

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
(Selected Topics)
Morehouse College
Fall 2013

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:15 – 4:15 pm; Thursday, 11 – 1 pm
Course Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday, 1 pm – 2:15 pm

Required Readings:

Peterson, C. (2006). *A Primer In Positive Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
 Brooks, D. (2012). *The Social Animal – The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement*. New York: Random House.
 Peck, M. S. (1978). *The Road Less Traveled*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
 Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-8.
 Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., & Fredrickson, B.L. (2006). Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting blessings intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 361-375.
 Fredrickson, B.L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.
 Cohn, M.A., Frederickson, B.L., Brown, S.L., Mikels, J.A. & Conway, A.M. (2009). Happiness unpacked: Positive emotions increase life satisfaction by building resilience. *Emotion*, 9, 361-368.
 Maddox, J.E. (2002). Self-efficacy: The power of believing you can. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 277-287.
 Linley, A.C., Joseph, S., Harrington, S. & Wood, A.M. (2006). Positive psychology: Past, present and (possible) future. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1, 3-16.
 Emmons, R.A. (2003). Personal goals, life meaning, and virtue: Wellsprings of a positive life. In C.L.M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, 105-128.
Other Readings as Indicated

Recommended Readings:

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic Happiness*. New York: Free Press.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course builds upon the basic tenets of humanistic psychology with its focus on self-knowledge and self-actualization. The course explores the conditions that allow individuals to optimize their human potential and to experience positive emotional experiences, including happiness, compassion, gratitude and love. The course will focus on the values, virtues, and talents that are prized by individuals and communities who are most effective in life and experience the greatest happiness and self-awareness.

The course will explore the historical foundations and contemporary understanding of positive psychology as well as offer opportunities for applied learning. Class time will concentrate on readings, discussion, and applied exercises.

COURSE GOALS

- 1) Provide an overview of positive psychology.
- 2) Identify the major theories of happiness, emotional intelligence, and the relationship between behavior and positive experiences and well being.
- 3) Identify major concepts, issues, and questions of positive psychology, e.g., What are your deepest desires, virtues, and strengths? How can you become more engaged by your life and the world around you? How can you help build a positive community and what would it look like? What is life's ultimate meaning and what claims might ultimate meaning make on your life?
- 4) Develop and implement a project aimed at promoting personal well being based on positive psychology.

5) Engage in a community based learning project to clarify positive psychology's impact on individuals and communities.

The following indicators of student performance will be assessed: class participation, community based learning performance and report, performance on exams, and projects.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Course schedule (Subject to change)

August	Week 1: Introduction to Positive Psychology
September	<p>Week 2: Peterson- Learning about Positive Psychology – Not a Spectator Sport; the place of service learning. Tuesday: Peterson, c. 2 Thursday: Otake (2006); Peterson, c. 3</p> <p>Week 3: Peck – The Road Less Travelled Tuesday and Thursday: Peck, Entire Book</p> <p>Week 4: Peterson – Happiness, Peck – Love Defined, etc. Tuesday: Discussion of Peck, The Road Less Travelled Thursday: Peterson, c. 4; Cohn (2009) Article</p> <p>Week 5: Peterson – Positive Thinking, Peck – The Risk of Loss, etc. Tuesday: Peterson, c.5; Peck, 131-155. Thursday: Frederickson (2001) Article</p>
October	<p>Week 6: Peterson – Character Strengths, Peck – Love is Disciplined, etc. Tuesday: Peterson, c.6; Emmons (2003) Article Thursday: Examination I</p> <p>Week 7: Peterson - Values Tuesday: Peterson, c. 7. Service Learning Discussion Topic – Relate your community based learning to the Peterson chapter on “Values” and to the Peck chapters on love. Thursday:</p> <p>Week 8: Brooks – The Social Animal Tuesday: Brooks, c. 1-4 Thursday: Brooks, c. 5-8</p> <p>Week 9: Peterson – Interests, Abilities, and Accomplishments, Brooks – Decision Making to Self-control. Tuesday: Peterson, c.8; Maddox (2002) Thursday: Brooks, c. 9-12</p>
November	<p>Week 10: Peterson – Wellness, Brooks – Culture to The Grand Narrative Tuesday: Peterson, c.9. Thursday: Brooks, c. 13-16</p> <p>Week 11: Peterson – Positive Interpersonal Relationships, Brooks – <i>Metis</i> to Morality. Tuesday: Peterson, c.10 Thursday: Brooks, c. 17-19.</p> <p>Week 12: Peterson, Enabling Institutions; Brooks, The Leader to Meaning. The Future of Positive Psychology Tuesday: Peterson, c.11; Brooks, 20-22. Service Learning Discussion Topic: Relate your community learning to the Peterson</p>

Chapter, *Enabling Institutions*, and Brooks' *Social Animal*.

