

Honors Seminar: Sociology 71H

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: SOCIAL SCIENCE APPROACHES TO WELL-BEING

**Spring 2016, Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45
Classroom: Murphey 302**

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Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 11-12
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Course Description

Happiness remains a fundamental goal in most societies, despite being elusive for many people. Social scientists have become increasingly interested in the subject of happiness and its causes and consequences. Sociologists, economists, political scientists, geographers and psychologists have joined with philosophers in studying the nature of happiness and subjective well-being and its relationship to social life.

This course will examine the interplay between individual and social happiness by considering the nature and meaning of happiness in the contemporary United States as well as in other countries. We will seek to answer questions such as: What is happiness? Can we measure happiness, and if so, how? What is the relationship between biology and happiness? Between psychology and happiness? Does money buy happiness? Does happiness vary among diverse groups (racial, ethnic, religious, gender, age, and social class groups)? How does happiness differ among cultures and nations? What is (and should be) the role of happiness in formulating public policies? We will address these and other questions by: reading books and articles; class discussions and debates; viewing films; interviewing people; and collecting information using the Internet and other sources.

Goals of this Honors Seminar

This seminar has the following goals:

1. To formulate meaningful questions about happiness.
2. To appreciate the views of others as well as to understand the merits and limitations of one's own perspective.

3. To use written, oral, or other forms of communication as tools for exploring intellectual problems, synthesizing material from various sources, and formulating effective arguments.
4. To read a variety of texts with understanding and critical judgment.
5. To be able to acquire and use appropriately different kinds of evidence.
6. To gain an appreciation for collaborative inquiry.
7. To integrate learning inside and outside the classroom.

Ultimately, this seminar will be judged by how well it achieves these 7 goals.

Rules of the Class

1. We start and end class on time.
2. **No non-class related use of the Internet or checking email or social media on your laptops or phones! (If this becomes an issue, I will ban the use of laptops in class.)**
3. Check your email account and the course Web page (Sakai) in preparation for each class. Some parts of the assignment are ONLY listed on the Sakai page for Daily Assignments and there may be changes to the syllabus from time to time.
4. Read the assigned materials before each class, and come prepared to discuss and answer questions about them.

Contacts

You can reach me by email at Arne_Kalleberg@unc.edu. For simple questions, that is the fastest and quickest way to contact me. For more difficult questions, please come see me during my office hours or see me after class. You can read more about my research interests on my Home Page (www.unc.edu/~arnekal).

Course information is available on the Sakai Web Page (Sakai.unc.edu; Sociology 71H). Copies of the course syllabus and assignments are posted and may be updated, so you should check the Sakai Web Page in preparation for each class.

Office Hours

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday: 11-12:00, in 261 Hamilton Hall. (If I am unable to attend office hours on a particular day, I will let you know this on the course Sakai Web Page.) To make the best use of our time, you should come prepared with some fairly specific questions. For example, you might have a question about a reading you don't understand, a concept we've covered in class, or something you've seen on CNN News or the Internet. Try to be specific about how I can help you. However, you don't have to have a problem to come to office hours—you may just want to chat about something, and that's OK, too.

Honor Code

The University Honor Code will be in effect on all assignments. Please read carefully the provisions of the Honor Code, make certain you understand and adhere to them, and ask me to clarify any questions you have regarding the Code. The Code is a long and valuable tradition at UNC—protect it!

Texts and Readings

We will read three books, which are available at the Student Bookstore or on Amazon.

Barbara Ehrenreich. *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking has Undermined America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009. (ISBN: 978-0-8050-8749-9, paperback.)

David G. Myers. *The Pursuit of Happiness: What Makes a Person Happy – And Why*, 1992. New York: William Morrow & Co. (ISBN: 0688105505)

Eric Weiner. *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2008. (ISBN: 978-0-446-69889-4, paperback.)

In addition, I will ask you to read a number of articles, which can be accessed through the Sakai Course Web Page.

Attendance

It is important that you come to class regularly. If you know you'll be out of town and have to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time if possible.

Evaluation

Your course grade is based upon: two short papers; a research paper; six written field assignments; a completed journal; and group teamwork and class participation. Details of these assignments, and criteria for how I will evaluate them, will be given on the Sakai Web Page.

