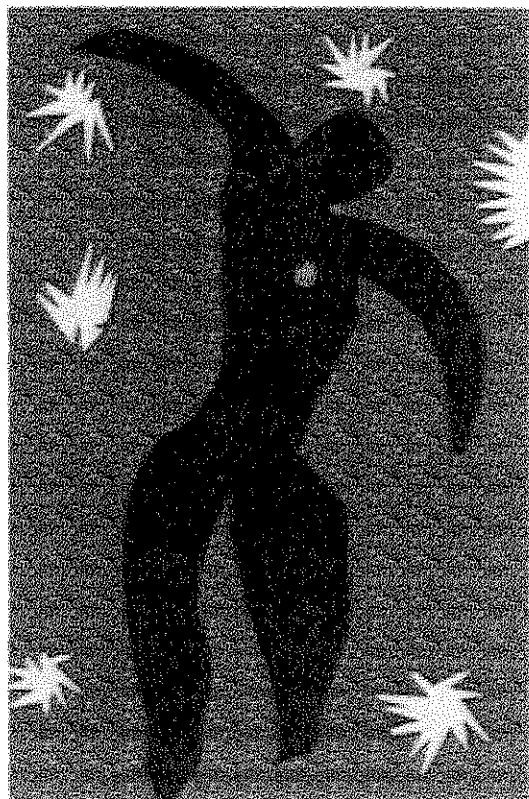


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Seminar on Social/Personality Psychology – PSYCH 375

“Health, learning and virtue will insure your happiness; they will
give you quiet conscience, private esteem and public honor.”

– Thomas Jefferson, 1788



Spring 2016

Seminar: Positive Psychology – PSYCH 375

Positive psychology is the science of understanding human strengths and the practice of promoting these strengths to help people psychologically and physically. Psychology has grown to accept the view that stressful circumstances do not inexorably lead to negative prognoses. Positive psychology explores factors that make life worth living and the human strengths that enable individuals to confront challenges, appreciate others, and regard daily experiences as meaningful. As a new subfield of psychology, positive psychology provides a distinct contrast to the negative focus of the disease-model approach that traditionally dominated much of the discipline. We will read, discuss, and critique books and articles dealing with current issues in positive psychology, including defining happiness and the nature of the good life, subjective well-being, human strengths and virtues, finding meaning, emotions, flow, and optimism. Regular attendance and active class participation are essential aspects of the seminar. Students will write reaction/thought papers, do a research review paper wherein they design a project dealing with some aspect of positive psychology.

This class will meet on Monday and Wednesdays from 8:55am to 10:05pm in PPHAC 301.

Required books:

Bolt, M., & Dunn, D. S. (2016). *Pursuing Human Strengths: A Positive Psychology Guide* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Worth.

Recommended book (optional) for PS 375:

Dunn, D. S. (2011). *A Short Guide to Writing about Psychology* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson Longman. (paper)

Other readings, primarily journal articles, are referenced in the syllabus. These readings can be downloaded from Reeves Library.

Course Requirements

Class participation, reading, activities, and attendance. This class requires constant attendance, active participation, critical discussions of the readings, and appropriate and open-minded reactions to the opinions and experiences of class members. Our book has lots of exercises, assessments, and activities—we will complete and discuss virtually all of them, so please complete them in the course of your reading. I expect that you will attend each and every class, and that you will come prepared to talk about—and question—what you read. I will be passing out a sign-in/attendance sheet at the beginning of every class. If you miss more than 3 classes, then your final course grade will be lowered accordingly.

Exam. Given the focus on reading, discussion, and writing in this class, there is only one exam, the final. The final exam will be a take-home exam comprised of essay questions dealing with course material. You will choose two questions to answer from a list of 8 or so questions (each question will be worth 50 pts). I expect that you will craft carefully written and thoughtful answers to each question (i.e., you should use and cite materials from course reading, discussion, and so on). The due date for submitting the exam will be announced later, once the final exam schedule is established.

Writing assignments. There are 7 short writing or paper assignments for this class. Due dates are noted in the class schedule. Late papers will drop a full letter grade immediately and an additional letter grade for each subsequent day. The assignments are described in detail later in this syllabus.

