

# PSYCHOLOGY 417A (Special Topics in Psychology): The Science of Happiness

Section 1: Tues/Thurs: 9:30am (Swing 309)

Section 2: Tues/Thurs: 11am (Swing 405)

Pre-requisites: Psych 366 or 217&218

Professor: Dr. Elizabeth Dunn

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## Teaching Assistant

Name	E-mail
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**Course Description:** In this seminar-style course, students will read and discuss cutting-edge research addressing questions such as: Does money really make people happier? Why are people happier in some places than others? How do technological innovations, such as smartphones and social media, affect happiness? As a student in this course, you will learn how to think like a social psychologist, critiquing existing ideas and creating new ones. And along the way, you may learn how to live a happier life.

**Course Format:** This course emphasizes active discussion and team work. You will be assigned to a team at the beginning of the term and you will work collaboratively with your team throughout the semester. There is no midterm or final exam, but the course will require consistent effort, with frequent writing assignments, oral presentations, and mandatory attendance and participation.

**Learning Outcomes:** While learning about the science of happiness, you will have the opportunity to develop the following skills:

- Critiquing existing research
- Generating new research ideas
- Writing clearly and concisely
- Giving engaging oral presentations
- Working effectively in collaborative teams

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS**

**1) Term Paper (team-based; 20% of grade):** In collaboration with your assigned team, you will write one 5-page paper, in which you will propose a new experiment to test a novel hypothesis, building on one or more of the ideas discussed in the course. In addition to submitting the paper, your team will give a brief oral presentation on your proposed experiment.

**2) Article Presentations (team-based; 20% of grade):** Twice during the semester, your team will teach the recommended reading to the class. You can choose how to divide the work, with the requirement that all team members should contribute equally across the 2 presentations combined. To test whether your classmates understood the key ideas from the recommended reading, you must prepare a Learning Quiz that your classmates will take immediately after your presentation. Strong performance on the Learning Quiz will reflect well on both your presentation and your classmates' active listening, and thus their responses will affect your presentation grade and their participation grades. You should review your teaching materials (e.g., slides) and Learning Quiz with the professor or TA ahead of time. You may teach the material through a traditional presentation with slides, but you are also welcome to incorporate interactive or multi-media teaching methods, such as:

- a. Having your classmates complete a mini version of a study from the reading.
- b. Doing a demonstration that will allow your classmates to experience the psychological phenomenon discussed in the readings.
- c. Creating a video re-enactment of the study.

**3) Collaboration Reflections (10% of grade):** For each of the major team components described above (term paper & article presentations), you will be asked to complete a brief, private Collaboration Reflection. The primary goal of this individual exercise is to help you think about what worked well and what did not in your team, in order to enhance your collaborative skills in the future. In addition, you will be asked to rate the contributions of each member of your team, including yourself, and this information will be incorporated in determining individuals' grades on the team-based projects.

**4) Participation (25% of grade):** Discussion is a central component of this class. It is therefore very important that you attend class and participate actively. You may be absent from one class session without penalty; each additional absence will result in a 5-point drop in this component of your grade, unless you are granted an official Academic Concession by your advising office (see <https://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/academic-performance/help-academic-concession/>). Also, note that open discussion in this course requires that everyone feel comfortable talking about sensitive issues (e.g., gender differences); thus, treating anyone in the class with disrespect will have a highly detrimental effect on the participation component of your grade. You can participate in class not only by speaking up, but also by actively *listening* to your classmates. Thus, your responses on the Learning Quizzes will also count toward your participation grade. And as a reward for reading the syllabus carefully before the first day of class (nice job!), you will get a bonus point added to your participation grade if you email the TA

a picture of something that makes you happy before noon on Sept 4 (we'll create a slide of all the submitted photos, without names, so keep this in mind in choosing a photo).

