

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

## **First-Year Seminar: Sociology 71**

**Fall 2022, Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45  
Classroom: GS 1378**

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### **Course Description**

Happiness remains a fundamental goal in many 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 approach these questions from a multidisciplinary perspective, providing a sense of how different disciplines (sociology, psychology, economics, biology, geography, political science, public policy, philosophy) provide insights regarding happiness. We will seek to answer questions such as: What is happiness? Can we measure happiness, and if so, how? Does money buy happiness? What is the relationship between psychology and happiness? Between biology and happiness? How does happiness vary among diverse groups (racial, ethnic, religious, gender, age, and social class groups) and 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 videos; interviewing people; and collecting information using the Internet and other sources.

### **Goals of this First-Year 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.
8. To understand how different disciplines study social issues

Ultimately, this seminar will be judged by how well it achieves these 8 goals.

## Evaluation

The course requirements are designed to achieve these goals. Your course grade is based upon completing a variety of writing assignments: three short papers; six short written field assignments; a completed learning journal; and group teamwork and class participation. Details of these assignments, and criteria for how I will evaluate them, are given on the Sakai Web Page.

### *Components of your Grade*

Papers (3)	38%
Field Assignments (6)	42%
Group Presentations and Class Participation	10%
Learning Journal	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading Scale

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

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

## Rules of the Class

1. We start and end class on time.
2. No use of laptops (and phones, tablets) in class *except* in cases that I announce.
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](mailto:Arne_Kalleberg@unc.edu). For simple questions, that is the fastest and quickest way to contact me. For more difficult questions, let's talk after class or we can set up a meeting on Zoom. (Here is the link to my Zoom meeting room: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/4978230797>.) You can read more about my research interests on my Home Page ([www.unc.edu/~arnekal](http://www.unc.edu/~arnekal)).

Course information is available on the Sakai Web Page ([Sakai.unc.edu](http://Sakai.unc.edu); Sociology 71). 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.

## Instruction Modality

The instruction modality for this course is to meet in-person. However, there may be instances in which we will need to temporarily move to remote learning (via Zoom). Any such temporary modality changes will be announced via email and the course Sakai website.

## Office Hours

My office hours are 9-10 on Wednesdays via Zoom (<https://unc.zoom.us/j/4978230797>). I also available via Zoom at other times and can meet you in my office by appointment.

## Texts and Readings

We will read three books, which are available at the UNC Student Bookstore (and from Amazon):

William Davies. *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-being*, 2016. London: Verso (ISBN: 978-1-78478-095-1, paperback)

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, hardback)

Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity: Discover the Upward Spiral That Will Change Your Life*. Harmony Books, 2009. (ISBN 978-0-307-39374-6, paperback)

In addition, I will ask you to read articles which can be accessed through the Sakai Course Web Page (under “Resources/Course Readings”).

The **Learning Journal** is designed to help you reflect upon the readings, class discussions, and your experiences related to the topics we cover in this course. Journal entries should be thoughtful, reflective comments and questions based on or inspired by readings and discussions that occur in the classroom, relevant contemporary issues in the media, or on other topics related to the course. They may also include comments and questions pertaining to happiness based on your own sociological observations and personal experiences. Two questions that you may use to jumpstart your journal writing are: (1) What do you see as the single most inspiring or useful idea covered in the topic? And (2) In what ways is this idea inspiring or useful for you personally?

You should write **ten** entries, each consisting of about one page of double-spaced text (about 250 words). Additional and/or longer entries are acceptable. The topics you should write about are described in the corresponding “Learning Journal” assignments on Sakai.

Additional information related to the course can be found at the end of the syllabus.

## COURSE CALENDAR

***\*\*Any changes to these dates/topics/readings/etc. will be posted on the Sakai Course Web Page. Please check this web page regularly!\*\****

**August 16: Introduction** to each other and the course

**Question:** What are the course goals and requirements?

### **I. Happiness: Definitions, Theories, and Measurement**

**August 18: What is Happiness?**

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

**Readings:**

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

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

**August 23: Theories of Happiness**

**Questions:** How can we explain happiness? What are the different concepts that help to account for differences in happiness, such as utilitarianism and self-actualization? How have conceptions of happiness differed over time?

