

SOC352: The Sociology of Happiness

Tuesday and Thursday "live" sessions from 11:20-12:35

Instructor: Corey Keyes

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the study and pursuit of happiness, integrating research findings from positive psychology, psychiatry, behavioral genetics, neuroscience, economics, and sociology. In addition to science, happiness is a topic that is common to the core of politics and policy, education, law, religion, and philosophy. As such, happiness is a topic that has the potential to integrate and unite human beings through the shared pursuit of a better life. Most famously formulated in the American Declaration of Independence as unalienable right, "the pursuit of happiness" theme is an ancient and enduring ideal grounded in various Eastern, Hebrew, Greco-Roman, and Christian sources. This course will seek to introduce students to the new science of happiness through the engagement and connection of it to these ancient and enduring ideals embodied in the institutions of politics, policy, education, law, and religion.

Materials:

All other readings for this course will be empirical journal articles and book chapters that will be made available to you via the class site on Canvas.

Assignments:

(1) Journal assignments: You will be asked to complete brief writing exercises on an assigned topic. Journal assignments are designed to help you apply the readings and prepare for class. Length of the assignments can vary between 1 and 3 pages but in no case should be no more than 3 pages (all should be typed in 12 pt. font, double spaced with 1-inch margins). Length of journal assignments does not mean better grades. Your job is to show that you have understood the reading, that you clearly applied the reading and did the journal assignment, and meaningfully reflected on how the reading and exercise has or has not influenced you.

Check plus represents a grade of 95% and is awarded to assignments that meet all three of the following criteria: (1) represents college level (and junior level since this is SOC352) writing, (2) answers all of the questions or issues raised in the journal assignment description, and (3) it incorporates explicitly key ideas from that week's reading(s) into the assignment. To get a feeling for what I am asking, read the check plus journal assignment I have uploaded to Blackboard.

Check represents a grade of 85% and is awarded to assignments that meet two out of the three following criteria: (1) represents college level (and junior level since this is SOC352) writing, (2) answers all of the questions or issues raised in the journal assignment description, and (3) it incorporates explicitly key ideas from that week's reading(s) into the assignment.

Check minus represents a grade of 75% or sometimes lower if warranted and is awarded to assignments that meet one out of the three following criteria: (1) represents college level (and junior level since this is SOC352) writing, (2) answers all of the questions or issues raised in the journal assignment description, and (3) incorporates explicitly key ideas from that week's reading(s) into the assignment.

IMPORTANT: Journal assignments are **due and to be handed in by 11:59pm the Thursday of that week**. So, for example, the week 1 journal should be uploaded to the assignment folder by 11:59pm on August 27th. Handing in a journal assignment late results in a full grade reduction each day it is late (e.g., from 95% to 85%). I have posted examples of check plus journal assignments in the "files section" of Canvas.

(2) Paper: I would like a final paper that describes (1) what you have learned about yourself and life (which can include others, society, the world) at up to now, (2) whether and how college or other experiences have or have not helped you grow, and in what ways (e.g., more or less competitive, more or less mature, more or less health or happy, etc.) and (3) what you have learned about yourself and life from this course on happiness that you could or will apply to your life and pursuit of happiness. You do not need to cite any additional studies or information from this course other than what you have read for this course. There is no page limit other than it can be as short as 3 pages or as long, but no longer, than 10 pages. References do not count toward the page limit. All papers must be double-spaced, 12 pt. font, and with 1-inch margins. You can use any reference system – e.g., Chicago style, APA style, Harvard Style, or MLA.

The paper will be due in class on December 3rd, which would be the final exam time for this course if we did exams and you had a final exam.

Grading:

Journal Assignments count 50% toward your final grade, and the paper grade counts 50% toward your final grade. So, your final grade = (Journal grade) x .50 + (Paper Grade) x .50. Your final grade in terms of a letter grade will be based the following scale:

Average Score	Letter Grade
93 and above	A
90 to 92.99	A-
87 to 89.99	B+
83 to 86.99	B
80 to 82.99	B-
77 to 79.99	C+
73 to 76.99	C
70 to 72.99	C-
67 to 69.99	D+
60 to 66.99	D

0 to 59.99 F

When you sign and submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult: http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html.

TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

This class is being remotely taught. Due to the unusual nature of the semester, communication is important. I commit to responding to emails within 48 hours of receipt, and my intention to respond faster than that most of the time. I will likely be slower on weekends. Likewise, if your situation changes regarding health, housing, or in any other regard with respect to your ability to participate in the class, please contact the appropriate Emory student support organization first and then me as soon as possible. It is easier for me to address your needs if I know about them as soon as they arise. This does not mean I can successfully respond to every request for consideration, but I emphasize that my goal is to treat you all fairly and with compassion and do what I can to help you succeed in this course.

ATTENDANCE

This semester due to the pandemic, some students might be sick or will need to go into isolation or quarantine. If you are sick, understand that I will be flexible about attendance. Please make sure to email me so that we can discuss your individual circumstances. For students in quarantine who are well, we have provided ways that you can keep up with your schoolwork, whether our class is delivered online or in person. Please also contact me via email if you are in quarantine.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMODATIONS

As the instructor of this course I want to provide an inclusive learning environment. I want every student to succeed. The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must register with the DAS at <http://accessibility.emory.edu/students/>. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied so you need to contact DAS as early as possible and contact me as early as possible in the semester to discuss the plan for implementation of your accommodations.

For additional information about accessibility and accommodations, please contact the Department of Accessibility Services at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

At the very first sign of not feeling well, *stay at home* and reach out for a health consultation. [Please consult the campus FAQ for how to get the health consultation](#). As you know, Emory does contact tracing if someone has been diagnosed with COVID-19. A close contact is defined as someone you spend more than 15 minutes with, at a distance less than 6 feet, not wearing facial coverings. This typically means your roommates, for example. However, your classmates are *not* close contacts as long as we are following the personal protective equipment protocols in the classroom: wearing facial coverings, staying six feet apart. Due to the necessity of keeping your PPE on, eating and drinking is strictly forbidden in the classroom.

CLASS RECORDING

Our class sessions on Zoom / our in-person class sessions will all be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back to the information, and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live.

Lectures and other classroom presentations presented through video conferencing and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students enrolled in the course. The release of such information (including but not limited to directly sharing, screen capturing, or recording content) is strictly prohibited, unless the instructor states otherwise. Doing so without the permission of the instructor will be considered an Honor Code violation and may also be a violation of other state and federal laws, such as the Copyright Act.

Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image.

Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live.

Please read the [Rules of Zoom Engagement](#) for further advice on participating in our Zoom class sessions.

Class Schedule

Read:

(1) Chapter 2: “What is Happiness?” from Layard, R. (2005). *Happiness: Lessons From A New Science*. New York: Penguin.

(2) Chapter 1: “What is Well-Being?” from Myers, D. (1992). *The Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: HarperCollins.

(3) Listen to the following TED

talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory?language=en

Week1

Journal Assignment: What is happiness to you; how would you describe it as the way you have thought about up to this time and class. Do you agree with the readings about the descriptions of happiness; is it a full account of the experience of happiness from your perspective and experiences of it? Pay attention to the differences between each reading in the way that each author defines and describes what happiness, or ‘well-being’ is and describe how they are different (go beyond the obvious differences in the words they use to describe happiness to think about whether each author is describing a different kind of hedonic happiness. Finally, is happy life very little pain, suffering and negative emotions combined with more positive experiences and positive emotions; is such a life possible? Start this journal assignment as follows: **“Happiness to me ...”**

Does Happiness Stand a Chance? Does it Have a Foe?

Read:

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

Watch the following reading of a children’s book and be prepared to describe how it relates to the theme(s) in the above reading on the hedonic treadmill:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r88GSdTSY4s>

Week
2

(2) Chapter 1, “The Divided Self,” from Haidt, J. (2006) *The Happiness Hypothesis*. New York: Basic Books.

Journal Assignment: Can you sustain or maintain any emotion for more than one hour? Tell me whether and how you succeeded. Did you find it natural or unnatural to try to sustain your feelings? Or, were emotions meant to be time-limited and therefore something you did not invest much in keeping but, rather, something you learn from, or are sources of information? Does the hedonic treadmill make people look like fools, our culture look like a bankrupt capitalistic nightmare, or both? Lastly, does this research suggest that happiness is best viewed as a destination or as a lifelong process?

Success, Money and Happiness

Read:

(1) Chapter 2 “Wealth and Well-Being” from Myers, D. (1992). *The Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: HarperCollins.

Week
3

(2) Chapter 3: “A Satisfied Mind” from Myers, D. (1992). *The Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: HarperCollins.