Research paper. You will write one final paper for this course. Your paper should be 10-15 pages in length. The paper should be written in APA style, as described in the new, 6th edition of the *Publication Manual* and/or *A Short Guide to Writing about Psychology* (3rd ed.). I anticipate that although you will apply information we discussed in class, you will also need to do outside research and incorporate other sources—primarily recent journal articles—into your paper. Although the topics are more applied, that is, related to “real world” issues, I will be grading your work on how well you relate your chosen topic to empirical research from positive psychology and social psychology. **I will need to know your paper topic by Wednesday, March 2nd, the last class before spring break (of course, you may inform me earlier than that date). The paper is due in class on Wednesday, April 14th. Take careful note of this due date and plan your research and writing accordingly.** The first three topics were adapted from a course on positive psychology taught by Dr. Jamie Kurtz of James Madison University. You may, of course, suggest a topic not listed below—I just need to approve it.

Topic 1: Throughout this course, we have discussed many topics that relate (or fail to relate) to people’s subjective well-being (SWB), or happiness. Both our reading and the research done to date is far from exhaustive, thus there are topics we will not have time to cover or have not been examined empirically. Examples include sports, exercise, creativity (e.g., art, music, writing, performance), meditation, religion, drugs,

even food (e.g., chocolate). People may well have their own theories about how these activities or things influence their happiness, but are they correct? Design a study or a series of studies to examine the role of your chosen factor in the study of SWB.

Topic 2:

“I don’t know why we are here, but I’m pretty sure that it is not in order to enjoy ourselves.” – philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)

Is happiness really the ultimate goal and true sign of a life well-lived? What about good health, wisdom, meaning in life, spirituality, self-actualization, creativity, or even—from an evolutionary perspective—passing on your genes? Select one factor (it need not be from this list) that you believe is a marker of a well-lived life. Review the literature on this factor and how it has been measured in the past, and then propose a study or a series of studies that examine how this factor promotes “the good life.”

Topic 3: Is there a social trend or problem plaguing our society that could benefit from an application of research from positive psychology? Examples include the high divorce rate, job dissatisfaction, homophobia, economic stress, rampant materialism, and the obesity epidemic, among others (feel free to suggest one of your own choosing—just check with me). Identify and describe a social problem, and then justify why you believe that research from positive psychology and/or social psychology related to happiness, well-being, and any related constructs may be able to shed light on it. Design a research program to investigate the issue, and propose an intervention in which people can be taught how to apply “positive” research findings to begin to address the problem in their lives. Hypothesize how the treatment/intervention would affect not only people’s well-being and happiness, but also how it would help solve the specific problem or issue they face.

Topic 4: Read and react to the quote from Thomas Jefferson that appears on the first page of this syllabus. Given what you have read, learned, and discussed about positive psychology this semester, are the factors Mr. Jefferson cites (“Health, learning, and virtue”) actually related to our happiness? And are “quiet conscience, private esteem, and public honor” key parts of the good life? Perhaps Jefferson is on to something and the definition of subjective well-being might benefit from some expansion. In any case, design a study or two aimed at determining the empirical validity of Jefferson’s observations, focusing on how the development of our private selves can, in turn, be used to benefit the public welfare. Be sure to use research from positive and/or social psychology in the course of your answer and to support your research program.

Topic 5. Can money and material goods or wealth lead to genuine happiness? Ample research in both psychology and behavioral economics indicates that material goods and wealth do not make us happy for very long. Yet people continue to believe that more money, lottery winnings, new “toys”, and the like, will make them happy. How can research from positive psychology be constructively used to explain this paradox? Review the relevant literature and then offer a rationale for ways to convince people to

reduce their avarice for objects and wealth. If you want to go the extra mile, design an experiment to test whether an educational intervention could be designed and tested to reduce people's material longings.

Grading weights for final course grade. Final grades will be weighted as follows:

Seven Writing assignments	= 20%
Final exam (take home)	= 20%
Class participation	= 20%
Activities/exercises from text	= 15%
Research paper	= 25%

Office hours. My office hours at Moravian for Spring 2016 are:

Monday & Wednesday	By Appointment
Tuesday & Thursday	1:30-3:00pm
Friday	8:30-10:30am

When necessary appointments for other times may be scheduled.

