

Student Development 141R: The Science & Practice of Positive Living

Fall Semester 2016

Section 002: 245 SWKT M/W 3:00 pm - 3:50 pm

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Description

The overarching aim of this course is to actively engage its students in both learning and application of current topics related to positive human growth and development. The format of the course is such that students will explore the current research on a number of different topics related to psychological growth and development, and for each topic will also be invited to engage in experiential application through the use of various exercises to be done out of class. Taken together, these facets will facilitate both intellectual *and* experiential learning of the concepts discussed.

The academic material upon which the course is based will be informed in part by research from Positive Psychology, a relatively new movement within the field of psychology to study, better understand, and develop human strengths instead of focusing only on remediating and intervening in human problems. The topics we discuss and apply in the course will center largely on the promotion of human potential.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand the background and aims of positive psychology
- Consider issues of defining happiness, subjective well-being, and distinctions between hedonic and eudaimonic conceptualizations of happiness
- Expand personal awareness of character strengths and applications of these
- Acquire learning about current research and academic knowledge on topics relating to positive mental well-being
- Develop an appreciation for the process of applying acquired knowledge into one's lived experiences
- Reflect on learning acquired during the course through journaling and through teaching each other in small-group discussions
- Develop increased abilities to engage life in ways that will promote positive mental health and well-being

Texts and Materials

A required course packet (*READINGS ON THE SCIENCE & PRACTICE OF POSITIVE LIVING*) will be available at the BYU Bookstore, containing scholarly articles and readings related to the topics we cover in the course. Other readings will be made available by the instructor in order to supplement course topics.

Assignment Descriptions

Experiential Assignments:

For each course topic (or module) we will first take a class period to learn and discuss the current information and learning available on that particular topic. Following this, you will have one or more options of experiential assignments to help you apply what we learned about in class in a meaningful (and hopefully life-enriching) way within your own personal, away-from-class life. At times these will stretch you or perhaps involve you stepping a bit out of your comfort zone. At others they will just require a dedicated effort on your part. The way this will play into your grade for the course is through your own rating of your investment in the experience (described below). These experiences, coupled with the science and academic knowledge we learn about, represent the core essence of the course.

Course Experience Journal:

You will be asked to maintain a record of your thoughts, feelings, insights, and experiences throughout the various activities you will complete as part of the course. This will serve a primary purpose of helping you to purposefully reflect on what you learn; it will contribute to your grade in that you will be asked to bring reflections from your journal entry for each experiential assignment to the discussion groups and may also use your journal entries to inform your final 'personal summary' paper. I will not be reading what you write in your journal (unless you would like to share something with me) so feel free to keep this personally meaningful—at no point will you be handing in your journal.

Discussion Groups:

On each 'Discussion & Follow-up' class day, we will dedicate a significant portion of class-time to small discussion groups. Here you will be able to reinforce what you have learned as a result of your Experiential Assignment by sharing about the activity you selected, by sharing some of your journal reflections about what you experienced, thought, or felt, and by having the opportunity to essentially 'teach' the others in the group what you learned. I will provide more specific structure for these dependent upon the nature of the experiential assignments. Each person in the group will be given time to share and to discuss. We will then discuss as a full class and follow up with any other relevant information on the topic. Again, the graded component here will be the extent to which you are fully participative that day in your discussion group and the class discussion (discussed below).

Investment Points:

On each 'Discussion & Follow-up' class day, you will also be asked to fill in a short *investment points* sheet that captures the level to which you engaged with the experiential assignment (30 possible pts.), the journal writing (10), and the discussion group (10). There are ten modules, two of which are broken into two parts, for a total of **twelve** opportunities to assign yourself investment points. **50 pts each x 12 = 600 total points possible**

***Investment Points record forms will be completed and turned in during class; if you miss a discussion groups day, please contact me so we can work out your points for that module!

Quizzes:

You will be asked to read various articles throughout the semester (see schedule) to help supplement what we discuss in class. In conjunction with these readings, you'll take 5 quizzes on Learning Suite. These will be online, open-book quizzes, to be completed before class. **20 pts each x 5 = 100 total points possible**

Media Presentation ('People at Their Best'):

Students will sign up and briefly present an example from the media of someone 'at their best' with respect to the topics we cover in the course, or someone whose life and actions are worth highlighting. These can be based on an article you find, a news clipping, internet clip—wherever you can find an example. These should be presentable in about **3-4 minutes** so this is also an exercise in presenting information in succinct yet rich ways. The intent of this exercise is to help supplement our academic learning with real-world examples and to engage you in noticing and paying more attention to the positive efforts and actions of people. I will distribute a sign-up sheet in the beginning of the course. **50 points possible**

Personal Summary Paper:

