

Spring 2011—Psychology 461 (008): Science of Well-Being

Instructor: Todd B. Kashdan, Ph.D.
Office: 2047 David King Hall
Phone: 703-993-9486
Office Hours: 9am on Tuesday
email: tkashdan@gmu.edu and **website:** <http://mason.gmu.edu/~tkashdan/>

Day: T R
Time: 12:00-1:15pm
Place: Robinson A111

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.

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
1/25	Orientation Assignment for 2/1 (assessing happiness and interviewing people)	Read syllabus and join listserv DO NOT MISS ONLY CLASS ON SYLLABUS AND FINAL PROJECT
1/27	What Does Positive Psychology Offer?	DPP Chapter 1- Positive Psychology: Where Did It Come From, Where Is It Going? by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi & Jeanne Nakamura
2/1	Happiness: what is it, how do we measure it, what causes it?	Due Today: Happiness interview-1-page write-up Buss, D.M. (2000). The evolution of happiness. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 55, 15-23. DPP Chapter 2- Challenges, Pitfalls, and Aspirations for Positive Psychology by Todd B. Kashdan & Michael F. Steger
2/3	Benefits of Happiness Assignment for 2/8- philanthropy vs. pleasure. PLAN IN ADVANCE	Oishi, S. & Schimmack, U. (2010). Culture and well-being: A new inquiry into the psychological wealth of nations. <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i> , 4, 463-471. Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 13, 80-83. Diener, E., Ng, W., Harter, J., & Arora, R. (2010). Wealth and happiness across the world: Material prosperity predicts life evaluation, whereas psychosocial prosperity predicts positive feeling. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 99, 52-61.

<p>2/8</p>	<p>Why Are Some People Happier Than Others?</p> <p>Assignment- write overview of self-enhancement plan (see final project handout). Due 2/9</p>	<p>Due Today: philanthropy vs. pleasure write-up. Lyubomirsky, S. (2001). Why are some people happier than others? The role of cognitive and motivational processes in well-being. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 56, 239-249.</p> <p>Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. <i>Psychological Inquiry</i>, 11, 227-268.</p> <p>Oishi, S., Diener, E., & Lucas, R. E. (2007). The optimal level of well-being: Can we be too happy? <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i>, 2, 346-360.</p>
<p>2/10</p>	<p>Happiness Interventions</p> <p>Assignment—kindness exercise and log.</p>	<p>Due Today: write-up of self-enhancement plan</p> <p>Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. <i>Review of General Psychology</i>, 9, 111-131.</p> <p>DPP Chapter 26 Greater Happiness For A Greater Number: Is that possible? If so how? by Ruut Veenhoven</p>
<p>2/15</p>	<p>Positive Emotions</p>	<p>DPP Chapter 7 The Positive Psychology of Positive Emotions: An Avuncular View by Shigehiro Oishi & Jaime Kurtz</p> <p>DPP Chapter 8 The Future of Emotions Research within Positive Psychology by Sara B. Algoe, Barbara L. Fredrickson, & Sy-Miin Chow</p>
<p>2/17</p>	<p>Positive Emotions II</p> <p>Assignment-meditation/yoga/mindfulness exercise (due 2/24)</p> <p>spend at least 40 minutes on websites about meditation, e.g., www.shinzen.com or www.mkzc.org/beginzen.html or www.how-to-meditate.org. Read about meditation/mindfulness techniques.</p> <p>Meditate for at least 15 minutes, three days in a row.</p> <p>Attend free yoga Class.</p> <p>Keep log of attempts to be mindful during 2 activities per day for at least one week (besides meditation practice) and mood.</p> <p>Write about what happened---2 pages; include log as appendix!!!</p>	<p>Due Today: Kindness exercise</p> <p>DPP Chapter 6 Beyond Pleasure and Pain? Emotion Regulation and Positive Psychology by Maya Tamir & James J. Gross</p>

