FSEM 043
The Good Life: Perspectives from Psychological Science
Fall, 2002

Instructor
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Location and time
T, Th 1:20 – 2:35
Olin 129A

Course Description
Throughout history, men and women have been captivated by questions of what constitutes the good life and how such a life can be cultivated. What is the nature of human happiness, joy, and pleasure? Are some people simply born more content than other people? Are material wealth, spiritual practice, or outward achievements related to happiness? How can we know ourselves? What role do relationships play in the good life? This course surveys contemporary psychological research addressing these enduring questions. Students are introduced to a variety of psychological research methods and apply these methods through hands-on demonstrations. Throughout the course, students are helped to recognize the unique strengths and limitations of the scientific method for approaching questions such as these, and students are encouraged to articulate their own emerging views on what makes a life worth living.

Readings

Hacker, D. (2000). A pocket style manual (3rd ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Gottman, J. M. (1999). The seven principles for making marriage work. New York: Random House (Three Rivers Press).

Myers, D. G. (2001). The American paradox: Spiritual hunger in an age of plenty. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions. New York: Guilford Press.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1998). Learned optimism. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Stanovich, K. E. (2000). How to think straight about psychology (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

The additional articles will be placed on the Blackboard website for this course. I strongly encourage you to print the articles for yourself, because the writing assignments and test essays will require a close reading of the articles. A list of these references is attached to the syllabus.

Course Requirements and Grading

Assignment	Points
Midterm exam	50
Research paper	50
Final exam	65
Class participation	50

Midterm and final exam: The midterm will include definitions, short-answer questions, and essays. For the midterm, you will need to be able to understand and apply what you have learned about research methods in psychology; you will, of course, need to know the other course material as well. For the final exam, you will be given a list of essays to prepare ahead of time; the final will include a subset of those essay questions. I will solicit your suggestions for possible final exam questions. The midterm and final exams will cover material from lectures, discussions, and readings.

Midterm date: Thursday, 10/24

Research paper: The research paper will be a 9-10 page literature review of research on some aspect of "the good life". Details about the paper will be provided early in the semester.

Research paper drafts due: Tuesday, 11/12
Final research paper due: Tuesday, 11/26

Class participation: Attendance is required at all classes. Class participation is a crucial element of this course, and it will make our class sessions richer, more informative, and livelier. Because this is a seminar (rather than a lecture-oriented course), the quality of our discussions will largely determine the quality of the course itself. The class participation grade will include two aspects of your participation: 1) active participation in class discussions, and 2) brief written responses to the readings. Early in the semester, you will be writing a response for each class session, but later you will only be writing once a week. The written responses will be due in class the day the reading is to be discussed. A complete description of the format for these written responses is attached to the syllabus. You will receive a grade for your participation for each half of the semester (25 points each half), based on your participation in discussion and based on a portfolio of all your written responses for that half of the semester.

Portfolio of written responses for first half of the semester due: Tuesday, 10/29
Portfolio of written responses for second half of the semester due: Thursday, 12/12

Our own study!

During the semester, we will be planning and carrying out our own experiment; we will then analyze the data together. You will get to see first-hand the fun and challenges of using the scientific method. There will be a question on the final exam about our project and our results.

Course Policies

1. Students are expected to take the exams at the given times unless there is an emergency (death in the family, serious illness). You should notify me prior to the scheduled exam if you cannot make it.

2. It is expected that students will adhere to the guidelines and rules described in the Colgate Student Handbook. It is particularly important that you be careful to use your own language in all of your papers and that, when you use someone else's language, you quote your source. Plagiarism typically carries stiff penalties at Colgate.

