

IDST 89: HAPPINESS

First Year Seminar

Spring 2013

Course Instructors: **Kiran Bhardwaj**
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Instructor of Record: **David Pfennig**
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Class meeting times:

Tu/Th 8:00-9:15 am

Location:

Global Ed Ctr, Room 3024

Course Objectives:

Traditional courses usually involve learning one topic at a time and developing isolated skills. Interdisciplinary courses, in contrast, emphasize the learning of topics from a variety of disciplines. When done well, this novel teaching strategy engages students effectively and enhances learning. Consequently, we have developed an interdisciplinary course that centers on the theme of happiness. This course is intended to answer (1) What is happiness and how do we measure it? (2) Why do we value it and how is it valued? and (3) How does the pursuit of happiness influence our life and society? through the lens of different disciplines.

Course Description:

This is a 3-credit hour course, intended for any first year student regardless of what major he or she intends to pursue. The instructors of the course are graduate students from different fields and will provide their own perspective to happiness as follows:

Kiran Bhardwaj: I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student in the Department of Philosophy. I have an A.B. in Music and Philosophy from Bryn Mawr College. My specialty in the philosophy is ethics, in which we ask the question “How should we live?” Ethics is about carefully assessing arguments for what we think is right or wrong, and examining our own deeply-held values. My academic research is on the philosopher Immanuel Kant, and his ethics and aesthetics. Since my educational background is in philosophy, my role in this class will be to introduce the ways historical ethicists have incorporated happiness in their characterizations of how we should live, and contemporary accounts of how we should live.

Stevie Larson: I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography. I received a B.A. in Comparative Sociology at the University of Puget Sound. Geography is a widely interdisciplinary field – covering everything from culture to nature to geology – but it all generally points to questions of how to assess activity on the earth’s surface, especially complex

problems like financial crises or climate change. My emphasis is on critical human geography, which tries to understand the ways humans produce, destroy, and change space. My current work looks at the history of transnational adoption, and how law, economy, politics, social services, humanitarianism, migration, and racialization all get bound up in adoption in contradictory ways. I devote a lot of time to critical theory and analysis, so my role in this class will be thinking through the many ways happiness gets translated “on the ground” through human relationships, interaction, and organization. In this class I will also introduce the methods used by social scientists when they look at “problems” of happiness, as well as how we know what data to look for – whether in media, statistics, interviews, or observation of the goings-on in the world.

Akinyemi Oni-Orisan: I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. I have a B.S. in Biology from the University of Michigan and am a licensed pharmacist (Pharm.D., U of M) in the state of North Carolina. Pharmaceutical Sciences is the study of anything related to drugs including the discovery, design, development, disposition, action, use, and perception of drugs. This discipline can involve and require elements of advanced chemistry, biology, mathematics, statistics, epidemiology, public policy, engineering, and physics. Since my educational background revolves mainly around basic and applied sciences, my role in this class is to get down to the science of happiness. I will discuss how the biology and evolution of our brain determines happiness (i.e., what imbalances in our body may lead to unhappiness) and how altering this physiology (through drugs and psychotherapy) directly and indirectly affects happiness. Furthermore, we will discuss how those of us in the field of Health Sciences measure happiness.

Course Texts:

- No textbooks are required
- Case studies and articles will be posted on sakai.unc.edu at least one week prior to each class session

Grading:

- Reading Quizzes: 10%
- 1 Short (2-page) Paper: 10%
- 1 Long (4 page) Paper: 25%
- 2 In-Class Exams: 10% and 20%, respectively
- Capstone Project (including 4-page write-up): 25%

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

A final course average of 93 or above will earn you an A

A final course average of 90 to 92.99 will earn you a grade no lower than A-

A final course average of 87 to 89.99 will earn you a grade no lower than B+

A final course average of 83 to 86.99 will earn you a grade no lower than B

A final course average of 80 to 82.99 will earn you a grade no lower than B-

A final course average of 77 to 79.99 will earn you a grade no lower than C+

A final course average of 73 to 76.99 will earn you a grade no lower than C

A final course average of 70 to 72.99 will earn you a grade no lower than C-

A final course average of 67 to 69.99 will earn you a grade no lower than D+
A final course average of 63 to 66.99 will earn you a grade no lower than D
A final course average of 60 to 62.99 will earn you a grade no lower than D-

Students who have questions or issues regarding their grade for the final course or for an individual assignment must request a meeting to discuss within three days of receiving the grade.

