

IDIS 399 – Fall 2010

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Office hours: Thursday 4:00-5:00 or by appointment

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 Frankl

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 student topic researches*

Week I

Tuesday August 31 Introduction

Thursday September 2 Happiness and gratitude

Week II

Tuesday September 7 ancient concepts of happiness

Thursday September 9 happiness myths

Week III

Tuesday September 14	happiness set point
Thursday September 16	happiness activities
Week IV	
Tuesday September 21	Man's Search of Meaning
Thursday September 23	avoiding over thinking
Week V	
Tuesday September 28	act of kindness
Thursday September 30	social relationships
Week VI	
Tuesday October 5	managing stress
Thursday October 7	Mid-term paper due
Week VII	
Tuesday October 12	Fall recess
Thursday October 14	The Art of Loving
Week VIII	
Tuesday October 19	finding meaning
Thursday October 21	Happiness and forgiving
Week IX	
Tuesday October 26	living in the present
Thursday October 28	flow experiences
Week X	
Tuesday November 2	savoring what is
Thursday November 4	mindfulness
Week XI	
Tuesday November 9	committing to goals
Thursday November 11	caring for body and soul
Week XII	
Tuesday November 16	meditation
Thursday November 18	happiness in literature
Week XIII	
Tuesday November 23	Thanksgiving recess

Thursday November 25

Thanksgiving recess

Week XIV

Tuesday November 30

Final essay due

Thursday December 2

the pursuit of happiness

Week XIV

Tuesday December 7

are we happy(ier) now? 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.