Why Are We Not Happy? Happiness: the Holy Grail of Western Society

In The conquest of Happiness Bertrand Russell makes us look at the many ways we choose to be miserable despite our circumstances. This course will explore the different meanings and definitions of happiness, the way western culture tries to measure it, as opposed to the way eastern culture approaches it. Individual happiness versus social happiness, who says happiness is a promised part of the human condition? Was paradise The Happy Place, and if so, how and why did we lose it? Is guilt part of our self-inflicted misery/punishment? Is happiness moral? Is happiness humanly possible?

How does wellbeing, welfare, contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction or absence of pain relate to happiness? Does happiness derive from comparing ourselves to the less fortunate? Or is un-happiness a result of comparing ourselves to those who seem more fortunate? Is counting our blessings a key to happiness? Is happiness a mean or a goal? Can one buy a positive outlook on life? How does one pursue happiness? What did Aristotle, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Mill, Rousseau, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Camus write about
happiness? How do art, psychology, sociology, economy and religion view happiness?

You will be asked to read books and articles about happiness, write and discuss different aspects of happiness and relate them to your culture, to other cultures and to your own set of beliefs and personal experiences.

**Purposes**

As required by moral life guidelines: by exploring happiness you will learn that moral issues are typically more complex than they appear to be and that informed decision-making about them requires interdisciplinary understanding; you will have an occasion to grapple with your own values and moral position-taking; your capacity for moral discernment, criticism, and argument will be enhanced, as well as your self-knowledge and capacity for enhancing the quality of your emotional intelligence.

**Expectations**

You are expected to show up to every class, and on time. Missing lessons and lateness will interfere with learning and hence affect your grade. Since there is a large emphasis on teamwork you will be required not to disrupt your fellow student's creativity and to be considerate.

- No ringing phones, no text messaging and no eating during class.
- All assignment will be presented in print; please refrain from hand-written submissions.

Students who are found in violation of the College’s Academic Honesty Policy (found in the student handbook and on the college website) will receive a zero for the assignment.

Your own ideas and individual input will be valued more than borrowing and quoting.
Grading

1. Contribution in class discussion……………………………..20%
2. Group work in class………………………………………………10%
3. Journals……………………………………………………………10%
3. Presentations in class………………………………………………15%
4. Written assignments ……………………………………………20%
5. Midterm ……………………………………………………………10%
6. Final essay…………………………………………………………15%

Blackboard

You are expected to use Blackboard for course information and assignments throughout the course. You will be enrolled in Blackboard and you have to make sure you check Blackboard before each class.

Required texts

The How of Happiness Sonja Lyubomirsky
In Search of Meaning Viktor Frenkel
The Art of Love Erich Fromm

Recommended Readings

The Conquest of Happiness Bertrand Russell
On Liberty John Stuart Mill
Learned Optimism Martin E.P. Seligman PhD
Toward a Psychology of Being Abraham Maslow
The Science of Happiness Time Magazine January 17, 2005
Journal of Happiness studies Editor Ruut Veenhoven, 2000
The Art of Happiness Dalai Lama
The City of God St. Augustine
Studies in Pessimism Arthur Schopenhauer
Emotional Intelligence Daniel Golman
The Examined Life Robert Nozick
The psychology of Happiness Michael Argyle
Happiness: Facts and Myths Michael Eysenck
Authentic Happiness Martin E.P. Seligman
Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle
How Proust Can Change Your Life Alain de Botton

**Schedule - with possible modifications according to students’ researches**

Week I
Wednesday January 20
Introduction and expectations

Week II
Wednesday January 27
Happiness and gratitude

Week III
Wednesday February 3
Ancient concepts of happiness

Week IV
Wednesday February 10
Happiness and responsibility

Week V
Wednesday February 17
Eastern philosophers' happiness

Week VI
Wednesday February 24
happiness and religion - midterms due

Week V
Wednesday March 3
Nozick’s experiencing machine

Week VI
Wednesday March 10
Spring Recess

Week VII
Wednesday March 17
Man’s Search for Meaning
Week VIII
Wednesday March 24          Happiness in literature

Week IX
Wednesday March 31          the bliss of forgetting

Week X
Wednesday April 7            The Art of Loving

Week XI
Wednesday April 14           misery as a legitimate choice

Week XII
Wednesday April 21           the pursuit of happiness – finals due

Week XIII
Wednesday April 28           Conclusions: are we happy(ier) now?

Notes
1) You can expect to dedicate 6-8 hours per week outside of class, reading
   and preparing assignments.
2) Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodation
   in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Offices as soon
   as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are
   implemented in a timely fashion.
3) Do not hesitate to address me with any kind of problem you have during
   class or after.
4) This syllabus is subject to change.