| 3/8   | Curiosity Part II                                                    | Due today: curiosity assignment                                                    |
|       |                                                                       |                                                                                     |
| SPRING BREAK March 14-20 |                                                                       |                                                                                     |
| 3/22  | Healthy Relationships                                                | DPP Chapter 17- The Positive Side of Close Relationships by Shelly L. Gable & Courtney Gosnell  
DPP Chapter 18- Positive Relationship Science: A New Frontier for Positive Psychology? By Nathaniel M. Lambert, Frank D. Fincham, A. Marlea Gwinn, & Christine A. Ajayi |
| 3/24  | Healthy Relationships II                                             | No additional readings                                                               |
| 3/29  | Gratitude                                                            | DUE TODAY: Gratitude letter and visit. Write and deliver letter of gratitude and complete write-up. Write no more than 1 page on process and outcome. Include a copy of letter.  
DPP Chapter 16- Why Gratitude Enhances Well-Being: What We Know, What We Need to Know by Robert A. Emmons & Anjali Mishra |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>Creativity II</td>
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<td>DPP Chapter 11- A Task-Focused Mind is a Happy and Productive Mind: A Processing Perspective by Michael D. Robinson &amp; Maya Tamir</td>
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<tr>
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| 5/3  | Future of Positive Psychology | DPP Chapter 28- What's Positive about Positive Psychology? Reducing Value-Bias and Enhancing Integration within the Field by Kennon M. Sheldon  
DPP Chapter 29- To Celebrate Positive Psychology and Extend Its Horizons by Gordon Bermant, Charu Talwar, & Paul Rozin  
DPP Chapter 31- Positive Psychology in Historical and Philosophical Perspective: Predicting Its Future from the Past by Dean Keith Simonton |
| 5/5  | Psychology X | 
Final Paper (10 page maximum, single-spaced)  
Due 5/13 at 3pm (hard copy in my mailbox or under my door) |