**Summer Session C 2021―Psychology 417 (C01): Science of Well-Being**

# **Instructor:** Kerry C Kelso

**Office Hours:** 10:30am on Fridays by Zoom link ( <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/98525577430?pwd=TnZubk5UYkdWUytEcXFuUFNDcjZUZz09>)or appointment.

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**Course Description:** What contributes to satisfying, engaging, and meaningful living? What conditions allow people to flourish? We address these questions by examining and interpreting the latest research in psychology on well-being, psychological strengths, social relationships, small groups, and societies.

**SCIENTIFIC APPROACH**: We approach each topic as scientists. The application of science to questions regarding well-being and psychological strengths carries an assumption: these topics are suitable for empirical examination. Social scientists adopt an attitude of open-minded skepticism. To benefit from this class, you will balance 1) personal beliefs you already acquired about positive experiences, traits, and institutions and 2) the willingness to be open, explore, and experiment with new ideas and experiences.

**Course Requirements:** You will 1) write reflections on course topics (worth 50% of your grade), 2) post discussion questions and answers on course topics (worth 20% of your final grade) and 2) write a final paper focusing on the development of a positive intervention on yourself (worth 30% of your final grade). All reflections, discussion questions and answers, and the final paper will be submitted on Blackboard.

**Exams:** I believe the best way to learn is to actively work with course material as opposed to memorizing information to pass exams. Thus, I have little inclination to give formal exams.

**Grades:** Your grade will be determined by performance on the above. Improvement over the semester and class attendance and participation will help in borderline cases.

**DEMONSTRATED MASTERY GRADING SYSTEM:** The *quality* of participation will be looked at favorably when there are questions of whether grades adequately reflect a student's knowledge, or when an average falls just below a cut-off. This can only work in your favor. This process was created as a consequence of watching many of my students and colleagues over the years perform poorly on tests despite class engagement, general mastery of material, and intense efforts beyond requirements. Please respect this process by not asking for preferential treatment. Deserving individuals will be acknowledged.

The grading scale is as follows (I reserve the right to make it less stringent if necessary):

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D+ = 67-69

D = 60-66

F = less than 60

## **Additional Course Policies**

**Safe Return to Campus:** All students taking courses with a face-to-face component are required to take Safe Return to Campus Training prior to visiting campus. Training is available in Blackboard ([*https://mymason.gmu.edu*](https://mymason.gmu.edu/)). Students are required to follow the university’s public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage ([*www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-plan*](https://www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-plan)). Similarly, all students in face to face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week. The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system and students will receive either a Green, Yellow, or Red email response. Only students who receive a “green” notification are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get testing. Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.

**Students with Special Concerns:** If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office**.**

**Statement of Academic Integrity:** The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation

**Last Day to Add/Drop: June 23rd**

**Readings**:

Articles that cannot be obtained online (scholar.google.com or GMU electronic libraries) will be posted on our blackboard site. To obtain articles, go to Google Scholar or [e-journals at GMU](http://library.gmu.edu/phpzone/ej.php) (the articles below are available as PDF files in the electronic library at GMU) and write in the title of the journal article (e.g., Journal of Personality and Social Psychology), find the article, and download the PDF file.

**Reflections (50%):**

Concerning a topic covered in class, write a reflection indicating how reading content relates to your personal, academic, or professional life. There are 12 potential topics to write reflections on; however, you will only need to write about 5 unique topics. Each reflection will be worth 10 points, for a total of 50 points. Reflections should be at least 200 words each and explicitly refer to at least one of the readings with an in-text citation (i.e., by noting the author(s) and the year in (e.g., Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) or at the end of a sentence paraphrasing or quoting their article (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)). For more information on how to use an in-text citation, see <https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/in_text_citations_the_basics.html>. Reflections should be submitted under “assignments” on Blackboard by their due dates (see below). See the Reflection Rubric under “assignments” on Blackboard for how they will be graded. Due dates for reflections are listed below, though you may submit them ahead of due dates. For every day late you submit a reflection, 1 points will be deducted from you total (e.g., 9/10 for a 10/10 assignment that was turned in one day late).

**Posts: Discussion Questions and Answers (20%):**

Write one discussion question related to a topic or covered each week and respond to a classmate’s discussion question that has not been previously answered by another classmate. As with reflections, since there are 12 topics, I will drop you two lowest graded questions and answers or you can choose to not complete two questions and answers, and I will count your remaining 10. You can earn up to 1 point per question for a total of 10 points and up to 1 point per answer, for a total of 10 points. See the Question-and-Answer Rubric under “assignments” on Blackboard for how they will be graded. Late discussion questions and answers will not be accepted. You may post questions and answers in advance of their due dates.

