SYLLABUS

Honors College, HON 113.S01: Positive Psychology: Readings and Experiential Exploration, Spring, 2015
Seminar meetings: Honors College Lounge Monday 2:30-3:23

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Required Reading

Available at the campus bookstore, online, local bookstores, and at many public libraries.

Course Description
Seminars are small, interactive courses for all first-year students. Seminars are designed to introduce students to thought-provoking and interesting topics, which vary annually by section and cover a variety of subjects related to the interaction of science and society. Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. Positive Psychology focuses on how to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, cultivate what is best within people, and enhance people’s experiences of love, work, and play.

Course Goals
● Improve critical thinking by developing evaluative, problem-solving, and expressive skills.
● Enhance group communication skills through discussions, small-group work, presentations or debates.
● Develop intellectual curiosity and better understand the role of a student in an academic community.
● Experience first-hand exercises developed to enhance well-being by leaders in the field of Positive Psychology.
● Skillfully reflect upon and discuss your experiences with these exercises.
● Understand the scientific roots of these exercises.

Class Format
This class is a participatory seminar based on short presentations and discussion. We will discuss assigned readings and audiovisual materials, and discoveries gleaned from experiential exercises. Participants are expected to carefully review readings before class and contribute actively in seminar discussions.

Evaluation

1. Total of 7 Assignments due on alternate weeks (10% each) 70%
2. Attendance (~.7 each week) 10%
3. Participation (~.7 each week) 10%
4. Completing course readings (~.7 each week) 10%

1. Assignments: Assignments are due on alternate weeks. Refer to each week in the course schedule for instructions for assignments. Some require advance preparation (e.g., recording an activity for 7 days in a row) so you must plan ahead. Assignments are due to Blackboard by Sunday midnight the evening before each Monday’s class.

2., 3., and 4. Attendance, Participation, and Completing Readings: Attendance is a necessary but not sufficient component of participation. Full credit (~2 points per class) will be awarded to those who are active, thoughtful members of group discussions and who demonstrate that they have completed the required reading. Presence in the seminar involves attending to the flow of the proceedings apart from distractions from electronic devices.

Assignment of Letter Grades
93-100% = A
90-92% = A-
87-89% = B+
84-86% = B
80-83% = B-
77-79% = C+
74-76% = C
70-73% = C-
67-69% = D+
60-66% = D
59% or less = F

To access the Blackboard site for the course, go to http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu and log in using your NetID and NetID password.

Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person’s work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

COURSE EVALUATIONS
Each semester Stony Brook University asks students to provide feedback on their courses and instructors through an online course evaluation system. The course evaluation results are used by the individual faculty, department chairs and deans to help the faculty enhance their teaching skills and are used as part of the personnel decision for faculty promotion and tenure.

Stony Brook contracts with an outside vendor to administer the surveys and all results are completely anonymous. No individually identifiable data are ever reported back to the university or instructor. Students who have completed previous evaluations can view all faculty ratings at: tlt.stonybrook.edu-evaluate.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Monday, January 25: Introduction to the Field of Positive Psychology

Introductions to one another and introduction to the field of Positive Psychology

Video presentation 1: TED webcast: Martin Seligman on Positive Psychology.

Martin Seligman talks about psychology -- as a field of study and as it works one-on-one with each patient and each practitioner. As it moves beyond a focus on disease, what can modern psychology help us to become?

PART 1: POSITIVE EMOTION

Week 2: Monday, February 1:

Readings:
Chapter 1. Positive Feeling and Positive Character (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Assignment 1 Due: Using Your Strengths: Take the VIA-IS strengths questionnaire (https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register) to assess your top 5 strengths, and think of ways to use those strengths more in your daily life. Print out the resulting summary. Write a one-page (roughly 300-word) introduction, in which you illustrate your character strengths. Submit the electronic copy (of both the summary and your introduction) to Blackboard by Sunday January 31, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.

Week 3: Monday, February 8:

Readings:
Chapter 2. How Psychology Lost Its Way and I Found Mine (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.).

Video presentation 2: TED webcast: Dan Gilbert asks, Why are we happy? Dan Gilbert, author of Stumbling on Happiness, challenges the idea that we’ll be miserable if we don’t get what we want. Our "psychological immune system" lets us feel truly happy even when things don’t go as planned.

Week 4: Monday, February 15

Readings:
Chapter 3. Why Bother to Be Happy (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class.)

Assignment 2 Due: Three Good Things/Blessings: Each evening for a week (this means you must begin by Monday February 8), write down three good things that happened and why you think they happened. Submit the electronic copy to Blackboard by Sunday February 14, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.