Thursday: Peterson, c.12, Linley (2006) Article

December Week 13:
Tuesday and Thursday: Presentations

Last Day of Class: Final Project Due

Final Exam Period: Examination II

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The grading breakdown is as follows:

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Community Project/Placement Performance: 20%

Projects/Report: 30%

Class Participation: 10%

EXAMS

There will be two exams given during the semester. The format of the exams will include concept identification and essay questions. Exams will cover both the lectures and assigned readings. All exams must be completed fully during the allotted time in order to achieve credit for that exam.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

You are expected to participate in class discussions and learning activities. You are responsible for the day's assigned reading(s). The required readings will provide information on a range of positive psychology topics whereas class time will concentrate on select topics in depth. Therefore, regular class attendance is very important. It is the student's responsibility to obtain class notes from other classmates in the event of an absence.

COMMUNITY PLACEMENT

Students are required to complete an approved community project. If you choose to work at a community placement, the minimum requirement is 25 hours of direct contact work distributed throughout the semester.

Placement Proposal and Contract

Students are required to select their project/placement by Week 4.

If you propose your placement site, show how your placement work will address the following issues in positive psychology:

- *How can you become more engaged by your life and the world around you?*
- *How can you help build a positive community and what would it look like?*
- *How does meaning and purpose unfold in your life?*
- *How can you achieve peak levels in pursuits that matter to you?*
- *How can you best live with stress and suffering?*
- *How can you overcome fear and do the right thing?*
- *How do you find love in your life and what might it mean to return love?*
- *What is life's ultimate meaning and what claims might ultimate meaning make on your life?*

The proposal should also specify the method that verifies your attendance and how you will receive feedback about whether your stated educational goals are being met.

It is the student's responsibility to "operationalize" educational goals in collaboration with their community placement supervisors.

Midterm Project: Service Learning Report: Due Week 8

Students should submit a midterm report of how well their community project/placement is meeting their service learning goals and a record of their attendance verified by their placement supervisor. The report should begin to integrate positive psychology theory with their lived experience of service learning – what’s happened at their placement, what experiences reflect the themes of positive psychology, etc.

Using their experience of their community project/placement to date, students develop plans for their final project – applying positive psychology to implement change. The midterm report should include how the hoped for change will be measured.

Final Project: Due Wee 12/13

The student will describe a “change process” reflecting ways that the student applied the theory of positive psychology to improve the quality of life of the population they are serving. The student will need to identify “quality of life” indicators and describe the positive psychology “change process” they designed and implemented at their community placement.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to attend each class meeting. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences may be administratively withdrawn from the course. Please note that class participation counts toward 10% of the overall course grade.

MAKEUP EXAMINATIONS/INCOMPLETE GRADE ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

In cases where students have excused absences, a make up examination will be given. If the student does not have a valid excused absence, a grade of zero will be assigned to any assignment missed. This policy applies to all class assignments and examinations. An excused absence is one that has been verified by the Vice President for Student Affairs. **Notification of the approved absence must be made within one week of the missed examination.**

INCOMPLETE GRADE ASSIGNMENT

The incomplete grade assignment will be provided to students who are prevented from completing assignments due to emergency medical or personal circumstances. The student must provide the professor with an official excuse from the Vice President for Student Affairs or other college official prior to consideration of the student's request for an incomplete grade assignment. If the incomplete grade is approved, all assignments must be completed prior to the beginning of the following semester. If assignments are not completed prior to the succeeding semester, a grade of F may be recorded by the registrar of the college.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are expected to conduct themselves with the highest level of ethics and academic honesty at all times. This applies to preparation of all assignments and requires that students master proper APA referencing and citation guidelines and refrain from engaging in any unethical behavior. All instances of academic dishonesty will result in a course grade of F and will be reported to the Honor and Conduct Review Board for further disciplinary action.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Morehouse College is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities or those who suspect they have a disability must register with the Office of Disability Services (“ODS”) in order to receive accommodations. Students currently registered with the ODS are required to present their Disability Services Accommodation Letter to faculty immediately upon receiving the accommodation. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Disability Services, 104 Sale Hall Annex, Morehouse College, 830 Westview Dr. S.W., Atlanta, GA 30314, (404) 215-2636, FAX: (404) 215-2749.

A syllabus is not a contract between instructor and student, but rather a guide to course procedures. The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus when conflicts, emergencies or circumstances dictate. Students will be duly notified.