

Foundations of Positive Psychology
CrCrTh 697
Spring 2016
Monday, 1:00-3:45 PM
Online Synchronous and Face-to-Face

Contact Information

Instructor: Orin C. Davis, Ph.D.

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Required Texts

- *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths, 3rd Ed.* – Lopez, Pedrotti, & Snyder, 2014
- *Psychological selection and optimal experience across cultures: Social empowerment through personal growth* – Delle Fave, Massimini, & Bassi, 2011
- *Psychological capital and beyond: Developing the human competitive edge.* -- Luthans, F., Youssef, C.M., & Avolio, B.J. (2015)
- *Other Readings on Blackboard*

Course Overview

What enables us to be our best selves? How do the choices we make and the environment around us help or hinder that process? We will explore different answers to these and other exciting questions throughout this introductory course on Positive Psychology. Topics include: subjective well-being, self-actualization, optimal experience (flow), positive relationships, and positive institutions. We will consider not only the major research findings but how they apply to real-world situations. Emphasis will be placed on application and extrapolation of knowledge to issues that are extant in our lives and the world around us.

Course Objectives

- Become familiar and conversant with the terminology of Positive Psychology
- Understand the major principles, theories, and findings of Positive Psychology
- Practice applying theory and research to situations that are commonly encountered
- Propose a way to apply Positive Psychology to a specific real-world issue

Communication

I will post course materials and announcements on Blackboard. You are required to check the site regularly (at least 4 times per week). You are responsible for being cognizant of all course announcements.

Please remember that you are responsible for knowing how to attend the online course punctually and with limited technological glitches. Go to <http://cct.wikispaces.umb.edu/OnlineGuideStudents> for guidelines. ***Also note that this course is synchronous and requires all students to attend at the time listed.***

School Cancellations

In the event of a school cancellation, we will resume class as usual on the next scheduled class day. Changes to the class schedule will be discussed during the first class meeting following the cancelled class.

Code of Conduct

The University's Student Code of Conduct (http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/code) exists to maintain and protect an environment conducive to learning. It sets clear standards of respect for members of the University community and their property, as well as laying out the procedures for addressing unacceptable conduct. Students can expect faculty members and the Office of the Dean of Students to look after the welfare of the University community and, at the same time, to take an educational approach in which students violating the Code might learn from their mistakes and understand how their behavior affects others.

It is your own responsibility to understand and abide by UMass's [Student Code of Conduct](#), which includes the university's academic honesty policy. Please note that failing to observe this policy can result in severe penalties ranging from a 0 on an assignment, to failing the course, to being expelled from the university.

Accommodations

Sections 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations to each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of the Drop/Add period.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class participation. This is a course rooted in thoughtful discussion and consideration of the material. Ergo, it is incumbent upon you to be prepared *at all times*. Class participation is a major part of the course, and will require that you be active and engaged at each meeting, in addition to occasionally leading class discussions. You will be graded as a function of the depth, thoughtfulness, and activity of your participation. In order to do this, you need to be attentive, and to make substantive statements that go beyond merely [dis]agreeing and/or providing an example of your own experience. You need to explain your line of reasoning and show why the example is relevant. At minimum, constructive commentary requires analysis of the sources to defend a contention. Better is insightful performance that leads the listener to new insights and ideas through complex arguments that are rooted in the interplay and analysis of multiple sources. Often this requires a thesis, a discussion of the caveats to the thesis, and a resolution (synthesis) that indicates when the thesis does and does not apply. A good guideline is to make sure you have spoken substantively at least 2-3 times per class. Class participation is 40% of your final grade!

Assignments must be emailed to the professor ***no later than 9 PM on the due date***. Late papers will be accepted, but will be graded with higher expectations commensurate with the additional amount of preparation time used. *Your work is expected to be original; cheating, plagiarism, and dishonesty in your work will not be tolerated in any fashion whatsoever. Anyone caught engaging in such disreputable behaviors will be reported to the dean and will receive a zero for the assignment.*

Reaction Papers. There will be 4 short reaction papers, which are opportunities for you to delve deeper into the reading and consider how the material applies to situations you have encountered. One paper is due every four weeks, and may be about any topic covered during that time. These should be no less than 1 page, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margin. Each paper is 5% of your final grade, for a total of 20%.