Components of your Grade

Journal	12%
Short paper # 1 (Based on Barbara Ehrenreich's <i>Bright-Sided</i>)	12%
Short paper # 2 (Based on Eric Weiner's <i>Geography of Bliss</i>)	12%
Research Paper	12%
Field Assignments (6)	36%
Team work and participation	16%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

At the end of the term, you will receive a letter grade, based on the following performance levels:

A	=	90-100
B	=	80-89
C	=	70-79
D	=	60-69
F	=	BELOW 60

****Any changes to these dates/topics/readings/etc. will be posted on the Sakai Course Web Page****

January 12: Introduction to each other and the course

Question: What are the course goals and requirements?

I. Happiness: Definitions, Theories, and Measurement

January 14: What is Happiness?

Questions: How has happiness been defined? What are the main similarities and differences in various definitions of happiness?

Readings:

“Discordant Definitions” Pp. 35-58 in Sissela Bok (2010) *Exploring Happiness: From Aristotle to Brain Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Richard Layard. Pp. 11-27 in *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. New York: Penguin, 2005.

January 19: Theories of Happiness

Questions: How can we explain happiness? What are the different concepts that help to account for differences in happiness? How have conceptions of happiness differed over time?

Readings:

“The Pursuit of Happiness,” Pp. 81-106 in Jonathan Haidt (2006) *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.

Chapter 3 (“A Satisfied Mind”) in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

Carol Graham. (2011). Pp. 27-44 in *The Pursuit of Happiness: An Economy of Well-Being*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings.

-- Field Assignment # 1 Due --

January 21 and 26: Measuring Happiness

Questions: How do social scientists measure happiness? What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of subjective vs. objective measures of happiness?

Readings:

January 21:

“Measurement” Pp. 83-106 in Sissela Bok (2010) *Exploring Happiness: From Aristotle to Brain Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Chapter 1 (“What is Well-Being?”) in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

January 26:

“Is the U.S. Moving Toward a ‘Happiness Index’?” by Wendy Koch. *USA Today* (August 1, 2012).

National Research Council Committee on Measuring Subjective Well-Being, Executive Summary (2014).

-- Field Assignment # 2 Due on January 26--

January 28: Carmen Gonzalez, Student Success Workshop: Utilizing University Resources

II. Economics and Happiness

February 2 and 4: Money and Happiness

Questions: What is the relationship between higher incomes and happiness?

Readings:

February 2:

Richard Easterlin. (1995). "Will raising the incomes of all increase the happiness of all"? *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 27: 35-47.

Interview with Richard Easterlin:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X-0EyuXYco>

Richard Layard. *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. New York: Penguin Press, 2005, pp. 41-53.

Chapter 2 (“Wealth and Well-being”) in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

February 4: Does Winning the Lottery Make You Happier?

Questions: Are Lottery Winners Happier? Why or Why Not?

Readings:

Philip Brickman, Dan Coates and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. (1978). “Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 36, No. 8, 917-927.

Mark Lutter. (2007). Review of Christoph Lau and Ludwig Kramer, *The Relativity of Luck. About the Life of Lottery Millionaires*. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 8: 155-160.

David Samuels. (2013). “The \$314,900,000 Losing Ticket.” *New York Times Magazine*.

-- Field Assignment # 3 Due on February 4--

III. Biology and Happiness

February 9: The “Happiness Gene”

Questions: Are some people born to be happier than others? What is the “happiness gene”?

Readings:

Robert E. Lane. Pp. 36-50 in *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve (2011). “Functional polymorphism (5-HTTLPR) in the serotonin transporter gene is associated with subjective well-being: evidence from a US nationally representative sample.” *Journal of Human Genetics* 1-4

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Po_YJZW7VJs

Emily Esfahani Smith (2013). "Meaning is Healthier than Happiness." *The Atlantic Monthly* <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/08/meaning-is-healthier-than-happiness/278250/>

IV. Psychology and Happiness

February 11, 16, 18: Psychology of Happiness

Questions: What makes us happy? Why are some people happier than others? Is happiness "all in your head?" What is the relationship between happiness and positivity? Is being "happy" always a good thing?

Readings:

February 11:

Martin E.P. Seligman. Chapter 1: "What is Well-Being?" Pp. 5-29 in *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. New York: Free Press, 2011.

Sonja Lyubomirsky. Chapter 2: "How Happy Are You and Why?" Pp. 27-68 *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*. New York: Penguin, 2007.

February 16:

D.T. Max, "Happiness 101" (*New York Times*, January 7, 2007).

"Think Yourself Well" (*The Economist*, December 8, 2012).