At the culmination of the course, you will be asked to turn in a 3-4 page paper describing and reflecting on your overall journey during the course. I am going to give you significant latitude with this assignment, the emphasis being on detailing how you have worked to increase your own positive living, what you have learned along the way that has been particularly impactful, and your plans to continue in one or more areas into the future. You might use your ongoing journal reflections to help you write this paper and remind you of what you have gained. I hope that this can be more for you than just an assignment to be graded; I believe that it can help crystallize the thoughts and feelings you've had during our semester together and help you purposefully reflect on strengths you've developed, habits you've begun, and plans to continue developing well-being. **250 points possible**

Point Breakdown

Assignments	Points
Investment Points	600
Quizzes	100
Media Presentation ('People at Their Best')	50
Personal Summary Paper	250
Total Points	1000

Grades	Percent
A	93%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	83%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	73%
C-	70%
D+	67%
D	63%
D-	60%
E	0%

Grading Policy

The challenge (and invitation) this course extends to you is that you can increase your psychological well-being in a semester. This, of course, depends on the degree to which you fully engage with the course material and experiential assignments. Each of the modules we cover in the course will include an assignment that allows you to put into practice in your daily lives the concepts we learn about in class. Following each experiential assignment, the subsequent class period will utilize small discussion groups to teach each other what you learned from your experience. These experiential assignments will comprise the majority of the graded aspects of your course participation. In addition, you will be invited to write a personal summary paper to be turned in near the end of the semester.

Since the class is heavily based on engaging in experiences and reflecting on these, if you miss an experiential assignment or miss class on a discussion group day, you will need to work out with the instructor what you might be able to do to make up for missed material.

Participation Policy

This course involves a great deal of sharing and discussion of your personal experiences and engagement with the material. You are highly encouraged to come to class and are responsible for the readings, writing/journaling component, and experiential homework. Students are invited to learn the names of those in the class, and contribute to class or small group discussions. Attendance will not be taken; however, in-class discussion groups will contain a self-rating component that will contribute to a portion of the final grade.

Schedule

Date	Topics	Assignments
M Aug 29	What's This Course All About? The Challenge	
W Aug 31	"You at Your Best" Introductions	Come ready to do YAYB intros (instructions in class)
M Sep 05	Labor Day NO CLASS	
W Sep 07	"You at Your Best" Introductions cont'd Media Presentation sign-ups The Science of Happiness I: What is Happiness? Well-Being? Correlates and Predictors of Happiness	Myers article: Who is Happy? Quiz 1 (Learning Suite)
M Sep 12	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Sep 14	The Science of Happiness II: Cultivating Happiness and Positive Emotions	Fredrickson article: The value of positive emotions Quiz 2 (Learning Suite)
M Sep 19	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Sep 21	The Science of Effective Interpersonal Relationships	
M Sep 26	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Sep 28	The Science of Gratitude I: Awareness and Purposeful Reflection	
M Oct 03	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Oct 05	The Science of Gratitude II: Gratitude in Action	Andersen article: Thanks-living Quiz 3 (Learning Suite)
M Oct 10	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i> Explain VIA Signature Strengths assessment	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Oct 12	The Science of Character Strengths	Park article: Strengths of character and well being Take VIA Survey of Signature Strengths (online)
M Oct 17	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Oct 19	The Science of (Di)stress Management	

M Oct 24	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Oct 26	The Science of Purposes & Values	
M Oct 31	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Nov 02	The Science of Decision Making: The Paradox of Choice and Dealing with Ambiguity	Schwartz article: The tyranny of choice Quiz 4 (Learning Suite)
M Nov 07	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i> distribute Mindfulness reading for next time	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Nov 09	The Science of Mindfulness	Foundations of Mindfulness reading (distributed in class) Quiz 5 (Learning Suite)
M Nov 14	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i>	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Nov 16	The Science of Savoring	
M Nov 21	NO CLASS	
W Nov 23	NO CLASS	
M Nov 28	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i> Talk about Final Paper	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i>
W Nov 30	The Science of Flow & Exercising Your Will	
M Dec 05	<i>Discussion & Follow-up</i> Conclusions	<i>Journal/Discussion Groups</i> Final Paper Due

University Policies

Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and every instructor's expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Sexual Misconduct

As required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the university prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment-including sexual violence-committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of "Sexual Misconduct" prohibited by the university.

University policy requires any university employee in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report incidents of sexual misconduct that come to their attention through various forms including face-to-face conversation, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. If you encounter sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at t9coordinator@byu.edu or 801-422-2130 or Ethics Point at <https://titleix.byu.edu/report-concern> or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours). Additional information about Title IX and resources available to you can be found at <http://titleix.byu.edu>.

Student Disability

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

Mental Health Concerns

Mental health concerns and stressful life events can affect students' academic performance and quality of life. BYU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS, 1500 WSC, 801-422-3035, caps.byu.edu) provides individual, couples, and group counseling, as well as stress management services. These services are confidential and are provided by the university at no cost for full-time students. For general information please visit <https://caps.byu.edu>; for more immediate concerns please visit <http://help.byu.edu>.