Final Paper. The final paper will require you to do some research about the current findings in your topic of choice. You will provide an overview of the extant knowledge in this area (5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margin), and then propose a way for an individual to use and apply this knowledge in life (3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margin), and a way that a group and/or institution can make use of this knowledge (3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margin). This paper will comprise 40% of your final grade.

Here are some [guidelines](#) on how to do the review section (click the link for additional):

- A) Describe the topic and its current importance and relevance to the field, including the implications for a practitioner of critical and creative thinking.
- B) Describe and review the theoretical work regarding the topic.
- C) Describe and evaluate the empirical work conducted on the topic over the past 5-10 years.

Covering about 5-10 seminal papers that fit A-C above should suffice.

Plan to start this assignment in the FIRST WEEK OF CLASS. You are very strongly advised to get approval for your topic.

Overview of the Grading

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|------------------------------|-----|
| 4 short papers (3-5 pages): | 20% |
| 1 final paper (11-15 pages): | 40% |
| Class participation: | 40% |

Course Calendar

Week 1 (January 25th): Overview

Serious Introductions (prepare one for class; [instructions here](#))
Review of Syllabus
Introduction to Positive Psychology: Lopez, Pedrotti, & Snyder (LPS) Ch. 1-2
Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

Week 2 (February 1st): Strengths

VIA Strengths Survey (<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>)
LPS Ch. 3-5
Park, Peterson, & Seligman (2004)

Week 3 (February 8th): Pleasure, Happiness, and the Hedonic Treadmill

LPS Ch. 6-7
Schkade & Kahneman (1998)
Diener et al. (2006)

NO CLASS ON FEBRUARY 15TH

Week 4 (February 22nd): Self Efficacy, Optimism, Values, and Self-Actualization

LPS Ch. 8-9
Maslow (1968): Ch. 12, 14
Schneider (2001)
Norem & Chang (2002)
***Reaction Paper 1 due Sunday (February 28th) by 9 PM Eastern.
Class today is ONLINE ONLY***

Weeks 5-6 (February 29th, March 7th): Flow, Peak Experience

Week 5: LPS Ch. 10; Delle Fave, Massimini, & Bassi (2011): Ch. 3, 4, 5
Week 6: Delle Fave, Massimini, & Bassi (2011): Ch. 8, 9; Privette (1983)

Week 7 (March 14th): Creativity

Hennessey & Amabile (2010)
Csikszentmihalyi (1996): Ch. 3, 5
Reaction Paper 2 due Sunday (March 20th) by 9 PM Eastern.

Week 8 (March 21st): Mindfulness and Savoring

Jarman (2014)
Bryant and Verhoff (2007): Ch. 1, 8
Brown & Ryan (2003)

Week 9 (March 28th): Positive Relationships and Mentoring

LPS Ch. 11-12
Ragins & Cotton (1999)
Higgins & Kram (2001)

Week 10 (April 4th): Positive Identity, Goal Setting, and Motivation

LPS Ch. 13-14

Locke & Latham (2013): Ch. 1, 10

Gollwitzer (1999)

Reaction Paper 3 due Sunday (April 10th) by 9 PM Eastern.

Weeks 11-13 (April 11th, April 25th, May 2nd): Psychological Capital

Luthans et al. (2009): Ch. 1-4 (*Week 11*); Ch. 5-8 (*Week 12*)

Week 13: Fredrickson et al. (2000); Fredrickson (2001); Fredrickson & Joiner (2002)

NO CLASS ON APRIL 18th

Class on April 25th is ONLINE ONLY

Reaction Paper 4 due May 8th by 9 PM Eastern.

Final Paper due May 10th by 9 PM Eastern.

The syllabus is subject to change at any time with notice from the instructor.

If you have a documented learning disability, please inform the instructor so that accommodations can be made.

References

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- Maslow, A.H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

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