**5) Discussion Questions (10% of grade):** You will need to submit a discussion question 10 times (approximately once per week) related to the day's reading. Your question must be submitted via the course website by Monday at noon (for class on Tuesday) or Wednesday at noon (for class on Thursday), and you should be ready to discuss it in class. These discussion questions should be thoughtful responses to the reading, not requests for clarification (although you are always welcome to submit clarification questions in addition to your discussion questions). In forming discussion questions, you may want to challenge the conclusions drawn by authors, consider implications of the findings, or relate the readings to other topics. You may draw on the required and/or recommended readings in forming your questions, and you're encouraged to draw connections between multiple readings in the course. Discussion Questions will be marked check-plus, check, or check-minus, and there is no way to submit make-up questions or late questions, so plan ahead to make sure you complete ten.

**6) Experiential Learning Exercises (15% of grade):** These exercises are designed to help you experience the concepts being discussed in class. For each exercise, you will write a brief paper (~1 page) reflecting on your experience and linking it to course concepts. ELE's will be marked check-plus, check, or check-minus, and will be marked down one step for each day late. You only need to complete 3 out of the 4 ELE's, and thus extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

## COURSE POLICIES

- *Office hours & appointments:* If you have questions about the course material or would like to discuss issues related to the course in more detail, you are always welcome to make an individual appointment with the professor or TA or talk to us before/after class.
- *EMAIL POLICY:* The professor will only provide 1-sentence responses via email. If you have a question that cannot be answered in a single sentence or less, make an appointment to discuss it or see the professor before/after class. Emails requiring responses longer than one sentence will not be answered by the professor (and note that she typically checks her UBC email account once per day, on school days only). You may get a slightly faster or longer email response if you email the TA. However, to encourage you to solve problems on your own, if you email the TA or professor with a question that can be answered by searching the syllabus, course website, or Google, you will lose two points from your final participation grade.
- *Electronics:* You will need a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to complete in-class learning quizzes. If you don't have access to one of these devices, please speak to the professor on the first day to make special arrangements for completing the quizzes. Using electronic devices for non-course related purposes (e.g., texting, Facebook, email) is extremely distracting for everyone. For this reason, after one warning, each use of a device for purposes unrelated to the course will result in an automatic 5-point deduction in your participation grade for the term. If it is necessary for you to use your

devices for such a purpose (e.g., sending text messages) during class due to a family emergency or another serious issue, simply notify the professor prior to class. Otherwise, to reduce temptation, you are encouraged to put these devices away (or use airplane mode) to help you stay focused.

- *Attendance & Extensions:* Attendance is mandatory. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to speak with one of your classmates (not the professor/TA) to find out what you missed. If you miss more than one class, additional absences will only be excused if an official Academic Concession from the advising office is presented within one week. Extensions on written assignments will only be considered if an official Academic Concession is presented prior to the due date.
- *Course Materials:* All course materials will be provided via the course website, external web links (e.g., TED.com), or distributed in class, without cost to students. All students must read/watch/listen to the material denoted "Required." Students are also encouraged to review the recommended material, but only the team presenting the recommended material must review it.
- *Syllabus Changes:* Because this course is being taught for the first time, feedback will be elicited throughout the term. It may be necessary to make adjustments to the syllabus in order to maximize student success. If needed, this will be discussed with the students and an updated syllabus will be provided.

#### UNIVERSITY AND PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

- For full details on the university's academic concession policy, see: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,329,0,0>
- Psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions for final course marks. Final course marks may be scaled up or down as necessary by the professor or department in order to comply with these norms. For official UBC policy on grade scaling, please see: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,42,96,0>
- Please make sure you are familiar with the University's values and policies here: <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>

## WEEK 1: INTRO

Tues Sept 3:

**\*\*Imagine Day (NO CLASS)\*\***

Thurs Sept 5:

**\*\*Course Introduction (Read the syllabus before class)\*\***

## WEEK 2: THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT HAPPINESS

Tues Sept 10

- Required
  - Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D. & Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. *Psychological Science*, 22, 1359-1366.
  - Listen to this podcast: *Circle of Willis (June 2019)*. Jim Coan with Guest Brian Nosek: <http://circleofwillispodcast.com/brian-nosek> **\*Begin at Minute 8\***