**Final Paper (30%):**

For your final paper, you will implement a series 4 well-being strategies into your routine (at least twice per week) for the duration of the class, (beginning 6/27) log how they impact your emotions/thoughts/behaviors, and write up they impact they’ve had on life stressors and/or disruptions you’ve experienced due to COVID-19. See Final Paper Description and Rubric under “assignments” on Blackboard for details.

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| **Week** | **TOPIC and READINGS** | **ASSIGNMENTS** |
| **6/21 - 6/25** | **What is the Science of Well-Being?** Seligman, M.E.P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. [*American Psychologist*](http://www.apa.org/journals/)*, 55,* 5-14  Tov, W. (2018). Well-being concepts and components. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of well-being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. - <https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/12>  **Understanding and Measuring Well-Being**  Lucas, R. E. (2018). Reevaluating the strengths and weaknesses of self-report measures of subjective well-being. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of well-being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. - <https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/2>    Pavot, W. (2018). The cornerstone of research on subjective well-being: Valid assessment methodology. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of well-being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. - <https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/15> | 1 discussion question and answer, and 4 strategies and schedule for final paper due by 6/27 at 11:59PM |
| **6/28 - 7/2** | **Benefits of Well-being**  Diener, E., Pressman, S. D., Hunter, J., & Delgadillo‐Chase, D. (2017). If, why, and when subjective well‐being influences health, and future needed research. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well‐Being*, *9*, 133-167.  Optimal Levels of Happiness Noba module-  <http://nobaproject.com/modules/optimal-levels-of-happiness?r=LDI2ODkz>  **Well-Being Interventions**  Stone, B. M., & Parks, A. C. (2018). Cultivating subjective well-being through positive psychological interventions. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of well-being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. - <https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/59>  **Cultural and Contextual Influences on Well-Being**  Heine, S. J., & Buchtel, E. E. (2009). Personality: The universal and the culturally specific. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*, 369-394.  Culture module by Noba  <http://nobaproject.com/modules/culture> | 1 discussion question and answer due by 7/4 at 11:59PM  Reflection #1 must be submitted by 7/4 at 11:59PM |
| **7/5 – 7/9** | **Emotions**  Functions of Emotion module by Noba  <http://nobaproject.com/modules/functions-of-emotions>  Emotion Experience and Well-Being Noba Module - <http://nobaproject.com/modules/emotion-experience-and-well-being>  **Psychological Strengths**  Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004).  Character strengths and wellbeing. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23,* 603-619.  Biswas-Diener, R., Kashdan, T.B., & Minhas, G.  (2011). A dynamic approach to psychological strength development and intervention. Journal of Positive Psychology, 6, 106-118.  **Mindfulness and Acceptance**  Davidson, R. J., & Dahl, C. J. (2018). Outstanding challenges in scientific research on mindfulness and meditation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *13*(1), 62-65.  Van Dam, N. T., van Vugt, M. K., Vago, D. R., Schmalzl, L., Saron, C. D., Olendzki, A., ... & Field, B. A. (2018). Reiterated concerns and further challenges for mindfulness and meditation research: a reply to Davidson and Dahl. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *13*(1), 66-69.  Van Dam, N. T., van Vugt, M. K., Vago, D. R., Schmalzl, L., Saron, C. D., Olendzki, A., ... & Fox, K. C. (2018). Mind the hype: A critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *13*(1), 36-61. | 1 discussion question and answer due by 7/11 at 11:59PM  Reflection #2 must be submitted by 7/11 at 11:59PM |
| **7/12 – 7/16** | **Healthy Social relationships**  Coan, J. A., & Sbarra, D. A. (2015). Social baseline theory: The social regulation of risk and effort. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *1*, 87-91.  Gable, S. L., & Bromberg, C. (2018). Healthy social bonds: A necessary condition for well-being. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of well-being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. <https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/65>  Kansky, J. (2018). What's love got to do with it?: Romantic relationships and well-being. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), Handbook of well-being. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers. DOI:nobascholar.com - <https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/10>  **Psychological Flexibility**  Kashdan, T.B., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30,* 865-878.  Bonanno, G.A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist, 59*, 20-28.  **Meaning and Purpose in Life**  Heintzelman, S. J., & King, L. A. (2014). (The Feeling of) Meaning-as-Information. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *18,* 153-167.  Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *11*(5), 531-545  McKnight, P. E., & Kashdan, T. B. (2009). Purpose in life as a system that creates and sustains health and well-being: an integrative, testable theory. *Review of General Psychology*, *13*(3), 242-251. | 1 discussion question and answer due by 7/18 at 11:59PM  Reflection #3 must be submitted by 7/18 at 11:59PM |
| **7/19 – 7/21** | **Morality**  Haidt, J. (2008). Morality. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3, 65-72. | 1 discussion question and answer due by 7/22 at 11:59PM  Reflections #4-5 must be submitted by 7/22 at 11:59PM |
|  | **Final Paper due by 7/23 at 11:59PM** |  |