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
3/1	Psychological flexibility	Hayes, S.C., Luoma, J., Bond, F., Masuda, A., & Lillis, J. (2006). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Model, processes, and outcomes. <i>Behaviour Research and Therapy</i> , 44, 1-25. Kashdan, T.B., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health. <i>Clinical Psychology Review</i>, 30, 865-878.
3/3	Curiosity	Silvia, P.J., & Kashdan, T.B. (2009). Interesting things and curious people: Exploration and engagement as transient states and enduring strengths. <i>Social Psychology and Personality Compass</i>, 3, 785-797. Wilson, T.D., Centerbar, D.B., Kermer, D.A., & Gilbert, D.T. (2005). The pleasures of uncertainty: Prolonging positive moods in ways people do not anticipate. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 88, 5-21.
3/8	Curiosity Part II Assign: Gratitude letter and visit	Due today: curiosity assignment Sansone, C., & Thoman, D.B. (2005). Interest as the missing motivator in self-regulation. <i>European Psychologist</i> , 10, 175-186.
SPRING BREAK March 14-20		
3/22	Healthy Relationships Plan for gratitude visit due in a week.	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

3/31	Self-Control Assignment TBA	DPP Chapter 12- Finding Positive Value in Human Consciousness: Conscious Thought Serves Participation in Society and Culture by E. J. Masicampo & Roy F. Baumeister DeWall, C. N., Baumeister, R. F., Gailliot, M. T., & Maner, J. K. (2008). Depletion makes the heart grow less helpful: Helping as a function of self-regulatory energy and genetic relatedness. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i> , 34, 1653-1662.
4/5	Self-Control II	Baumeister, R. F., Gailliot, M. T., DeWall, C. N. & Oaten, M. (2006). Self-regulation and personality: Strength-boosting interventions and trait moderators of ego depletion. <i>Journal of Personality</i> , 74, 1773-1802.
4/7	Meaning in life	McKnight, P.E., & Kashdan, T.B. (2009). Purpose in life as a system that creates and sustains health and well-being: An integrative, testable theory. <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 13, 242-251. DPP Chapter 21- Meaning and Growth within Positive Psychology: Towards a More Complete Understanding by Crystal L. Park
4/12	Morality, Spirituality, & Religiosity I	DUE TODAY: Morality assignment Haidt, J., & Kesebir, S. (2010). Morality. In S. Fiske, D. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.) <i>Handbook of Social Psychology</i> (5th Ed.) (pp. 797-832). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
4/14	Morality, Spirituality, & Religiosity II	Hogg, M.A., Adelman, J.R., & Blagg, R.D. (2010). Religion in the face of uncertainty: An uncertainty-identity theory account of religiousness. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Review</i> , 14, 72-83. Kay, A.C., Gaucher, D., McGregor, I., & Nash, K. (2010). Religious belief as compensatory control. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Review</i> , 14, 37-48.
4/19	Creativity I	Due Today: Creativity exercise Sternberg, R.J. (2006). The nature of creativity. <i>Creativity Research Journal</i> , 18, 87-98.
4/21	Creativity II	DPP Chapter 11- A Task-Focused Mind is a Happy and Productive Mind: A Processing Perspective by Michael D. Robinson & Maya Tamir
4/26	Hope and Optimism	Carver, C.S., Scheier, M.F., & Segerstrom, S.C. (2010). Optimism. <i>Clinical Psychology Review</i> , 30, 879-889. Snyder, C. R., Ilardi, S. S., Cheavens, J., Michael, S. T., Yamhure, L., & Simpson, S. (2000). The role of hope in cognitive behavior therapies. <i>Cognitive Therapy and Research</i> , 24, 747-763.
4/28	Psychological Strengths	Peterson, C., & Park, N. (2009). Classifying and Measuring Strengths of Character. In C.R Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), <i>Handbook of Positive Psychology</i> (2 nd ed.) New York: Oxford University Press. Biswas-Diener, R., Kashdan, T.B., & Minhas, G. (2011). A dynamic approach to psychological strength development and intervention. <i>Journal of Positive Psychology</i>

5/3	Future of Positive Psychology	<p>DPP Chapter 28- What's Positive about Positive Psychology? Reducing Value-Bias and Enhancing Integration within the Field by Kennon M. Sheldon</p> <p>DPP Chapter 29- To Celebrate Positive Psychology and Extend Its Horizons by Gordon Bermant, Charu Talwar, & Paul Rozin</p> <p>DPP Chapter 31- Positive Psychology in Historical and Philosophical Perspective: Predicting Its Future from the Past by Dean Keith Simonton</p>
5/5	Psychology X	
<p>Final Paper (10 page maximum, single-spaced) Due 5/13 at 3pm (hard copy in my mailbox or under my door)</p>		