

Writing 100M – Fall 2007

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Why Are We Not Happy? Happiness: the Holy Grail of Western Society

Most of us are experts at being miserable despite our circumstances. Our quest for happiness is often futile although we do spend a lot of time lusting for that elusive butterfly. This course will explore the different meanings and definitions of happiness, the way western culture tries to measure it, as opposed to the way eastern culture approaches it. Individual happiness versus social happiness; who says happiness is The Promised Land of the human condition? Was paradise The Happy Place, and if so, how and why did we lose it? Is guilt part of our self-inflicted misery/punishment? Is happiness moral? Is happiness humanly possible?

How does wellbeing, welfare, contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction or absence of pain relate to happiness? Does happiness derive from comparing ourselves to the less fortunate? Or is un-happiness a result of comparing ourselves to those who seem more fortunate? Is counting our blessings a key to happiness? Is happiness a mean or a goal? Can one buy a positive outlook on life? How does one pursue happiness? What did Aristotle, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Mill, Rousseau, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Camus write about happiness? How do art, psychology, sociology, economy and religion view happiness?

You will be asked to read books and articles about happiness, write and discuss different aspects of happiness and relate them to your culture, to other cultures and to your own set of beliefs and personal experiences.

There will be oral presentations and you will be required to address the class and speak without using notes. The topics will be partly selected by you and partly assignments given by the instructor.

Purposes

1. Get you in touch with your happiness capacity.

2. Enhance your proficiency in writing, reading and discussing topics in class.
3. Expose you to different schools of thoughts.
4. Expand your tolerance to different ideas and cultures.
5. Learn to differentiate between an individual way of thinking and fashions, or group's way of thinking.
6. Increase your self-knowledge and your emotional intelligence.

Expectations

You are expected to show up to every class, and on time. Missing lessons and lateness will interfere with learning and hence affect your grade. Since there is a large emphasis on teamwork you will be required not to disrupt your fellow student's creativity and to be considerate.

No ringing cell phones and no eating during class.

All assignment will be presented in print; hence you have to master computer skills.

Your own ideas and individual input will be valued more than borrowing and quoting

The writing center is there to help you with any difficulties you encounter.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to perform your academic work honestly and fairly. Since you can choose your subject and your writing is supposed to be personal I expect you to write yourself each and every assignment. The consequences of failure to meet those expectations are out lined in the current *Student Handbook* and in the *Statement on Academic Honesty at Moravian College*.

Grading

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| 1. Contribution in class discussion..... | 20% |
| 2. Attendance..... | 15% |
| 3. Presentations in class..... | 15% |
| 4. Written works..... | 25% |
| 5. Research papers on your chosen topic..... | 25% |

Required Reading

Contentment A Way to True Happiness by Robert A. Johnson 7 Jerry M. Ruhl

The Bedford Handbook Seventh Edition by Diana Hacker

Recommended Readings

The Conquest of Happiness Bertrand Russell

Learned Optimism Martin E.P. Seligman PhD

In Search of Meaning Viktor Frenckel

Subjective Well-Being Ed Diener *Psychological Bulletin* 95, 3 (1984)

True Happiness Psychology Today February 2005

The Science of Happiness Time Magazine January 17, 2005

Journal of Happiness studies Editor Ruut Veenhoven, 2000

The Art of Happiness Dalai Lama

The Art of Love Erich Fromm

The psychology of Happiness Michael Argyle

Happiness: Facts and Myths Michael Eysenck

Authentic Happiness Martin E.P. Seligman

Schedule - with possible modifications according to students' researches

Week I

Monday August 27 Introduction and expectations

Wednesday August 29 Is happiness relative?

Week II

Monday September 3 Labor Day

Wednesday September 5 Happiness and freedom

Week III

Monday September 10 Happiness: mean, goal or none?

Wednesday September 12 Class held at the library

Week IV

Monday September 17 The gift of compassion

Wednesday September 19 Taming your ISJ

Week V

Monday September 24 Early philosophers' happiness

Wednesday September 26 Happiness, are we there yet?

Week VI

Monday October 1 Happiness and religion. Midterm essay due

Wednesday October 3 Empowering Joy

Week VII

Monday October 8 Fall recess

Wednesday October 10 The joys of breaks

Week VIII

Monday October 15 East meets western happiness

Wednesday October 17 Is love happiness?

Week IX

Monday October 22 Happiness and psychology

Wednesday October 29 Social contentment

Week X

Monday November 5 The bliss of nature

Wednesday November 7 The experience machine

Week XI

Monday November 12 Happiness and economy

Wednesday November 14 Practicing happiness

Week XII

Monday November 19 Alchemy of happiness

Wednesday November 21 Is happiness a choice?

Week XIII

Monday November 26 Happiness and art

Wednesday November 28 King Lear

Week XIV

Monday December 3 The joys of ambiguity. Final essays due

Wednesday December 5 Am I better now?

Week XV

Monday December 10 Conclusions

Notes

- 1) You can expect to dedicate 6-8 hours per week outside of class, reading and preparing assignments.
- 2) Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Offices as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
- 3) Do not hesitate to address me with any kind of problem you have during class or after.
- 4) This syllabus is subject to change.