Note about the syllabus. Readings should be completed before class on the dates noted herein. I reserve the right to alter the syllabus should the need arise. You will note that there are days noted when class will not be meeting—this usually means that I will be out of town. I anticipate that you will use the time as suggested here in the syllabus, completing whatever assignments are indicated, including writing or submitting required papers.

Plagiarism and cheating. Your work must be your own. The College has a detailed plagiarism policy. I assume you are already familiar with it. I am happy to discuss it with you if you have questions. I will follow it to the letter. Please visit: <http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic2.htm> to view the policy.

Disability issues. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1401. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Class Schedule

Week One – Overview of the Course and Definitions – January 18 (M) and 20 (W)

(M) Introduction and syllabus

(W) Defining positive psychology – Bolt & Dunn Chapter 1

Week Two – Learning about Positive Psychology – January 25 (M) and 27 (W)

(M) Defining positive psychology continued – Bolt & Dunn Chapter 1

(T) Last Day for Course Changes

(W) *Writing Assignment 1: Complete the Personal Growth Initiative Scale on page 19 – 20 in Bolt & Dunn. Write a 1 to 2 page paper where you reflect on and analyze your PGIS score. Does it indicated that you have a plan for your life? Write about that plan and share your goals with us. If you don't have a plan (and your PGIS score reflects that), write about what you think you should do to develop a plan and/or goals. What do you want out of life?*

Week Three – Love – Feb 1 (M) and Feb 3 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 2

(W) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 2

Week Four – Empathy – February 8 (M) and 10 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 3

(W) *Writing Assignment 2: Good Life List Exercise due in class (instructions are at the back of the syllabus)*

Week Five – Self-Control – February 15 (M) and 17 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 4

(W) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 4

Writing Assignment 3 due in class

Go to this website: <https://www.authenticchappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>.

Create an account so you can login to “Questionnaires.” You will need to provide some

profile information. Then click on 'VIA Survey of Character Strengths.' The survey has 240 questions so hang in there to completion. At the end it will provide a hierarchy of your personal strengths.

Use this business memo format to submit your findings:

To: Dr. Dana S. Dunn
 From: (Your Name Here)
 Re: Results of VIA Survey of Character Strengths
 Date: (Submission Date)

In the body of the memo, address the following points:

1. List your top ten values indicated by the VIA.
2. Briefly discuss whether any of the resulting insights surprised you.
3. Describe whether you think the inventory will produce reliable (consistent) results on retesting.
4. Describe whether you think the test will produce valid (truthful) results that fairly represent the psychological construct it claims to measure.

Week Six – Grit & Wisdom – February 22 (M) and 24 (W) – NOTE: I will be out of town this week. *Writing Assignment 4*: Find your GRIT score and read the below article about this construct. Write a paper wherein you discuss Grit, whether and how it is related to self-control, and discuss what you believe your score says about you (3-4 pages double spaced, with references).

(M) Find your GRIT score (see p. 96 in Bolt & Dunn) – *No Class Meeting*

Von Culin, K. R., Tsukayama, E., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). Unpacking grit: Motivational correlates of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(4), 306-312. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2014.898320

(W) Wisdom – Bolt & Dunn Chapter 5 – *No Class Meeting*

Note: Midterm point of the semester – Friday, February 26th

Week Seven – Wisdom continued– February 29 (M) and Mar 2 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 5 – **Grit paper (*Writing Assignment 4*) due in class.**

(W) Research paper discussion – *your paper topic is due in class today* – please indicate your choice of topic (i.e., 1, 2, 3, or 4) on a piece of paper (preferably typed) with your name on it.

Spring break Assignment: *Do a Secret Good Deed (Writing Assignment 5)*

Have a safe and relaxing spring break!

Spring Break – (Sa) March 5 thru (Su) March 13

Writing Assignment 5: Do a secret good deed. (I suggest you complete the deed sometime over spring break, but you can wait until you return to campus—note, however, that your one-page paper is due on **Wednesday, March 15th**). This assignment is adapted from one developed by Chris Peterson: How you act when no one notices is important, and in this exercise, you are asked to do something kind for someone else without attracting any attention to yourself or taking any credit whatsoever. The good deed can be small—like picking up trash in a neighbor's yard or putting a coin in an expired parking meter—but it should be done anonymously or secretly. If done for a stranger, the stranger may see the deed being done, but you, as do-gooder, should fade away as quickly and quietly as possible. If done for a friend or a family member, the recipient should not know who performed the deed. If asked about the good deed, you should feign ignorance and discreetly change the subject. We are all pretty experienced at this vis-à-vis our bad deeds, so those skills can presumably be used to good effect here. Write a one-page paper wherein you describe the deed, your reason for choosing it, the recipient's reaction (only if you witnessed it), and how you felt once you did the deed.