**Readings:**

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

Arthur Brooks, "The Satisfaction Trap" *The Atlantic*, March 2022.

**-- Field Assignment # 1 Due --**

***August 25 and 30: Measuring Happiness***

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

***Readings:***

***August 25:***

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

“Knowing How You Feel,” pp. 13-39 in Davies, *The Happiness Industry*

***August 30:***

“Living in the Lab,” pp. 215-243 in Davies, *The Happiness Industry*

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

**-- Field Assignment # 2 Due on August 30--**

**II. Economics and Happiness**

***September 1 and September 8: Money and Happiness***

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

***Readings:***

***September 1:***

Richard Layard. “If You’re so Rich, Why Aren’t You Happy?” Pp. 41-53 in *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. New York: Penguin Press, 2005.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The Myths of Happiness*, Chapter 7

David Walters, “4 Men with 4 Very Different Incomes Open Up About the Lives They Can Afford” <http://www.esquire.com/lifestyle/money/a44086/four-men-four-numbers/>

*The Economist*, “Can Money Buy Happiness? Two Centuries’ Worth of Books Suggest it Can,” <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/10/16/can-money-buy-happiness-two-centuries-worth-of-books-suggest-it-can>

### **September 8: Does Winning the Lottery Make You Happier?**

Kathleen Elkins. “Here’s What 11 Regular People Did with Their Money When They Won the Lottery.” *Business Insider* (January 9, 2016).

Mark Abadi. “20 Lottery Winners Who Lost Every Penny.” *Business Insider* (December 28, 2017).

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

**-- Field Assignment # 3 Due on September 8--**

## **III. Psychology and Happiness**

### **September 13, 15, 20, 22, 27: 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:**

##### **September 13:**

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.

##### **September 15:**

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.

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

**-- Field Assignment # 4 Due on September 15 --**

**September 20:** Broaden and Build Theory

Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity* 2009, Ch. 1-3

**September 22:** Resilience and Stress Buffering

Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity* 2009, Ch. 4-6

**September 27:** Upward Spiral Theory of Lifestyle Change

Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity* 2009, Ch. 8-12

**-- Group Presentation # 1 --**

#### **IV. Biology and Happiness**

**September 29: Genes and Happiness**

**Questions:** What is the relationship between genes and happiness? Are some people born to be happier than others?

**Readings:**

Barbara Fredrickson (2018). "The Biological Underpinnings of Positive Emotions and Purpose." In R. Baumeister & J. Forgas (Eds.) *The Social Psychology of Living Well*. New York: Routledge.

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve. "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 (2011).

**October 4 and 6: Critique of Positive Thinking**

**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.



-- Paper # 1 Due on October 6 --

### III. Sociology and Happiness

#### **October 11, 13, 18, 25: 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:**

##### **October 11: Social Relations (Friends, Family) and Happiness**

Teddy Wayne. "Are my friends really my friends?" *New York Times*, 2018.

Catherine Pearson. "How Many Friends Do You Really Need?" *New York Times*, 2022.

Bradley Fikes. "3 out 4 Americans lonely, study says" *San Diego Union-Tribune*

Nathan Kettlewell et al. "Marriage and money help but don't lead to long-lasting happiness?" *The Conversation* 2020

Jane Brody. "Social Interaction is Critical for Mental and Physical Health." *New York Times* (June 12, 2017).

##### **October 13: Social Media and Happiness**

Erin Vogel. "FOMO: How Social Media Affects our Social Lives and Self-Images." *One Mind Psyber Guide*. 2022

"Social Optimization," pp. 181-214 in Davies, *The Happiness Industry*

##### **October 18: TBA**

#### **October 20: FALL BREAK**

##### **October 25: Age and Happiness**

Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The Myths of Happiness*, Chapter 8-10

Jonathan Rauch. "The Real Roots of Midlife Crisis." *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 2014).

