

Psychology 987i: The Science of Happiness
Spring, 2003 Thursdays 1-3PM
MBB 42 Church St Room 227

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Office Hour: Thursdays 3-4 pm *at 42 Church St*; other times by
Appointment.

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Required Texts:

Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, Norbert Schwartz, Eds. **Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology**. Russell Sage Foundation, 1998

David G Myers. **The Pursuit of Happiness**. Avon Books, 1993

Martin E. P. Seligman **Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment**. The Free Press, 2002.

Alois Stutzer and Bruno Frey **Happiness and Economics: How the Economy and Institutions Affect Human Well Being**. Princeton University Press, 2001.

Supplementary Reading Packet – Individual Articles are listed below. You will Receive these readings at the second class.

Course Requirements:

Each student will be required to make one class presentation and write a 10-15 page paper. The presentation will be a 30 minute talk summarizing the readings of the week and the questions and issues they raise. The presenter will then co-lead a discussion. The paper must be on a subject approved by the instructor. The paper may be in one of two formats, either a critical review of a topic within the science of happiness or a detailed proposal for original research on a specific hypothesis within the science of happiness. The latter would include a detailed background, proposed methods and statistics and a discussion of possible findings. Grading will be based on the class presentation (40%), class participation (20%), and the paper (40%). The paper will be due on May 12.

A significant portion of the grade depends on oral participation. If a student wishes to take this course but finds oral participation difficult, he or she must come to see me after the first class to discuss an alternate arrangement for grading.

Course Description

This course focuses on the science of happiness, integrating findings from positive psychology, psychiatry, behavioral genetics, neuroscience and behavioral economics. Over the course of the semester, we will consider the genetics of happiness, including the notion of a biologically determined hedonic set point, the brain's pleasure circuitry, and the mind's power to frame events positively, a tool used with great success in cognitive therapies. We will question an idea that has gained prevalence since the Enlightenment: that pleasure and happiness are our purpose.

Schedule of Classes

January 30

Introduction:

Among the questions considered:

How do we define happiness?

Is happiness what matters most?

Why study happiness; isn't suffering more important?

Does greater happiness come from pleasure or from acts of kindness?

Handout: Robert Nozick from **Anarchy, State, and Utopia**, 1974 (pp 42-43)

February 6

Compared to what? How to measure happiness

Reading: Chapter 1 Myers

Chapters 1,3,4 Kahneman, Diener, Schwartz

Chapter 1 Seligman.

February 13

Love and Happiness: In which we consider why people are so ecstatic when they fall in love, whether marriage makes men and women equally happy, and the pleasures of solitude.

Reading: Chapters 8,9 Myers

Chapters 18,19 Kahneman, Diener, Schwartz

Chapters 11, 12 Seligman

Supplemental Reading:

Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation, *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 1995, 497-529

February 20

Genes and Personality Traits: Is happiness hard won or heritable?

Reading: Chapter 6 Myers

Chapters 11, 15 Kahneman, Diener, Schwartz

Supplemental Reading:

David Lykken and Auke Tellegen: Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon
Psychological Science, 7, 1996, 186-189

February 27

The Brain's Reward Pathways. Or why you can't get no satisfaction

Readings: Chapters 25, 26, 27 Kahneman, Diener, Schwartz

March 6

Consuming Happiness I: Drugs. In which we consider why people all through recorded history want to get high, and whether you can get "better than well" by prescription.

GUEST SPEAKER Dr. David Lenson, Professor of Comparative Literature, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, author of **On Drugs**.

Supplemental Readings:

David Lenson. Pharmaka and Pharmakos. Chapter 1. **On Drugs**, 1995.

Peter D. Kramer, The valorization of sadness: alienation and the melancholic temperament. *The Hastings Center Report*. March/April 2000.

Sadie Plant. Chapters 2,3,4 Artificial Paradises, Unconscious, White lines.

Writing on Drugs, 2000.

March 13

Contagious Happiness: Smiles and Laughter

Supplemental Readings:

Charles Darwin, Chapter 8 (Joy, High, Spirits, Love, Tender Feelings, Devotion)

The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (edited by Paul Ekman), 1998.

Robert Provine, Chapters 2,3, 9 in **Laughter: A Scientific Investigation**, 2000.

Paul Ekman, Chapter 9 (Enjoyable emotions). from **Emotions Revealed**, 2003.

March 20

1. Happiness and Culture: In which we will ponder whether or not the East and West have alternate notions of happiness, and whether politics effects happiness..

Readings: Chapters 7,8,9 Stutzer and Frey

Supplemental Reading:

Daniel Goleman Chapter 10 (The Influence of Culture) **Destructive Emotions**, 2003

2. Age and Gender and Happiness: Women are much more likely than men to suffer from depression. Does that mean that men are happier? Are we generally happier when young or old? And why are teenagers so miserable?

Readings: Chapter 4, Myers
Chapter 17, Kahneman, Diener, and Schwartz

April 3

Consuming happiness II: Wealth, employment and the general issue of whether money can buy happiness

Readings: Chapters 4, 5, 6, 10 Stutzer and Frey
Chapter 2 Myers
Chapter 10 Seligman

April 10

Pleasures of the Body: where we consider the relation of pleasure to happiness, and why sex is fun and chocolate tastes good.

Readings: Chapter 6 Kahneman, Diener, and Schwartz
Chapter 7 Seligman

Supplemental Readings:

Shigehiro Oishi, Ulrich Schimmack and Ed Diener, Pleasures and Subjective Well-Being, *European Journal of Personality*, 15, 2001, 153-167.

Ruut Veenhoven Hedonism and Happiness. Paper presented at ARISE conference, October 2001, Nice, France.

April 17

Pleasures of the Mind: where we consider curiosity, creativity, and contemplation .

Readings: Chapter 7, Myers
Chapters 7 Kahneman, Diener, and Myers

April 24

Pleasures of the Heart and Soul: where we consider awe, transcendence, aesthetic bliss, gratitude, and compassion.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Daniel Goleman

Readings: Chapter 10, Myers

Supplemental Reading:

Daniel Goleman, Chapter 14 **Destructive Emotions** 2003

.The Dalai Lama: The Value and benefits of compassion. Chapter 7. **The Art of Happiness**. 1998

Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt. Approaching Awe, a moral, spiritual and aesthetic emotion. *Cognition and Emotion*, 2003.

May 1 FINAL CLASS

In which we re-examine the questions we raised in January and consider signature strengths and virtues

Readings: Chapters 8, 9 Seligman