Week Eight – Nature/Attention Restoration Theory (ART) and the Great Outdoors – Mar 15 (M) and 16 (W)

(M) Berman, M. G., Jonides, J., & Kaplan, S. (2008). The cognitive benefits of interacting with nature. *Psychological Science*, 19, 1207-1212.

Berman, M. G., Kross, K. M., Askren, M. K., Burson, A., Deldin, P. J., & . . . Jonides, J. (2012). Interacting with nature improves cognition and affect for individuals with depression. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 14(3), 300-305. Doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2012.03.012

(W) One-page Good Deed paper (Writing Assignment 5) due at the start of class

Zhang, J. W., Piff, P. K., Iyer, R., Koleva, S., & Keltner, D. (2014). An occasion for unselfing: Beautiful nature leads to prosociality. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3761-3772. Doi: 10.1016/j.jenvp.2013.11.008

Oppezzo, M., & Schwartz, D. L. (2014, April 21). Give your ideas some legs: The positive effect of walking on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036577>

Week Nine – Commitment and Work – Mar 21 (M) and 23 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 6 – *Writing Assignment 6: Begin the Gratitude Letter assignment (see instructions at the back of the syllabus). The letter is due on Monday, March 28th.*

(W) Caza, B., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2013). How work shapes well-being. In S. A. David, I. Boniwell, A. Conley Ayers (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of happiness* (pp. 693-710). New York, NY US: Oxford University Press.

Wrzesniewski, A. (2012). Callings in work. In K. S. Cameron, G. M. Spreitzer (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 45-55). New York, NY US: Oxford University Press.

(Th) Mar 24 – (Su) Mar 27 *Easter Break*

Week Ten – Happiness and Prosocial Spending – Mar 28 (M) and 30 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 7 – **Gratitude Letter due (*Writing Assignment 6*) in class**

(W) Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008, March 21). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science*, 319, 1687-1688. doi: 10.1126/science/1150952

Anik, L., Aknin, L. B., Norton, M. L., & Dunn, E. W. (2011). Feeling good about giving: The benefits (and costs) of self-interested charitable behavior. In D. M. Oppenheimer & C. Y. Olivola (Eds.), *The science of giving: Experimental approaches to the study of charity* (pp. 3-13). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

(F) Apr 1- Last Day for Course Withdrawal with a W

Week Eleven – Happiness and Savoring/Self-Respect and Humility – Apr 4 (M) and Apr 6 (W)

(M) Jose, P. E., Lim, B. T., & Bryant, F. B. (2012). Does savoring increase happiness? A daily diary study. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 7, 176-187.

Hurley, D. B., & Kwon, P. (2012). Results of a study to increase savoring the moment: Differential impact on positive and negative outcomes. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 13, 579-588.

(W) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 8

Layous, K., Nelson, S. K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). What is the optimal way to deliver a positive activity intervention? The case of writing about one's best possible selves. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14(2), 635-654.

Week Twelve – Humility and Awe, and Hope –Apr 11 (M) and April 14 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 8

Rudd, M., Vohs, K. D., & Aaker, J. (2012). Awe expands people's perception of time, alters decision making, and enhances well-being. *Psychological Science*, 23(10), 1130-1136. doi:10.1177/0956797612438731

(W) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 9

****Your research paper is due today in class****

Week Thirteen – Hope continued and Friendship and Social Support – April 18 (M) and 20 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 9

(W) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 10

Week Fourteen – Friendship/Social Support and Meaning & Flourishing – April 25 (M) and 27 (W)

(M) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 10

Note: I will handout the take-home final exam during this class

(W) Bolt & Dunn Chapter 11 – ***Writing Assignment 7: Write a one-page reflection of whether, how, and why your Flourishing score here in Chapter 11 is different from the score you received back in chapter 1.***

(Sa) Apr 30 – Last Day of the Spring Semester

Final Exams – May 2 (M) – May 7 (F)

Final Examination (Take Home Test) is due during Finals Week. Due date and time: Monday, May 2 at 11:30am in my office. I will be happy to accept the exam earlier than that time.

