

IDIS 399 – Spring 2010

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

In *The conquest of Happiness* Bertrand Russell makes us look at the many ways we choose to be miserable despite our circumstances. 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 a promised part 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, and 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.

Purposes

As required by moral life guidelines: by exploring happiness you will learn that moral issues are typically more complex than they appear to be and that informed decision-making about them requires interdisciplinary understanding; you will have an occasion to grapple with your own values and moral position-taking; your capacity for moral discernment, criticism, and argument will be enhanced, as well as your self-knowledge and capacity for enhancing the quality of 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 phones, no text messaging and no eating during class.

All assignment will be presented in print; please refrain from hand-written submissions.

Students who are found in violation of the College's Academic Honesty Policy (found in the student handbook and on the college website) will receive a zero for the assignment.

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

Grading

1. Contribution in class discussion.....	20%
2. Group work in class.....	10%
3. Journals.....	10%
3. Presentations in class.....	15%
4. Written assignments	20%
5. Midterm	10%
6. Final essay.....	15%

Blackboard

You are expected to use Blackboard for course information and assignments throughout the course. You will be enrolled in Blackboard and you have to make sure you check Blackboard before each class.

Required texts

The How of Happiness Sonja Lyubomirsky

In Search of Meaning Viktor Frenckel

The Art of Love Erich Fromm

Recommended Readings

The Conquest of Happiness Bertrand Russell

On Liberty John Stuart Mill

Learned Optimism Martin E.P. Seligman PhD

Toward a Psychology of Being Abraham Maslow

The Science of Happiness Time Magazine January 17, 2005

Journal of Happiness studies Editor Ruut Veenhoven, 2000

The Art of Happiness Dalai Lama

The City of God St. Augustine

Studies in Pessimism Arthur Schopenhauer

Emotional Intelligence Daniel Golman

The Examined Life Robert Nozick

The psychology of Happiness Michael Argyle

Happiness: Facts and Myths Michael Eysenck

Authentic Happiness Martin E.P. Seligman

Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle

How Proust Can Change Your Life Alain de Botton

Schedule - *with possible modifications according to students' researches*

Week I

Wednesday January 20 Introduction and expectations

Week II

Wednesday January 27 Happiness and gratitude

Week III

Wednesday February 3 Ancient concepts of happiness

Week IV

Wednesday February 10 Happiness and responsibility

Week V

Wednesday February 17 Eastern philosophers' happiness

Week VI

Wednesday February 24 happiness and religion - midterms due

Week V

Wednesday March 3 Nozick's experiencing machine

Week VI

Wednesday March 10 Spring Recess

Week VII

Wednesday March 17 Man's Search for Meaning

Week VIII

Wednesday March 24

Happiness in literature

Week IX

Wednesday March 31

the bliss of forgetting

Week X

Wednesday April 7

The Art of Loving

Week XI

Wednesday April 14

misery as a legitimate choice

Week XII

Wednesday April 21

the pursuit of happiness – finals due

Week XIII

Wednesday April 28

Conclusions: are we happy(ier) now?

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.