(3) “If money doesn’t make you happy, then you probably aren’t spending it right” by Elizabeth W. Dunn et al. (2011)

Journal Assignment: How much money do you think you will need to live a happy life and why? Do you believe that earning more money will bring you more happiness, why or why not? If you want to achieve a more lasting state of happiness, is it “wise” to spend the bulk of your adult life at working, working long hours, aspiring to pay raises and promotions?

Happiness: Decisions and Choices

Read:

(1) Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2005). Affective forecasting: Knowing what to want. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 131-134

(2) Schwartz, B. (2004). The tyranny of choice. *Scientific American*, April, 71-75.

Week (3) Complete the choices scale that is in the files folder
4

Journal Assignment: Discuss whether and why having options from which to make your own choices in life is important to you, what is your dominant style of choice-making (based on the results of completing the choices scale) and whether and why making choices for you affects your happiness (promotes it or reduces your happiness). Have you experienced times when others made choices for you and it did and did not promote your happiness (e.g., many of us get frustrated with parents who control choices when we are adolescents, but now you are in college, how has choice-making changed for you?). What role has affective forecasting influenced your choices, and whether affective forecasting did or did not result in happiness for use (provide examples of when you were inaccurate or accurate in your affective forecasting and then why or why not using ideas from the reading – for example, immune neglect, focalism, etc.).

Eudaimonia (“Eu” = Good; “daimon” = spirit)

Read:

(1) Read Chapter 1 in *Beyond Pleasure and Pain: How Motivation Works* by E. Tory Higgins

(2) “Liberalism and Its Discontents” from McMahon, D. M. (2006). *Happiness: A History*. Grove Press.

Week
5

Journal Assignment: Take the following quiz to discover your character strengths: <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/Personality-Assessment>. You will click on the icon for taking the test and then you will have to register to be able to take the test.

Write a journal about your strengths of character, how (when and if) you use your strengths in your life right now, why you think you have your particular character strengths, and whether or how using your strengths help you achieve happiness (does employing your strengths always bring happiness or not, and if not, what do you achieve from using strengths when they do not bring you happiness)

Flow and Flourishing: Scientific Eudaimonia

Read:

Week
6

(1) Chapter 7: “‘Flow’ in Work and Play” from Myers, D. (1992). *The Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: HarperCollins.

(2) Keyes, C. L. M. (2003). Complete mental health from *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, edited by C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt. Washington: APA Press.

Journal Assignment: Do some “research” to find athletes describing “being in the zone” and describe how ‘being in the zone’ is like and/or is different from flow. Describe how or why flow and flourishing are both examples of the eudaimonic view of happiness. How could you design a society or workplace based on the concept of flow or on flourishing (be creative, be cynical, but be a believer that you could create an environment that encourages flow or that encourages flourishing).

Happiness and Meaning in Life

Read:

(1) Baumeister, The meanings of life: Happiness is not the same as a sense of meaning. How do we go about finding a meaningful life, not just a happy one?

(2) Oishi and Diener, Residents of Poor Nations Have a Greater

Sense of Meaning in Life Than Residents of Wealthy Nations

Week
7

Journal assignment: According to this week's reading, a meaningful life has four properties. (1) It has purposes that guide actions from present and past into the future, lending it direction. (2) It has values that enable us to judge what is good and bad; and, in particular, that allow us to justify our actions and strivings as good. (3) It is marked by efficacy, in which our actions make a positive contribution towards realizing our goals and values. (4) A meaningful life is founded on a kind of self-worth that enables us to genuinely regard ourselves as good and worthy people.

Think about properties 2-4 (we will focus on purpose later) in your life. Describe what those three properties are or are not as follows. Do you see yourselves as worthy and good? If not or not entirely, what is needed for you to do more of to achieve that self worth? Do you see yourselves as having the efficacy to achieve your goals? If or if not, do you have the right goals and what would you need to build more of a sense that you can achieve your goals in life? Do you see yourselves as having the right values and all of the values that you believe are needed for you to know what is a good way for you and others to be in this world and what is a bad way for you and others to be in this world and life? For all of the above, think about the following as well. Even if you have all of the properties right now, you have a long life ahead of you. How will you maintain it in the face of temptations to achieve goals in ways that don't always represent goodness or your values or would not leave you feeling of yourself as having integrity and self worth?

The Pursuit of Happiness: Does Being Good or Bad Produce More Happiness?

Read:

(1) Chapter 9, “Divinity With or Without God,” from Haidt, J. (2006) *The Happiness Hypothesis*. New York: Basic Books.

