

PSYC108: SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (The Science of Happiness)

School of Social Sciences
Academic Year 2014/2015, Term 1
Meeting Times: Fridays, 12-3:15pm
Location: SOSS CR 4.1

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Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with a foundation in the scientific literature on happiness, or subjective well-being. In particular, the course will cover questions about the measurement of happiness, the causes and consequences of happiness, happiness interventions, and happiness as an aim for society. The course will focus on rigorous scientific evidence, not self-help books or theories or anecdotal evidence. The course does not aim to make students happier (although I would be pleased if it does!).

A Word About Workload

There is a heavy workload for this course, atypical of most 100-level courses. Do not be fooled by the title of the course. The science of happiness is technical, specific, and scientific.

Assessment Methods

Group Project	35%
Individual Paper	15%
Final Exam (comprehensive)	25%
Participation	15%
Homework/Quizzes/Etc	10%

Instructional Methods and Expectations

Course sessions will be a combination of group discussions, lecture, and project meetings.

Group Project

The basic premise of the project is that SWB researchers have made some key discoveries about happiness. Now it is time to give the science away to people who don't read academic journals and maybe don't even know how to read. Students will work in small groups focused on a sector of society (e.g., education, community, business). Each student group will examine how SWB can help that area of society or population. The goal is to translate some of the scientific research on SWB so that it has impact on real people. Example projects include a program, application, intervention, campaign, game, or social enterprise—the sky's the limit—as long as the project has a basis in the science of SWB. Each group will provide a weekly update on the status of their project to be shared with the entire class on a class blog (<https://sites.google.com/site/psyc108swb/>). In Week 13, the groups will publicly present their final projects.

A Word on Uncertainty and Grading

Group Projects will be student-led. I cannot tell you how long your project needs to be, how many pages (if pages at all), or what the outcome will look like. We (the TAs and your Prof) will do our best to help guide you in the development of your project, but ultimately, your creativity and implementation must shine through. I cannot show you an A+ project from last year, and I do not wish to constrain your

imagination with too many examples. The only thing I am certain of is that each project will be different. I cannot provide a detailed grading rubric because it would probably look different for each group. The best I can do is to give you some broad dimensions on which you will be assessed: (1) Extent to which the project incorporates SWB science, (2) Ability to communicate the science to your client/audience, (3) Impact on society, (4) Execution vs Challenge/Risk. **Students who are uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity regarding assessments should not sign up for this course.** There is an opportunity to do something fun and groundbreaking, but students who are primarily concerned about the grade will miss the real lesson here. Please consider this carefully before signing up for the course.

Individual Paper (see guidelines for details)

Each student will individually write a paper. Students will select from one of two options. Option 1 Self Experiment: Student conducts a longitudinal self-experiment aimed at changing his/her own levels of SWB. The student will select from one of several happiness interventions described in the scientific literature and will measure his/her own baseline happiness as well as daily happiness. The culmination of the project will be a report written in APA style of *no more than 5 pages*. The paper should include a brief introduction, method section, results (e.g., graph of one's SWB over time), and discussion section that specifically describes what ideas for SWB research the student has gained from the self-experiment project. Option 2 Policy Memo: Student prepares a memo for Singaporean policy makers aimed at increasing the SWB of Singaporean citizens. This is a written document of *no more than 5 pages*. The memo should include a brief introduction, suggested policies and (*importantly*) evidence for their effectiveness, and suggestions for tracking the impact of the policies. See guidelines for writing policy memos as well as <http://slc-aux.berkeley.edu/writing/PublicPolicy.htm> (for content tips) and <http://wilcoxen.maxwell.insightworks.com/pages/275.html> (for stylistic advice).

Exam

The final exam will consist of short-answer questions and essays. Although what makes a person happy may be unique and subjective to each individual, answers to exam questions about the science of happiness actually do have right and wrong answers. In other words, the exam will be neither easy nor intuitive. Studying is required.

The usual rules regarding a make-up exam apply (medical documentation, etc).

Participation

SMU takes student participation in classes very seriously. Students are expected to prepare before each class and to attend each class with an inquisitive mind. Please note the following carefully:

- An A is not the default mark for this component. Receiving a D or F is not an impossibility. To receive an A on this component, a student must make a consistent and *high quality* contribution to every class session. Quantity of speech does not necessarily equal quality.
- Attendance alone is NOT participation.
- Students who engage in email, web surfing, or Facebook during class will be penalized. Students are expected to be on time at the beginning of class and after break. Tardiness will be noted and penalized.
- Participating in and leading your group discussions and activities will count toward this component. Peer evaluations will be used to assess whether group members are actively contributing to their groups.

