

COURSE INFORMATION & SYLLABUS
PSYC 4873-101 Special Topics - Positive Psychology
Fall 2021

MWF 12:00 – 12:50 Room: PY 101

Office: OD 117

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Don Knox
Email: don.knox@msutexas.edu
Office hours: by appointment
TEXTBOOK:

Required

Snyder, C.R., Shane J. Lopez and Jennifer Pedrotti. *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Exploration of Human Strengths. 4th Ed.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Recommended

Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience. 1st Ed.* New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008. Print.

General Description:

Students explore themes in the field of Positive Psychology, such as happiness, hope, engagement, meaning, savoring, and personal strengths. Is happiness the same as pleasure? Can we increase our life satisfaction, and if so, how? What helps people be resilient in the face of adversity? What characteristics help individuals thrive? Students study concepts, research, techniques, and exercises related to the enhancement of well-being. Students also study the scholarship and the practical applications of Positive Psychology.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Assess personal strengths in self and others.
2. Define key terms in the field of positive psychology.
3. Practice strategies to enhance subjective well-being.

Grading:

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

Exams: 3 exams (non-comprehensive) The intention is to assess that students are keeping up with the reading and comprehending the main points in the chapters. Questions will focus on core terms and concepts. You are not expected to memorize dates, places, researchers' names, etc

JOURNALING PERSONAL HAPPINESS PROGRAM:

I want you to undertake a “self-modification” project that you feel will have a positive change in you as a person. The personal happiness program will be your collection of favorites from the course and how you can use them to build strengths, improve happiness, and increase quality of life. It should summarize the learning that you want to incorporate and take away from this class – the readings, the exercises, the discussions, and the supplementary materials such as websites. You need to include your responses after completing the “personal mini-experiments” and the “life enhancement strategies”. You will be required to turn your journal in on 11/19. You should have at least three entries per week.

TOPIC PAPER

Using your journal topic (or you may chose a different topic) each student will prepare a paper that summarizes the self-modification process, successes and failures during the project, and your overall assessment of the results of the project. The paper will be 1750 - 2500 words using double-spaced pages. Please allow yourself enough time to review and perhaps re-draft the paper before turning it in. In addition to content, the “clarity” of your communication with the instructor will be a major factor in assigning a grade. That is, you must write well to do well. Papers less than 1750 words (body of the text) will be graded as a zero. Please do not shoot for a minimum and expect a great grade. As in life, exceed the minimum and strive for excellence. The written journal portion of this assignment will be worth up to 150 points and the paper portion will be worth up to 100 points. Refereed/peer reviewed journal articles are the only sources allowed for this paper. Websites and books are not to be used. This assignment must be saved using Microsoft Word convention.

Assignment	Points	Total points
3 Exams	200	600
Journal	200	200
Paper	200	200
Totals		1000

Test 1 Chapters 1 – 5
Test 2 Chapters 6 – 10
Test 3 Chapters 11 – 16

The following scale will be used to grade tests, your paper, and your class participation (1000 points total):

90 – 100%	=	A
80 – 89%	=	B
70 – 79%	=	C
60 – 69%	=	D
0 – 59%	=	F

NO GRADES WILL BE DROPPED IN CALCULATING COURSE GRADES.

Make-up tests: Students who miss one or more tests due to absences will be allowed to schedule make-up exams with permission of the Instructor. There will be no grade penalty for exams missed due to an excused absence. A 25 -point penalty will be assessed for exams missed due to unexcused absences. **Excused absences come from the Dean of Students.** Written work will not be accepted late – no exceptions (really means no exception). Please turn written work in early. I will not accept emailed work.

COVID Class Attendance Requirements and Additional Classroom policies:

Class attendance is expected! Schedule problems can usually be worked out, but must be discussed IN ADVANCE. Bona fide emergencies do sometimes occur, but must be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible after the emergency absence.

COVID teaching modality – this class is structured to be an in-person course in Dillard room 101.

All recommended social distancing and face covering rules promulgated by MSU-Texas will be followed and maintained. As long as the University requires face masks/covers, students MUST wear an approved mask to be in the physical classroom to minimize the potential spread of the Coronavirus. You will be asked to leave if you do not follow the University's policy. At present, face masks are NOT required but are recommended.

IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN Six (6) UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, YOU WILL BE DROPPED FROM THIS CLASS WITH A GRADE OF "F".

An absence may be excused **ONLY** if the student complies with, or provides one of the following:

- a. Negotiates approval for the absence with the instructor **IN ADVANCE**, or in the case of a legitimate emergency, as soon as is reasonable.
- b. Presents a written excuse from a physician or the MSU Infirmary via the Dean of Students
- c. Presents written evidence of participation in a mandatory University function (Band, Choir, Sports, etc.)
- d. Presents written evidence of attendance at a recognized professional meeting or professional educational program.
- e. Presents a written excuse from a physician for a dependent child's illness via the Dean of Students.

Student Code of Conduct:

MSU-Texas' official policy in the University's Code of Student Conduct on page 52, states:

Instructor Drop An instructor may drop a student any time during the semester for excessive absences, for consistently failing to meet class assignments, for an indifferent attitude, or for disruptive conduct. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to dropping the student from the class. An instructor's drop of a student takes precedence over the student-initiated course drop of a later date. The instructor will assign a grade of either WF or F through the first 9 weeks of a long semester, the first 6 weeks of a 10-week summer term, or the 12th class day of a 4- or 5-week summer term consisting of 20 days. After these periods the grade will be an F. The date the instructor drop form is received in the Office of the Registrar as the official drop date. A student dropped from a class by a faculty member for disruptive behavior has the right of appeal to the Student Conduct Committee through the Student Conduct office.

I will closely follow this policy in terms of your conduct in class. Anything that is disruptive to the class will result in you being Instructor Dropped from the class with a grade of F. I will enforce this policy in that my obligation is to provide the best and most informative course that I can. I cannot do that when there is behavior that disrupts the class. This also includes attempting to dominate or "teach" the class, interrupting the course frequently with stories that are not facilitative or relevant to the flow of the class, using electronics during class that are not directly related to the class material, and talking frequently to one's peers while course is being held. Any other behaviors that are deemed disruptive will also be enforced as deemed by our Code of Conduct policy. Remember that there are stories and questions that are facilitative to our class discussions, and some that are obstructive.

Other Comments:

Taping, laptop microphones, Googleglasses, cell phones – NOT ALLOWED! All students deserve the same respect and confidentiality in the classroom.

I will NOT accept emailed work.

Given the nature, scope, and intensity of this course, it is essential that each student keep up. It is the responsibility of each student to seek assistance when needed.

Academic Dishonesty: Please do not cheat or plagiarize. The MSU policy on cheating and plagiarism is in the MSU Student Handbook and Activities Calendar (Code of Student Conduct, Item 11) and I encourage you to review it. Additional information regarding the Academic Dishonesty policy is available from the Dean of Students office, in Clark Student Center. Cheating or engaging in plagiarism will result in a grade of zero (0) and/or a letter grade of “F” for the course!!!!!! If you find yourself even *thinking about* cheating on an exam or copying someone else’s work, please *talk to me* instead of doing it!!!

Late work – I will not accept late work. I will not accept work sent via email. I will not accept work turned in to the office or under my office door. I will only accept work submitted via D2L. ALL WORK MUST BE SAVED IN Microsoft convention (*.doc or *.docx). I cannot and will not open gdocs or pages. Work turned in any format other than the two I state will be graded as a zero. I will not accept work saved as a pdf. There will be no exceptions for late work and this includes absences for any MSU events – get things done in advance. Dates are posted and D2L is available.