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

Most of us are experts at being miserable despite our circumstances. Our quest for happiness is often futile although we do spend a lot of time lusting for that elusive butterfly. 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 The Promised Land 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 unhappiness 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, 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.

There will be oral presentations and you will be required to address the class and speak without using notes. The topics will be partly selected by you and partly assignments given by the instructor.

Purposes

1. Get you in touch with your happiness capacity.
2. Enhance your proficiency in writing, reading and discussing topics in class.
3. Expose you to different schools of thoughts.
4. Expand your tolerance to different ideas and cultures.
5. Learn to differentiate between an individual way of thinking and fashions, or group's way of thinking.
6. Increase your self-knowledge and 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 cell phones and no eating during class.

All assignment will be presented in print; hence you have to master computer skills.

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

The writing center is there to help you with any difficulties you encounter.

**Academic Honesty**

You are expected to perform your academic work honestly and fairly. Since you can choose your subject and your writing is supposed to be personal I expect you to write yourself each and every assignment. The consequences of failure to meet those expectations are outlined in the current *Student Handbook* and in the *Statement on Academic Honesty at Moravian College*.

**Grading**

1. Contribution in class discussion.................................20%
2. Attendance...............................................................15%
3. Presentations in class..............................................15%
4. Written works.........................................................25%
5. Research papers on your chosen topic........................25%

**Required Reading**

*Contentment A Way to True Happiness* by Robert A. Johnson 7 Jerry M. Ruhl

*The Bedford Handbook* Seventh Edition by Diana Hacker

**Recommended Readings**

*The Conquest of Happiness* Bertrand Russell
Learned Optimism Martin E.P. Seligman PhD
In Search of Meaning Viktor Frenkel
Subjective Well-Being Ed Diener Psychological Bulletin 95, 3 (1984)
True Happiness Psychology Today February 2005
The Science of Happiness Time Magazine January 17, 2005
Journal of Happiness studies Editor Ruut Veenhoven, 2000
The Art of Happiness Dalai Lama
The Art of Love Erich Fromm
The psychology of Happiness Michael Argyle
Happiness: Facts and Myths Michael Eysenck
Authentic Happiness Martin E.P. Seligman

Schedule - with possible modifications according to students’ researches

Week I
Monday August 27
Introduction and expectations
Wednesday August 29
Is happiness relative?

Week II
Monday September 3
Labor Day
Wednesday September 5
Happiness and freedom

Week III
Monday September 10
Happiness: mean, goal or none?
Wednesday September 12
Class held at the library

Week IV
Monday September 17
The gift of compassion
Wednesday September 19
Taming your ISJ

Week V
Monday September 24
Early philosophers' happiness
Wednesday September 26
Happiness, are we there yet?

Week VI
Monday October 1
Happiness and religion. Midterm essay due
Wednesday October 3
Empowering Joy

Week VII
Monday October 8
Fall recess
Wednesday October 10
The joys of breaks
Week VIII
Monday October 15                        East meets western happiness
Wednesday October 17                   Is love happiness?

Week IX
Monday October 22                        Happiness and psychology
Wednesday October 29                   Social contentment

Week X
Monday November 5                       The bliss of nature
Wednesday November 7                   The experience machine

Week XI
Monday November 12                       Happiness and economy
Wednesday November 14                  Practicing happiness

Week XII
Monday November 19                       Alchemy of happiness
Wednesday November 21                  Is happiness a choice?

Week XIII
Monday November 26                       Happiness and art
Wednesday November 28                  King Lear

Week XIV
Monday December 3                        The joys of ambiguity. Final essays due
Wednesday December 5                   Am I better now?

Week XV
Monday December 10                       Conclusions

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.