Your final grade may be "curved" upward, depending on: 1) evidence of improvement during the semester and 2) the performance of your classmates.

Reading Quizzes:

You are expected to complete the readings prior to the class session. You may be given an unannounced quiz at the start of class on the reading material that is assigned for that day.

Papers:

For part of your course grade, you are expected to prepare two papers: one short paper (2 pages) and one longer one (4 pages). The topics of these papers are listed on the syllabus. Please use MLA formatting style (which includes 12-point font, double-spacing, etc), Times New Roman, and only put your name on the bottom of your works cited page. This common format (and location of student names) allows us to grade work blindly. Students are always advised to seek assistance from the instructors or the Writing Center. Note that papers are due at the start of class and will be marked 1/3 of a letter grade down (e.g., A+ to A or B- to C+) for each day they are turned in late.

Capstone Project:

In lieu of a final exam, you will develop a project of original research that will be geared toward more public (academic and non-academic) audiences. Group work is encouraged to foster good interdisciplinary practice! You are expected to be creative in your presentation – it can include videos, art exhibits, websites, blogs, performances, etc. – as well as write up an accompanying scholarly statement about your capstone and how it contributes to your interest around questions of happiness. You will also be expected to meet with one of the instructors at least once to discuss your project and its development.

Classroom Expectations:

Participation and Professionalism. You are expected to participate in class discussion, demonstrate a positive attitude and enthusiasm for learning, and respect the views of classmates and others. Disagreements are fine and encouraged, but when doing so, please treat others with civility and respect.

Electronic devices. Use of a laptop, tablets, and other similar devices may be used in the classroom to take notes and access course content. However, use of laptops and other devices for activities unrelated to the ongoing class session discussion (including email, web browsing, and texting) is unacceptable. Please turn all cell phones off.

Attendance:

Attendance and participation are critical elements for the active learning experience of this course.

Excused absences. Students will be allowed to make up assignments and exams for excused absences. Examples of excused absences include serious illness (a doctor's note will be required) or death in the immediate family.

Unexcused absences. Makeups are not permitted on reading quizzes and will result in a zero. Makeups for exams will draw a 25% penalty. Arrival to class later than 20 minutes after start time is considered an unexcused absence.

Honor Code:

All students at Carolina are expected to act in full observance of the Honor Code. More details can be found at: honor.unc.edu. Nonetheless, a few major policies:

1. **Plagiarism** is the deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution. What this means is that you should be careful *to an extreme* to cite anything that you have consulted (internet, book, person, whatever). All students at Carolina are expected to know best practices in citation—which is a bit of an ideal, since we have various educational backgrounds. So if you are unsure, err on the side of citing the source, or use your resources: speak to one of us or to someone at the Writing Center.
2. **Authorized and unauthorized (cheating) collaboration:** all reading quizzes, exams, and papers are to be taken or written without the assistance of any others. However, it can be extremely helpful to discuss the material and your work with classmates or others. If you do discuss material with another person—and gain something from it—best practice is to footnote that help: for example, “Thanks to So-and-So for pointing this out to me.”
3. **Authorized and unauthorized materials:** you are welcome to look at outside resources (book, internet, magazine). But if you *do* consult outside resources, be very judicious! Always note down what the source is and how to find it again—if you use these materials in a paper, you *must* cite them.
4. **Consequences:** Under the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, the usual sanction for a first time academic offense is suspension for one academic semester and a failing grade.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

*****All readings must be read before class on the specified day.***
Assignments, papers, exams, and other projects are **highlighted**.**

Unit 1: What is happiness and how do we measure it?