Thurs Sept 12

- **Assignment due: Experiential Learning Exercise (ELE) #1: Track Your Own Happiness**
- Required
  - Gilbert, D. (2006). Chapter 2: The view from in here. In *Stumbling on happiness* (pp. 27-55). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
  - Watch Daniel Kahneman's TED Talk (2010): *The riddle of experience vs. memory*. [https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel\\_kahneman\\_the\\_riddle\\_of\\_experience\\_vs\\_memory?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory?language=en)

## WEEK 3: TIME & MONEY

Tues Sept 17

- Required
  - Dunn, E. W., Gilbert, D. T. & Wilson, T. D. (2011). If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21, 115-125.
  - Watch Elizabeth Dunn's TED talk (2019): *Helping others makes us happier – but it matters how we do it*. [https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth\\_dunn\\_helping\\_others\\_makes\\_us\\_happier\\_but\\_it\\_matters\\_how\\_we\\_do\\_it](https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_dunn_helping_others_makes_us_happier_but_it_matters_how_we_do_it)
- Recommended
  - Whillans, A. V., Dunn, E. W., Smeets, P., Bekkers, R. & Norton, M. I. (2017). Buying time promotes happiness. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114, 8523-8527.

Thurs Sept 19

- Required

- Pink, D. H. (2018). The hidden pattern of everyday life. In *When: The scientific secrets of perfect timing* (pp. 9-35). New York: Riverhead Books.
- Dunn, E. W. & Norton, M. I. (2013). Buy time. In *Happy money: The science of happier spending* (pp. 53-78). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Recommended
  - Smeets, P., Whillans, A. V., Bekkers, R. & Norton, M. I (2019). Time use and the happiness of millionaires: Evidence from the Netherlands. *Harvard Business School*. Retrieved from [https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/Time%20Use%20Millionaires\\_99e8b77e-ef00-4fa0-8402-507f450f6c1e.pdf](https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/Time%20Use%20Millionaires_99e8b77e-ef00-4fa0-8402-507f450f6c1e.pdf)

## WEEK 4: TECHNOLOGY

Tues Sept 24

- Required
  - Kushlev, K., Proulx, J. D. E. & Dunn, E. W. (2017). Digitally connected, socially disconnected: The effects of relying on technology rather than other people. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 76, 68-74.
- Recommended
  - Dwyer, R., Kushlev, K. & Dunn, E. W. (2018). Smartphone use undermines the enjoyment of face-to-face interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 78, 233-239.

Thurs Sept 26

- **Assignment due: ELE #2 (Social Media Fast: Give up social media for 2+ days)**
- Required
  - Twenge, J. M. (2019). More time on technology, less happiness? Associations between digital-media use and psychological well-being. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 28, 372-379.
  - Resnick, B. (2019, May 16). Have smartphones really destroyed a generation? We don't know. *Vox*. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/2/20/18210498/smartphones-tech-social-media-teens-depression-anxiety-research>
- Recommended
  - Orben, A. & Przybylski, A. K. (2019). The association between adolescent well-being and digital technology use. *Nature*, 3, 173-182.

## WEEK 5: SOCIAL LIFE

Tues Oct 1:

- **Term paper assignment given out**
- Required
  - Epley, N. & Schroeder, J. (2014). Mistakenly seeking solitude. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143, 1980-1999.

- Recommended
  - Diener, E. & Seligman, M. E. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science, 13*, 81-84.

Thurs Oct 3:

**\*\*No reading. Team meetings with TA (Dr. Dunn away)\*\***

## **WEEK 6. THE USUAL SUSPECTS: GRATITUDE, MEDITATION, EXERCISE & AND FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS**

Tues Oct 8

- Required
  - Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J. & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*, 1045-1062. **\*SKIM/SKIP pp. 1053-1054\***
- Recommended
  - Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*, 68-78.