(2) Chapter 9 “Generative Lives, Redemptive Life Stories” from McAdams (2015) *The Art and Science of Personality Development*

Week

8 Listen and take notes: <https://onbeing.org/programs/michael-mccullough-getting-revenge-and-forgiveness/>

Journal Assignment: First, watch Richard Attenborough’s movie about Mahatma Gandhi (you can purchase it online at Hulu.com or Amazon video). Even if you’ve seen it before, watch it again, and this time take notes so that you can describe whether and how you think Gandhi was a happy person (what kind of happiness, how, what was the role of nonviolence, or “passive resistance,” why did Gandhi take so much suffering on himself and urged other to do the same as the best way to overcome British colonial rule?). What role did divinity as described in the Haidt reading and generativity in the McAdams reading guide Gandhi’s life and affect his happiness.

The Pursuit of Happiness: Understanding the Causes of “Suffering.”

Read:

(1) Chapter 3 from David Burns, “Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy.”

(2) Chapter 6: “Mind over Matter” from Begley, S. (2007). *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*. New York: Ballantine.

Week

9

Journal Assignment: Identify an event, situation, person, and place that make you feel negatively (e.g., angry, frustrated, sad, guilty, uncooperative, unkind or wishing ill will, makes you act arrogant or be boastful, makes you feel imperfect or worthless, etc.). Can you identify one or more cognitive distortions (you must read Ch. 3 in order to know about cognitive distortions) that you use when you encounter the event, situation, person, and place that make you feel negatively? Then, take the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (DAS), score it and interpret your DAS score. Do you believe your “emotional vulnerabilities” help you to better understand why you use your particular cognitive distortion(s) and that your new awareness of how your automatic way of thinking may help on your path to pursuing lasting happiness? Do you have “emotional strengths” you did not know about and do you draw on that/those strength(s) each day?

The Pursuit of Happiness: Cultivating “Right” Attention and “Right” Desire

Read:

- (1) Bo Lozoff chapters, Life if meaningful, it just takes practice
- (2) Killingsworth & Gilbert (2010). A wandering mind is an unhappy mind
- (3) Watch: <https://onbeing.org/programs/seane-corn-yoga-meditation-in-action/>

Week
10

Journal Assignment: What is yoga and meditation and how or why do you think it can promote your happiness if you practiced either or both? It would help if you actually tried yoga this week or tried meditation this week – see the above suggestions for an app to help guide you through meditation. Is the practice of yoga or meditation conducive to happiness (i.e., when you are actually doing the practice) and/or is the result of practicing yoga or meditation what brings happiness. In answering these questions, please explain what is produced or changed in you as a result of practicing yoga or meditation (is it your mindset, is it the values that guide how you treat other people, is it spirituality, etc.)

The Pursuit of Happiness: Meaningful Relationships

(1) Read: “The Suffocation Model: Why Marriage in America Is Becoming an All-or-Nothing Institution” by Eli J. Finkel, et al. (2015)

(2) Read: Parent and Happiness pdf

Week
11

Journal Assignment: Think about how your conception of a good relationship differs from or resembles that of older generations in your family. Use the Finkel reading to describe the generational differences in what constitutes a good, happy relationship for your grandparents versus what you want in your significant relationship. Note: by “significant relationship” I’m referring to your marital relationship. Part of the significant relationship is that many want and will become parents. Using the Lyubomirsky reading, describe what challenges you may pursuing happiness if you have children and what you would do to avoid the so called “parental penalty” in terms of happiness.

The Pursuit of Happiness: Curiosity, Play, and Creativity

Read:

(1) “Taking Play Seriously” from the February 17, 2008 *New York Times Magazine*

(2) “The Serious Need For Play”

Week
12

Journal Assignment: Go to <http://www.nifplay.org/> to learn about the various ways children play. Then, make an inventory of your last week (5 or 7 days) as to whether and how frequently you engaged in any of the kinds of play described at the National Institute of Play’s website. Are you getting enough play, in your opinion, and could you or Emory make it more likely that you could experience more play (not just out of the classroom, off campus or in the PE building but in the classroom and on campus)? Can a person be happy and serious at the same time (can one be too serious to have happiness in one’s life)?

The Pursuit of Happiness: Simplicity and Callings

Read:

(1) Chapter 5 “The Downshifter Next Door” from Schor, J. B. (1998). *The Overspent American*. New York: Basic Books.

Week
13

(2) Introduction and various selections from Bronson, P. (2002). *What Should I Do With My Life?* New York: Random House.

No Journal this week

Last class: Gratitude and Lessons Learned from Studying Happiness