Chapter 6 ("The Traits of Happy People") in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

-- Field Assignment # 4 Due on February 16 --

February 18: Group Presentations # 1

February 23 and March 1: Dark Side of Happiness

Questions: What are some of the disadvantages of positive thinking?

Readings:

Barbara Ehrenreich. *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking has Undermined America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009.

-- Short Paper # 1 Due on March 1 --

February 25: TBA

V. Sociology and Happiness**March 3 and 8: The Demography of Happiness**

Questions: How and why does happiness differ for men and women? How does it depend on family, friends and companions? How does happiness differ by age?

Readings:**March 3:**

Pp. 79-86 and Chapter 8 (“The Friendship Factor”) and Chapter 9 (“Love and Marriage”) in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

Maya Dusenbery, “Benefits of Marriage Study Hints at the Horrors of Middle Age” *Pacific Standard*, January 16, 2015

March 8:

Pp. 69-79 in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

Jonathan Rauch (2014), “The Real Roots of Midlife Crisis.” *The Atlantic Monthly*
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/12/the-real-roots-of-midlife-crisis/382235/>

Mona Chalabi (2014), “What’s the Best Age to Be?”

-- Field Assignment # 5 Due on March 8 --

March 10: Celebrations and Happiness

Questions: How do societal rites of passage and holidays contribute to social happiness?

Readings:

“Introduction: Invitation to the Dance” (Pp. 1-20) and “Conclusion: The Possibility of Revival” (Pp. 247-261) in Barbara Ehrenreich, (2006) *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

“Why Aren’t People Happier During the Holidays?” *New York Times*, December 23, 2012.

March 15 and 17: SPRING BREAK**March 22: Religion and Happiness**

Questions: Are religious people happier? What is the relationship between spirituality and happiness?

Readings:

Chapter 10 (“Faith, Hope, and Joy”) in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

-- Field Assignment # 6 Due --

VI. Geography and Happiness**March 24, 29 and 31: Happiness Around the World**

Questions: How and why are people in different countries more or less happy? What is the role of standard of living and economic development in producing these country differences in happiness? What is the role of culture and institutions in producing these country differences in happiness?

Readings, March 24:

Carol Graham. (2011). Pp. 62-80 in *The Pursuit of Happiness: An Economy of Well-Being*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings.

David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald. (2011). “International Happiness: A New View on the Measure of Performance” *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 25: 6-22.

March 29: Group Presentations # 2

Readings, March 31:

Eric Weiner. *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2008.

-- Short Paper # 2 Due on March 31 --

VII. Work and Happiness**April 5 and 7: Work and Happiness**

Questions: What is the relationship between work and happiness? Why are some people satisfied with their work and others not happy?

Readings:**April 5:**

Chapter 7 (“Flow’ in Work and Play”) in David G. Myers (1992) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy – And Why*.

Pp. 213-239 in Jonathan Haidt (2006) *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.

Arne Kalleberg (2011). *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*, pp. 164-176 (Chapter on “Job Satisfaction”).

April 7:

Annabelle Krause. (2011). “Happiness and Work” IZA Discussion Paper No. 8435 (August).

VII. Happiness, Politics, and Public Policy**April 12, 14, 19: Public Policy and Happiness**

Questions: What is the role of public policy in creating happiness? Should happiness be a goal of public policy? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Gross National Happiness vs. Gross Domestic Product as measure of a country’s success? Do people have a “right” to be happy?

Readings:

April 12: What is the role of government in increasing happiness?

“Should Policy-Makers Use Happiness Research?” Pp. 45-62 in Derek Bok (2010) *The Politics of Happiness*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Grant Duncan (2008). “Should Happiness-Maximization be the Goal of Government?” *Journal of Happiness Studies*

April 14: GNP vs. GDP vs. HDI

Carol Graham, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, pp. 106-126

“Gross National Happiness.” Pp. 185-211 (Chapter 9) in Zachary Karabell, *The Leading Indicators* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014).

“Bhutan: Happiness is a Policy,” Pp. 49-95 in Eric Weiner (2008) *The Geography of Bliss*. New York: Hachette Book Group.

April 19: What are the challenges and limits to increasing happiness through public policies?

Evgeny Morozov (2015). “The Planning Machine.” *The New Yorker*, October 13, 2014

April 21 **TBA**

-- Journals Due --

April 26: **Last Day of Class**

-- Research Papers Due --