Have a relaxing summer . . . if you are graduating, have a productive and meaningful life.

The Good Life

MINI PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

The Good Life Lists

This project offers you the opportunity to be reflective about your personal quest for the “good life” in context with how that quest is likely to vary based on the culture in which you were raised.

Step #1: Generate a list of the ten most important elements in rank order that will help you achieve “the good life” according to your current set of values. Number 1 should be what is most important to you, number 2 next most important, and so forth.

Step #2: Generate a list of someone of your age and gender who is a member of a different culture. You may use the random assignment of a culture that is distributed in class. With permission, you may substitute a culture with which you have or hope to have specific experience. (For example, if you are planning study abroad, this would be a good opportunity to begin thinking through your cultural adjustment by figuring out their version of the good life). Speculate about what that list might look like. Provide citations of sources you used to support your speculations.

Step #3: Compare and contrast to the two versions. Speculate about why commonalities and/or differences exist across the two lists.



MINI PROJECT
GOOD LIFE LISTS

Name:

Total Points Achieved:

	Your Good Life Elements	Good Life Elements in
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Provide a rationale for why you selected the good life elements for the other culture?

What can you extrapolate from comparing and contrasting the two lists?

Rubric: 10 pts available

- _____ provides complete rank-ordered list of own good life elements
- _____ formulates plausible list of rank-ordered elements from a different culture
- _____ with rationale for list of good life elements
- _____ draws reasonable comparisons between the two lists
- _____ provides appropriate APA format citation of sources used
- _____ expresses viewpoint professionally (e.g., good grammar, aesthetics)

MINI PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

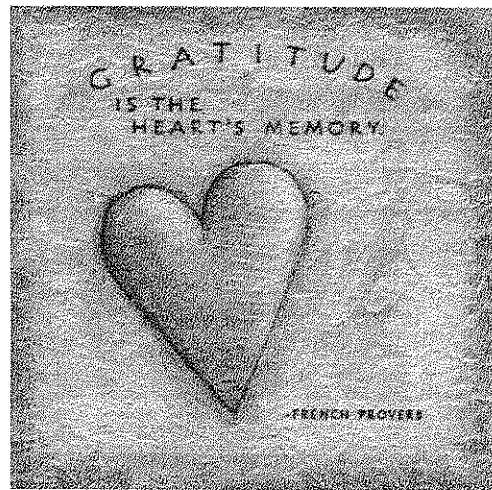
GRATITUDE LETTER

A fairly standard feature of any Positive Psychology course is examining the phenomenon of Gratitude. No one arrives at a meaningful place in life without getting assistance from someone who maintains a special role of significance. It can be a teacher, friend, professor, relative, coach, or even the lunchroom lady in the high school cafeteria. The formal role doesn't matter. The pivotal issue is that the target individual's kindness and interest made a big difference in your life. Chances are good that person could be in the dark about what kind of impact he or she has had. This project gives you an opportunity to change that. On the other hand, if the person is aware of his or her positive influence, it always feels lovely to have it reconfirmed.

Your task is to write a letter of gratitude specifying why you are grateful for that person's influence and impact. Be as specific as you can about what positive effects resulted from the interaction. Share what you are currently doing and whether there is a connection between where you are now and what happened to create such positive memories. Although the letter doesn't have to be long, it should be powerful. Note: You do not have to submit the actual letter; however, honor bright, you do need to have gone to the trouble to create a document that the target person can later review and cherish. If you can arrange to do so, please read your letter to your target person either in person or over the phone.

Reflection Questions:

1. Whom did you select for the gratitude letter and why?
2. What were your feelings as you wrote the letter?
3. How did your target person react to your disclosure?
4. How were you affected by how your target person responded?
5. Speculate about the duration of positive feeling that will result from this exchange
6. How important is the role of gratitude in your life?
7. Are there others whom you need to notify of their impact?
8. What influence might this experience have on your personal interaction style?



Grading Rubric: This ten-point exercise is hard not to get full credit as long as you faithfully follow the instruction, show thoughtful reflection, and give evidence of impact.