**-- Field Assignment # 5 Due on October 25 --**

**October 27: 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:**

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

Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The Myths of Happiness*, Chapter 5

**November 1: Religion and Happiness**

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

**Readings:**

Bryan Walsh, "Does Spirituality Make You Happy?"

Dphilo, "Religion and Happiness"

**-- Field Assignment # 6 Due --**

**November 3: The Happiness Industry**

**Readings:**

"The Psychosomatic Worker," pp. 105-137 in Davies, *The Happiness Industry*

**IV. Happiness Around the World**

**November 8, 10 and 15: National Differences in Happiness**

**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:****November 8: Country Differences in Happiness**

“Country Differences in Happiness”, Benjamin Radcliff, Pp. 96-99, 104-109 in the *Political Economy of Human Happiness*

*2022 World Happiness Report* (summary)

Mapped: Global Happiness Levels in 2022

**-- Paper # 2 Due on November 8 --**

**November 10: Culture and Happiness**

Hiroshi Ono and Kristen Schultz Lee (2016), “Marriage and Happiness in the United States and Japan,” Pp. 49-62 in *Redistributing Happiness: How Social Policies Shape Life Satisfaction* (Praeger).

**November 15: Country Examples**

**--Group Presentation # 2—**

**VII. Public Policy and Happiness****November 17 and 22: 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:****November 17:**

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

Geoff Mulgan, “Well-Being and Public Policy,” *Oxford Handbook of Happiness*, August 2013.

***November 22:***

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

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).

***November 29:*            **Problems and Solutions****

**--Paper # 3 Due--**

**University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**  
**Information for Undergraduate Classes**  
**Fall 2022**

**Syllabus Changes**

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

**Attendance Policy**

**University Policy:** As stated in the University's [Class Attendance Policy](#), no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

**Class Policy:** Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), instructors determine their own approach to missed classes and make-up assessment and assignments.

Please let me know if you miss class. Try to get notes on the class activities from missed classes from other students in your team (or others) or talk to me. All assignments are to be submitted via Sakai, so you will be able to turn in assignments even if you are unable to attend class.

**University Approved Absence Office (UAAO):** The [UAAO](#) website provides information and FAQs for students and faculty related to University Approved Absences.

**Note:** Instructors have the authority to make academic adjustments without official notice from the UAAO. In other words, it is not required for instructors to receive a University Approved Absence notification in order to work with a student. In fact, instructors are encouraged to work directly with students when possible.

**Honor Code**

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the Honor Code, please see me or consult [studentconduct.unc.edu](http://studentconduct.unc.edu).

### **Optional Mask Use Statement**

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to the well-being of our community – not just physically, but emotionally. The indoor mask requirement was lifted for most of campus on March 7, 2022. If you feel more comfortable wearing a mask, you are free to do so. There are many reasons why a person may decide to continue to wear a mask, and we respect that choice.

### **Acceptable Use Policy**

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full [Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#), which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the University website "[Safe Computing at UNC](#)" for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

### **Accessibility Resources and Service**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, including mental health disorders, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The [Heels Care Network](#) website is a place to access the many mental resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

### **Title IX Resources**

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources

on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, [titleixcoordinator@unc.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

### **Policy on Non-Discrimination**

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu)) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

### **Diversity Statement**

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate suggestions.

### **Undergraduate Testing Center**

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit <http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/>.

### **Learning Center**

Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit UNC's Learning Center at <http://learningcenter.unc.edu> to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

**Writing Center**

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's Writing Center. Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit <http://writingcenter.unc.edu>.

**Grade Appeal Process**

If you feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss with me. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our departmental director of undergraduate studies or appeal the grade through a formal university process based on arithmetic/clerical error, arbitrariness, discrimination, harassment, or personal malice. To learn more, go to the [Academic Advising Program](#) website.