Thurs Oct 10

- **Assignment Due: ELE # 3 (Gratitude letters)**
- Required
  - Kumar, A. & Epley, N. (2018). Undervaluing gratitude: Expressers misunderstand the consequences of showing appreciation. *Psychological Science, 29*, 1423-1435.
- Recommended
  - Lathia, N., Sandstrom, G. M., Mascolo, C. & Rentfrow, P. J. (2017). Happier people live more active lives: Using smartphones to link happiness and physical activity. *PLoS ONE, 12*, e0160589.

## **WEEK 7. BEYOND THE USUAL SUSPECTS: FRUITS, VEGETABLES, & PSYCHEDELICS**

Tues Oct 15

- Required
  - Mujcic, R. & J. Oswald, A. (2016). Evolution of well-being and happiness after increases in consumption of fruit and vegetables. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*, 1504-1510.
- Recommended
  - Conner, T. S., Brookie, K. L., Carr, A. C., Mainvil, L. A. & Vissers, M. C. (2017). Let them eat fruit! The effect of fruit and vegetable consumption on psychological well-being in young adults: A randomized controlled trial. *PLoS ONE, 12*, e0171206.

Thurs Oct 17

- Required
  - Griffiths, R. R., Johnson, M. W., Richards, W. A., Richards, B. D., Jesse, R., MacLean, K. A., ... & Klinedinst, M. A. (2018). Psilocybin-occasioned mystical-type experience in combination with meditation and other spiritual practices produces enduring positive changes in psychological functioning and in trait measures of prosocial attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, *32*, 49-69.
- Recommended
  - Nisbet, E. K. & Zelenski, J. M. (2011). Underestimating nearby nature: Affective forecasting errors obscure the happy path to sustainability. *Psychological Science*, *22*, 1101-1106.

## WEEK 8: THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES OF AGE AND GENDER

Tues Oct 22:

- Required
  - Stevenson, B. & Wolfers, J. (2009). The paradox of declining female happiness. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, *1*, 190-225.
- Recommended
  - Nelson-Coffey, S. K., Killingsworth, M., Layous, K., Cole, S. W. & Lyubomirsky, S. (2019). Parenthood is associated with greater well-being for fathers than mothers. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *45*, 1378-1390.

Thurs Oct 24:

- Required
  - Weiss, A., King, J. E., Inoue-Murayama, M., Matsuzawa, T. & Oswald, A. J. (2012). Evidence for a midlife crisis in great apes consistent with the U-shape in human well-being. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *109*, 19949-19952.
- Recommended
  - Carstensen, L. L., Fung, H. H. & Charles, S. T. (2003). Socioemotional selectivity theory and the regulation of emotion in the second half of life. *Motivation and Emotion*, *27*, 103-123.

## WEEK 9. BARRIERS TO LASTING HAPPINESS

Tues Oct 29

- Required
  - Medvec, V. H., Madey, S. F. & Gilovich, T. (1995). When less is more: Counterfactual thinking and satisfaction among Olympic medalists. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *69*, 603-610.
- Recommended
  - Quoidbach, J., Dunn, E. W., Hansenne, M. & Bustin, G. (2015). The price of abundance: How a wealth of experiences impoverishes savoring. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *41*, 393-404.



Thurs Oct 31

- Required
  - Lucas, R. E. (2007). Adaptation and the set-point model of subjective well-being: Does happiness change after major life events?. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16, 75-79.
- Recommended
  - O'Brien, E. & Smith, R. W. (2019). Unconventional consumption methods and enjoying things consumed: Recapturing the "first-time" experience. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 45, 67-80.

## WEEK 10. CAN HAPPINESS BE SUSTAINABLY INCREASED?

Tues Nov 5

- Required
  - Lyubomirsky, S., Dickerhoof, R., Boehm, J. K. & Sheldon, K. M. (2011). Becoming happier takes both a will and a proper way: An experimental longitudinal intervention to boost well-being. *Emotion*, 11, 391-402.
- Recommended
  - Mochon, D., Norton, M. I. & Ariely, D. (2008). Getting off the hedonic treadmill, one step at a time: The impact of regular religious practice and exercise on well-being. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 29, 632-642.

