

**PSY 10 - Positive Psychology****Catalog Description****Transfer Status:** CSU/UC**Unit(s):** 3.00**Lecture:** 51.00 Contact hours/102.00 Out of class hours/153.00 Total hours/3.00 Unit(s)**Total:** 51.00 Contact hours/102.00 Out of class hours/153.00 Total hours/3.00 Unit(s)

Course Description: This course introduces the scientific study and practices of the emerging field of Positive Psychology. Students will explore various research methods, theories and empirically supported applications of positive psychology as they relate to human traits that will include, but not be limited to: personal growth, well-being, gratitude, happiness and resilience. This course also reviews the history of positive psychology and the contributions this new field has made to several traditional areas in the field of psychology.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the historical and philosophical foundations of positive psychology versus traditional psychological models and theories.
2. Evaluate the scientific literature relating to how well-being is enhanced by positive traits such as happiness, gratitude, emotional intelligence, love and resilience.
3. Discuss the major research findings and applications of positive psychology.
4. Describe common characteristics of positive institutions.
5. Critically evaluate the ideas and research findings in positive psychology.
6. Compare research findings with those of Positive Psychology with those of traditional fields of psychology, including Neuroscience, Cognitive Information Processing, Lifespan Development, Social Psychology, Personality Theory and Clinical Psychology.
7. Evaluate scientific evidence for the validity of empirical claims in contemporary positive psychological research.

Course Content

Topic Titles / Suggested Time Topic	
Topics	Lecture Lec Hrs
Introduction to Positive Psychology	3.00
a. Evolution and history of positive psychology	
b. Focus on including the health model vs illness/disorder	
c. Theories of positive psychology	
d. Survey literature on well-being	
The Research Methods in Positive Psychology Research	3.00
a. Principles and standards relating to the scientific method	
b. Critical thinking	
c. Observations, case studies, surveys and experiments (independent & dependent variables)	
d. Correlations	
e. Ethical and socio-cultural issues	
Meaning and Measure of Well-Being	3.00
a. Objective vs subjective measures related to well-being	
b. Negative vs positive measures of well-being	
c. Reliability and validity of measures of well-being	
Happiness and Life Satisfaction	3.00
a. Defining happiness	
b. Measuring happiness	
c. Increasing happiness	
Positive Thinking and Emotions	3.00
a. Theories explored	
b. Neurological foundations of emotions	
c. Social and cultural influences of emotions	
d. Undo negative emotions	
e. Building enduring resources to improve well-being	
f. General theory of positivity	
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	3.00
a. Theories and models of EI	

Topics	Lec Hrs
b. Development of EI	
c. Neurological basis of EI	
Well-Being Across the Life Span	3.00
a. Study Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development	
b. Living well in each stage of life	
c. Stage models and well-being	
Positive Health and Stress	3.00
a. Biological basis of stress	
b. Social Readjustment rating Scale of Life Change events	
c. Healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms	
d. Managing stress	
Positive Relationships	3.00
a. Examine research by Gottman & Robins related to relationships	
b. Equity, empathy and attachment theories explored	
c. Research related to love, liking, friendship	
d. Positive parenting relationships	
Resilience and Growth	3.00
a. Explore theories (e.g. Seligman)	
b. Research and clinical perspectives	
c. Examining growth through trauma	
Money, Happiness and Culture	3.00
a. Paradox of affluence	
b. Well-being across nations	
c. Culture and well-being	
Gratitude, Hope and Optimism	3.00
a. Factors contributing to gratitude	
b. Research related to gratitude and its benefits	
c. Theories, assessment and development of hope	
d. Research and assessment of optimism	
Flow, Mindfulness and Wisdom	3.00
a. Western and Eastern models of mindfulness	
b. Review theories of Flow (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi)	
c. Definition of wisdom and implicit and explicit theories	
Forgiveness, Empathy and Altruism	3.00
a. Definitions of empathy and compassion	
b. Related research findings	
Positive Institutions	3.00
a. Research related to common characteristics of Positive Institutions:	
1. The Positive Family	
2. The Positive Interpersonal Relationships	
3. The Positive School	
4. The Positive Workplace	
5. The Positive Institution	
6. The Positive Society	
b. Research related to work-place satisfaction	
c. Evaluate how positive environments contribute to personal and collective well-being	
d. Developing strategies to foster positive environments and enhance community engagement	
Positive Psychotherapy	3.00
a. Research findings and positive psychotherapy (Seligman & Lyubomirsky)	
b. Therapies based on positive psychology (PPT)	
c. Applications relating to smoking cessation, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder	
Future of Positive Psychology	3.00
a. Discuss current trends and future directions in positive psychology	
b. Critique of the field's growth and areas for further inquiry and development; for example the neurobiology of pleasure	
c. Explore the applications of positive psychology principles to emerging global challenges	
d. Integrating positive psychology with psychology	

Total Hours: 51.00

Methods of Instruction

A. Class Activities

- B. Group Discussions
- C. Homework: Students are required to complete two hours of outside-of-class homework for each hour of lecture
- D. Lecture
- E. Problem-Solving Sessions
- F. Reading Assignments

Methods of Evaluation

- A. Exams/Tests
- B. Homework
- C. Final Examination
- D. Written Assignments
- E. Written Examinations

Examples of Assignments

Reading Assignments

- 1. Read the chapter Positive Psychology and select one of the 9 major perspectives or themes. Take and submit notes on the perspective you chose (1-2 pages). You will use your notes to explain this perspective to a classmate during our next class.
- 2. Read the chapter on Resilience in childhood and adulthood, write out a one-paragraph summary of each of the following questions covered in the chapter. Bring your summary to next class. What variables influence our ability to bounce back from setbacks? 3 ways that trauma influences the brain Research on growing resilience

Writing Assignments

- 1. Write a 3-page research paper on a student-selected in-depth topic in Positive Psychology that has been discussed in class.
- 2. Submit a 5-page paper on how you would Create a Positive Institution: Design a hypothetical positive Institution. Your institution can be a classroom, workplace, a religious group, etc. Describe the specific components and procedures you would include in your institution, and explain how each contributes to the overall positivity of the institution.

Out-of-Class Assignments

- 1. Read Gottman's article, "How We Connect Emotionally". Be prepared to discuss concrete examples of psychological perspectives and underlying personal growth and Psychosocial adjustment in intimate relationships.
- 2. In 1-2 pages, analyze how each of the four main categories of Emotional Intelligence influence workplace productivity.

Recommended Materials of Instruction

Seligman, M. (2004). Authentic Happiness. *Atria, Reprint Edition*. 978-0743222983.

Boniwell, I. (2012). Positive Psychology in a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness. *Open University, 3rd*. 978-0335247202.

Compton, W. & Hoffman, E. (2024). Positive Psychology. *Sage, 4th*. 9781071931073.

Christopher Peterson. (2005). A Primer in Positive Psychology. *Oxford Press, 1st*. 978-0195188332.

Positive Psychology in a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness. *Open University, 3rd*.

Minimum Qualifications

Psychology (Masters Required)

Created/Revised by: Hovsepian, Vahan

Date: 10/20/2025