3. Students with language or learning disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in the class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to bring this to my attention as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

Topic	**Readings**
How can you pursue the good life at Colgate?	Edmundson (1997); Shorris (1997)
Psychology as a science: How can we study the good life scientifically? • Reaction paper on "What is the good life and how does one achieve it" • Workshop on developing testable hypotheses	Stanovich ch. 1, 2
Measuring the weight of smoke: How can we assess happiness? • complete measures of Subjective Well-Being	Stanovich ch. 3; Diener (2000)
What are happy people like? • Correlational studies	Stanovich ch. 5; Myers & Diener (1995); Diener & Seligman (2002)
Good moods and bad moods • Controlled experiments	Stanovich ch. 6; Isen (1987); Tice et al. (2001)
Tuesday, 9/24: Orientation to library research, part I; meet in Case Library, Picker Classroom • Bring possible ideas for a paper topic.	Martin (2000)
Tuesday, 10/1: Orientation to library research, part II; meet again in the Picker Classroom • Bring questions arising from developing your paper topic.	
What do we know about happy people?	
Optimism	Stanovich ch. 4; Seligman (1998)
Flow	Csikszentmihalyi (1990), pp. 43-93; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre (1989)
Happiness and our genetic makeup	Lykken (1999); Lykken & Tellegen (1996)

Know thyself (but don't ruminate!)	
The good side of expressing emotions	Pennebaker (1997); Kelly et al. (2001)
Knowing one's goals helps, too	King (2001a)
The bad side of expressing emotions	Bushman (2002)
Relationships	
Love: The good, the bad, and the ugly	Gottman (1999)
Love—American style	Myers (2001), chs. 2 & 3
Individualism versus community	Myers (2000) ch. 7; Schwartz (2000)
Meaning, goals, and purpose in life	
Finding meaning in suffering	Frankl (1959); Taylor et al. (2000)
Goals (including wealth)	Kasser & Ryan (1996); Myers ch. 6; Kasser & Sheldon (2000)
Religious faith; is being happy enough?	Myers (2000) ch. 10; King (2001b)
Wrap-up	
How can psychological science inform our question for the good life?	
• Reaction paper on how your view of the good life has changed over the course of this class	

References for Additional Readings

Bushman, B. J. (2002). Does venting anger feed or extinguish the flame? Catharsis, rumination, distraction, anger, and aggressive responding. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28, 724-731.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The psychology of optimal experience, pp. 43-93. New York: Harper.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & LeFevre, J. (1989). Optimal experience in work and leisure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56, 815-822.

Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. American Psychologist, 55, 34-43.

Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. Psychological Science, 13, 81-84.

Edmundson, M. (1997). On the uses of a liberal education. I. As lite entertainment for bored college students. Harper's Magazine, 295, 39-49.

Frankl, V. E. (1959/1984). Logotherapy in a nutshell. In Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy (pp. 103-136). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Isen, A. M., Daubman, K. A., & Nowicki, G. P. (1987). Positive affect facilitates creative problem solving. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52, 1122-1131.

Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. M. (1996). Further examining the American dream: Well-being correlates of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22, 281-288.

Kasser, T., & Sheldon, K. M. (2000). Of wealth and death: Materialism, mortality salience, and consumption behavior. Psychological Science, 11, 348-351.

Kelly, A. E., Klusas, J. A. von Weiss, R. T., & Kenny, C. (2001). What is it about revealing secrets that is beneficial? Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27, 651-665.

King, L. A. (2001a). The health benefits of writing about life goals. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27, 798-807.

King, L. A. (2001b). The hard road to the good life: The happy, mature person. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 41, 51-72.

Lykken, D. (1999). Happiness: What studies on twins show us about nature, nurture, and the happiness set point, pp. 33-60. New York: Golden Books.

Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. Psychological Science, 7, 186-189.

Martin, D. W. (2000). Doing psychology experiments (5th ed.), pp. 112-131. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson.

Myers, D. G., & Diener, E. (1995). Who is happy? Psychological Science, 6, 10-19.

Schwartz, B. (2000). Self-determination: The tyranny of freedom. American Psychologist, 55, 79-88.

Shorris, E. (1997). On the uses of a liberal education. II. In the hands of the restless poor. Harper's Magazine, 295, 50-59.

Taylor, S. E., Kemeny, M. E., Reed, G. M., Bower, J. E., & Gruenewald, T. L. (2000). Psychological resources, positive illusions, and health. American Psychologist, 55, 99-109.