Week 5: Monday, February 22:

Readings:
Chapter 4. Can You Make Yourself Lastingly Happier? (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Video presentation 3: TED webcast: Barry Schwartz on the paradox of choice
Psychologist Barry Schwartz takes aim at a central tenet of western societies: freedom of choice. In Schwartz’s estimation, choice has made us not freer but more paralyzed, not happier but more dissatisfied.

Week 6: Monday, February 29:

Readings:
Chapter 5. Satisfaction about the Past (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Assignment 3 Due: Obituary/Biography: Imagine that you have passed away after living a fruitful and satisfying life. What would you want your obituary to say? Write a 1–2 page essay summarizing what you would like to be remembered for the most. Submit the electronic copy to Blackboard by Sunday February 28, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.

Week 7: Monday, March 7:
Readings:
Chapter 6. Optimism about the Future (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Video presentation 4: TED webcast: Malcolm Gladwell on spaghetti sauce
Tipping Point author Malcolm Gladwell gets inside the food industry’s pursuit of the perfect spaghetti sauce -- and makes a larger argument about the nature of choice and happiness.

** SPRING RECESS!! ** (No class Monday, March 14)

Week 8: Monday, March 21:

Chapter 7. Happiness in the Present (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Assignment 4 Due: Active/Constructive Responding: An active-constructive response is one where you react in a visibly positive and enthusiastic way to good news from someone else. At least once a day for a week (this means you must begin by Monday March 7 or earlier if you do not wish to do this over the break), respond actively and constructively to someone you know. Keep a written record of what you did each day. Submit the electronic copy to Blackboard by Sunday March 20, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.

PART 2: STRENGTH AND VIRTUE

Week 9: Monday, March 28:

Readings:
Chapter 8. Renewing Strength and Virtue (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Video presentation 5: TED webcast: Rick Warren on a life of purpose
Pastor Rick Warren, author of The Purpose-Driven Life, reflects on his own crisis of purpose in the wake of his book’s wild success. He explains his belief that God’s intention is for each of us to use our talents and influence to do good.

Week 10: Monday, April 4:

Readings:
Chapter 9. Your Signature Strengths (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)
Assignment 5 Due: Savoring: Once a day for a week (this means you must begin by Monday, March 28), take the time to enjoy something that you usually hurry through (examples: eating a meal, brushing your teeth, walking to class). When it’s over, write down what you did each day, how you did it differently, and how it felt compared to when you rush through it. Submit the electronic copy to Blackboard by Sunday, April 3, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.

PART 3: IN THE MANSIONS OF LIFE

Week 11: Monday, April 11:

Readings:
Chapter 10. Work and Personal Satisfaction (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Video presentation 6: TED webcast: Daniel Kahneman: The riddle of experience vs. memory
Using examples from vacations to colonoscopies, Nobel laureate and founder of behavioral economics Daniel Kahneman reveals how our "experiencing selves" and our "remembering selves" perceive happiness differently. This new insight has profound implications for economics, public policy -- and our own self-awareness.

Week 12: Monday, April 18:

Readings:
Chapter 11. Love (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Assignment 6 Due: Philanthropy vs. pleasure. Plan two experiences one where you engage in something pleasurable and another where you engage in a philanthropic act. Compare the two experiences in a 1-2 page essay. Submit the electronic copy to Blackboard by Monday, April 17, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.

Week 13: Monday, April 25:

Readings:
Chapter 12. Raising Children (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

Video presentation 7: TED webcast: Nic Marks: The Happy Planet Index
Statistician Nic Marks asks why we measure a nation's success by its productivity -- instead of by the happiness and well-being of its people. He introduces the Happy Planet Index, which tracks national well-being against resource use (because a happy life doesn't have to cost the
Which countries rank highest in the HPI? You might be surprised.

**Week 14: Monday, May 2:**

**Readings:**
Chapters 13 and 14. Reprise and Summary and Meaning and Purpose (Write down and bring your favorite idea contained in the reading or your most critical comment about the reading to class. Bring your copy of the book also.)

**Assignment 7 Due: Gratitude Visit:** Think of someone to whom you are very grateful, but who you have never properly thanked. Compose a letter to them describing your gratitude, and read the letter to that person by phone or in person (This needs to be planned well in advance!). Write a 1-2 page essay describing your experience. Submit the electronic copy (of both the letter and your essay) to Blackboard by Sunday May 1, midnight and bring a hard copy to class to discuss.