Thurs Nov 7

- Required
  - O'Brien, E. & Kassirer, S. (2019). People are slow to adapt to the warm glow of giving. *Psychological Science*, 30, 193-204.
- Recommended
  - Heintzelman, S. J., Kushlev, K., Lutes, L. D., Wirtz, D., Kanippayoor, J. M., Leitner, D., ... & Diener, E. (in press). ENHANCE: Evidence for the efficacy of a comprehensive intervention program to promote durable changes in subjective well-being.

## WEEK 11 THE GEOGRAPHY OF HAPPINESS

Tues Nov 12

- Required
  - Helliwell, J. F., Shiple, H. & Barrington-Leigh, C. P. (2019). How happy are your neighbours? Variation in life satisfaction among 1200 Canadian neighbourhoods and communities. *PLoS ONE*, 14, e0210091. **\*\*SKIP/SKIM methodology section\*\***
- Recommended
  - Schkade, D. A. & Kahneman, D. (1998). Does living in California make people happy? A focusing illusion in judgments of life satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, 9, 340-346.

Thurs Nov 14

- Required
  - Helliwell, J. F., Huang, H. & Wang, S. (2019). Changing world happiness. In J. F. Helliwell, R. Layard & J. D. Sachs (Eds.), *World Happiness Report 2019* (pp. 10-45). New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- Recommended
  - Confidential Paper on voting and happiness (*to be provided in hard copy only*)

## WEEK 12. PUBLIC POLICY

Tues Nov 19

**\*\*Term Paper Presentations: No new reading\*\***

Thurs Nov 21

- Required
  - Diener, E., Biswas-Diener, R., & Lyubchik, N. (2018). Social well-being: Research and policy recommendations. In J. F. Helliwell, R. Layard & J. D. Sachs (Eds.), *Global Happiness Policy Report* (pp. 128-157). New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
  - Watch Nicola Sturgeon's TED talk (2019): *Why governments should prioritize well-being*.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/nicola\\_sturgeon\\_why\\_governments\\_should\\_prioritize\\_well\\_being?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/nicola_sturgeon_why_governments_should_prioritize_well_being?language=en)
- Recommended
  - O'Donnell, G. & Oswald, A. J. (2015). National well-being policy and a weighted approach to human feelings. *Ecological Economics*, 120, 59-70.

## WEEK 13. DESIGN YOUR LIFE

Tues Nov 26

*CATCH-UP DAY (no new reading)*

**\*\*Group Term Papers Due\*\***

Thurs Nov 28

- **Assignment due: ELE #4 (Optimize your life for happiness)**
- Required
  - Whillans, A. V., Dunn, E. W. & Maccia, L. (in press). Time over money predicts happiness after a major life transition: A pre-registered longitudinal study of graduating students. *Science Advances*.

## How to Access the Course Materials via Canvas

TO LOGIN: Go to <https://canvas.ubc.ca> and after clicking “login to your courses,” enter your CWL and password and then click on the link to this course.  
(if you don’t have a CWL, go to [www.cwl.ubc.ca](http://www.cwl.ubc.ca) )

### TO ACCESS READINGS:

- 1) Go to Modules
- 2) Click on the relevant week
- 3) Click on the article you want (it will open up within the site with a link to download at the top of the page)
- 4) Podcast and talk links can also be accessed through Modules (click on link to open in new tab/window)

### TO POST DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Go to “Assignments” located on the sidebar
- 2) Click on the topic for the relevant week (eg, “Tues Sept 10 Reading Question”) to begin the assignment
- 3) Type or paste in your discussion questions in the text box provided, or by uploading a file with your response
- 4) Click “submit”
- 5) Check that your assignment is submitted correctly and not just saved!