WEEK OF JANUARY 9:

Introduction Session

Expectations and hopes for the course
What we think about our respective disciplines

Meaning of Life

Read: *Haybron, "What do we want from a Theory of Happiness?"* [Sakai]

WEEK OF JANUARY 14:

Meaning of Life (continued)

Read: *Metz, "Recent Work on the Meaning of Life"* (selections) [Sakai]

The Happiness "Eruption": Surveys, Indices, and Reforms

Case Study: the Gallup Well-Being Index (www.well-beingindex.com)
Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (www.grossnationalhappiness.com)
Commentary on "buen vivir" in Ecuador and Bolivia (reviewed in class)

WEEK OF JANUARY 21:

Looking Critically at Happiness on the Ground

Read: *Dutt & Radcliff, "Should national happiness be maximized?"* [Sakai]
TIME article, "Why the happiest states have the highest suicide rates" [Sakai]

WEEK OF JANUARY 28:

Brain States

Psychosocial functioning and cognition
Happiness at its basic level: Evolution and Darwinism [Sakai]

Drugs and the Brain

The use and abuse of legal and illegal mood altering drugs
Chronic disease altering medications and their effects on happiness [Sakai]

Drug Development

Animal as models of happiness to guide drug development [Sakai]

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 4:

Quality of Life

Health-related measures to quantify happiness and well-being
Qualitative measures of happiness

Short Paper Due: *What seems to be the best method for approaching questions about happiness?*

Unit 2: Why do we value happiness and how is it valued? Moral Philosophy and Happiness

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 11:

Happiness and Virtue

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Book 10 §6-8

Foot, *Natural Goodness*, [Ch. 1 “A Fresh Start?”, or selections]

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 18:

Happiness and Duty

Hill, “Happiness and Human Flourishing” in *Human Welfare and Moral Worth*

Kant, “The Two Impulses of Our Nature and their Concomitant Duties” in *Lectures on Ethics*

Unit 3: How does the pursuit of happiness influence our life and society? Humor in our Minds, Bodies, and Societies

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 25:

Short-Answer Exam: *You will be prompted to assess and explain approaches to happiness: philosophical theories of happiness, happiness indices, and quality of life measurements.*

Read: Martin, “Is laughter the best medicine?” [Sakai]

The science behind laughter [Sakai]

Evening field trip to DSI Comedy Theater

Advertising: Desire, Consumption and Ethics

WEEK OF MARCH 4:

Consumer Marketing

Using direct-to-consumer drug advertising - a case-study [Sakai]

Advertising Ethics

Read: Arrington, “Advertising and Behavior Control” AND Crisp, “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire” [Sakai]

Assignment: bring in 2 advertisements (online or print)

Assignment: Capstone project proposal

Student midterm evaluation of the class

WEEK OF MARCH 11: Spring Break!

Relationships: Understanding and Rethinking Love

WEEK OF MARCH 18:

Read: *hooks, All About Love* excerpts [Sakai]

Spencer & Dahl, Rethinking Friendship: Hidden Solidarities Today excerpt [Sakai]

Assignment: bring poem, song, or short video to class

Paper Due: *Contrast two of the approaches to happiness that we have discussed in class. Which do you think is more successful, and why? Is there any way to harmonize the insights of these two approaches?*

Psychology

WEEK OF MARCH 25:

Positive Psychology

TED Talk: Jonathan Haidt

Haybron, Ch. 1 and 2, “Taking Socrates’ Question Seriously” and “Happiness, Well-Being, and the Good Life: A Primer”

Community: Creating Foundations and Mechanisms for Happiness

WEEK OF APRIL 1:

Case study of Detroit, Peace Zones, and HOPE Communities

Read: *Adams, “Is happiness a home in the suburbs?”* [Sakai]

Watch documentary: “*The Economics of Happiness*”

Mapping a happiness “drift” through Chapel Hill

Exam: *You will be assessed on your original insights based on the readings discussed in the class. You will be prompted on unexamined but related subjects, and will have to use the ideas from class to respond to these prompts.*

WEEK OF APRIL 8:

Work on capstone project

WEEK OF APRIL 15:

Capstone Project Presentations

WEEK OF APRIL 22:

Student final evaluation of the class

Reflections and conclusions