Homework/Quizzes/Etc.

From time to time there will be homework assignments, class sharing assignments, and pop quizzes. All homework assignments will be distributed in class and due by 5pm the following Tuesday. The assignments are not lengthy or difficult and can easily be completed in the allotted time. The reason for the limited amount of time for the assignments is that I want you to do them before doing the reading for the following week in order not to spoil the fun!

Academic Integrity

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences. All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense. When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at <http://www.smuscd.org/resources.html>.

No Bonus points will be given for Research Participation.

Readings

Diener, Ed., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). *Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

e-book available for purchase at

<http://as.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1444356550,descCd-ebook.html> (for \$18.99 USD)

<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/Happiness/Ed-Diener/Q9027875> (for \$12.81USD)

Several empirical journal articles will also be assigned. See Schedule and Additional Required Readings.

Schedule[†]

Week	Date	Topic	Required Reading
1		What is SWB? Who is happy? The basics of SWB.	D&D Ch 1, 2; Zimbardo
2		A brief history of happiness. The measurement of SWB.	McMahon; Pavot
3		The happiness advantage	D&D Ch 3, 4, 5 Zappos case study
4		Can money buy happiness?	D&D Ch 6; Dunn 2011; Dunn 2008
5		Dispositional happiness, genetics, adaptation	D&D Ch 9, 10; Lykken & Tellegen; Diener, Lucas, & Scollon
6		SWB of nations Culture and happiness	D&D Ch 8; Suh & Koo; Wirtz & Scollon
7		Happy thoughts: Cognition and SWB	D&D Ch 11
8		Recess week	
9		Religion and SWB	D&D Ch 7
10		SWB and Public Policy	Bok Intro, Bok Ch 3, Bok Ch 4
11		Happiness interventions	D&D 10, 11; Lyubomirsky et al
12		The dark side of happy	D&D Ch 12
13		Grand Finale: Presentation of Group Projects	
14		Revision week **Individual Assignment Due**	
15		Finals week	

D&D refers to the Diener & Diener book

† The schedule is approximate and subject to change.

Additional Required Readings

Week 1

Zimbardo, P. G. (2004). Does psychology make a significant difference in our lives? *American Psychologist*, 59, 339-351.

<http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=2004-16479-003&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Week 2

McMahon, D. M. (2008). The pursuit of happiness in history. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The Science of Subjective Well-Being* (pp. 80-96). New York: The Guilford Press. [See SMU Library Course Reserves]

Pavot, W. (2008). The assessment of subjective well-being: Successes and shortfalls. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The Science of Subjective Well-Being* (pp. 124-140). New York: The Guilford Press. [See SMU Library Course Reserves]

Week 3

SGSB, Case M-333. Zappos: Happiness in a Box. [See SMU Library Course Reserves]

Week 4

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(2), 115-125. doi:10.1016/j.jcps.2011.02.002

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/science/article/pii/S1057740811000209>

Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science*, 319(5870), 1687-1688. doi:10.1126/science.1150952

<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/319/5870/1687.full.pdf?sid=fedfc959-cf00-4ed4-8770-a44fcb851614>

Week 5

Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science*, 7(3), 186-189. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.1996.tb00355.x

<http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psych&AN=1996-04558-012&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Scollon, C. N. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revisions to the adaptation theory of well-being. *American Psychologist*, 61, 305-314.

<http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=2006-05893-003&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Week 10

Suh, E. M., & Koo, J. (2008). Comparing subjective well-being across cultures and nations: The "what" and "why" questions. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The Science of Subjective Well-Being* (pp. 414-427). New York: The Guilford Press. [See SMU Library Course Reserves]

Wirtz, D., & Scollon, C. (2012). Culture, visual perspective, and the effect of material success on perceived life quality. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 43(3), 367-372.

doi:10.1177/0022022111432292

<http://jcc.sagepub.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/content/43/3/367.full.pdf+html>

Week 11

Bok, D. (2010). *The Politics of Happiness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Selected chapters; See SMU Library Course Reserves]

Week 12

Gruber, J., Mauss, I. B., & Tamir, M. (2011). A Dark Side of Happiness? How, When, and Why Happiness Is Not Always Good. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (6), 222-233.

<http://pps.sagepub.com/content/6/3/222>