

**Honors Seminar in the Social Sciences 254**  
**The Science of Happiness**  
**Fall 2021**

**Course Information**

21:525:254:01:00547  
Rutgers University, Newark  
Mondays & Wednesdays 4:00-5:20  
Engelhard Hall, Room 213

**Instructor Information**

**Samantha Heintzelman, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor, Psychology  
[samantha.heintzelman@rutgers.edu](mailto:samantha.heintzelman@rutgers.edu)  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00-4:00  
Smith Hall 354

**Required Materials**

**Course Website: Canvas**

- This course requires your use of the course Canvas page. You are responsible for ensuring that you have access to the Canvas page for this course.
- All readings, supplementary videos, etc., will be posted, and some writing assignments will be submitted, on the course Canvas page.

**Zoom**

- This course may require your use of Zoom. You are responsible for ensuring that you have access to Zoom if the need arises.

**Course Description:**

*The Science of Happiness (3 credits)* Psychological study of happiness including scientific examinations of theories of subjective well-being, well-being measurement, cross-cultural perspectives of happiness, sources of happiness, outcomes of happiness, and activities to promote happiness. Intersections with fields of government and policy, technology, healthcare, and business management will be examined.

**Learning Outcomes/Goals:** At the end of this course, you should be able to successfully demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:

1. Define subjective well-being and identify its source and outcome correlates
2. Discuss the validity of various well-being measurement strategies
3. Understand prominent theories of happiness
4. Describe the bi-directional relationships of subjective well-being with social relationships and health
5. Discuss the experience of subjective well-being from a cross-cultural perspective
6. Understand the relevance of happiness for public policy matters
7. Describe the relationship between money and happiness
8. Identify patterns of time use that are relevant for happiness
9. Discuss the role of technology in the experience of happiness
10. Understand the challenges of becoming happier
11. Identify scientifically validated strategies for becoming happier including gratitude and prosociality

12. Describe the psychological constructs of meaning and purpose in life
13. Understand psychological research regarding resilience and self-compassion
14. Identify key take-away messages from the science of happiness that can be leveraged in your own life for improved personal well-being

**Assessment of Learning Outcomes:** Mastery of learning outcomes will be assessed through writing assignments, class participation, and a final project which includes a class presentation and a paper.

**Office Hours:** Dr. Heintzelman will host office hours on Wednesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 pm. Students can also schedule alternative in person or virtual appointments outside these times with Dr. Heintzelman if needed. Students are encouraged to use office hours to ask clarifying questions regarding the course content or to gain more information on pursuing careers in psychology or related fields.

### **Course Structure**

The course will meet twice weekly and will consist of required readings, multimedia materials, lectures, activities, writing assignments, and discussion participation. In typical weeks, Monday meetings will focus on new content and Wednesday meetings will involve group discussions and activity reflections. There will be a final paper project due at the end of the semester, with preliminary components including a project abstract and class presentation.

Each week students are responsible for reading (or listening, watching, etc.) the materials assigned. Readings will include a mix of scholarly journal articles, chapters, and other press pieces. You will be responsible for watching any videos and other multimedia materials assigned (e.g., videos, podcasts). Across the course of the semester, you will be expected to complete a variety of activities which will be accompanied by reflection papers, submitted on Canvas, and in-class discussions.

### **Writing Assignments**

Approximately once each week (12 times total), students will submit a writing assignment in response to a provided prompt. These writing assignments will often involve the execution of an activity followed by a reflection on that activity. Further details regarding each activity, including a description of the point allocation rubric for the writing assignment, will be described in assignment description on Canvas. Each writing submission is worth a possible 10 points. Together, these weekly written submissions will be worth a possible total of 120 points (30% of your grade). All writing assignment grades will be included in the calculation of students' final course grades.

### **Participation**

Students are expected to attend and participate in each class session and will be graded accordingly, a possible 5 points for each class session. Participation includes attendance, attentive engagement, active discussion participation, and additional in-class activity completion. Participation points will be accrued for 26 of the class sessions (the two class

sessions dedicated to project presentations will not include additional participation points). Students will be able to drop their lowest two participation scores and so the final grades will consist of each students' highest 24 participation point sessions. Therefore, participation points will be worth a total of 120 points (30% of your grade).

**Final Course Project**

**Project Abstract.** Students will submit a short abstract describing their project. This will include an identification of the project thesis (the central topic of focus) and will include a list of at least three scientific references with commentary regarding their applicability to the project thesis. Dr. Heintzelman will review project abstracts and provide feedback regarding the appropriateness of the proposal in meeting the requirements for the final course project. The abstract is worth a possible 20 points (5% of your grade).

**Project Presentation.** Students will make an oral presentation of their course project to the class during the final two class sessions of the semester. Further details about the presentations will be provided by Dr. Heintzelman later in the semester. Presentations are worth a possible 40 points (10% of your grade).

**Final Paper.** Students will complete a final paper deeply examining a topic of their choosing from the science of happiness. The topic and format must be approved by Dr. Heintzelman through the abstract submission. Further details about the final paper requirements will be provided by Dr. Heintzelman later in the semester. Final papers are worth a possible 100 points (25% of your grade).

**Evaluation:**

Category	Points Possible	% of Grade	Points Earned
Writing Assignments (12 x 10 pts)	120	30%	
Participation (24 x 5 pts)	120	30%	
Final Project Abstract	20	5%	
Final Project Presentation	40	10%	
Final Project	100	25%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Grading:**

	%	Points
<b>A</b>	92—100	368+
<b>B+</b>	86—91.99	344—367.99
<b>B</b>	80—85.99	320—343.99
<b>C+</b>	74—79.99	296—329.99
<b>C</b>	68—73.99	272—295.99
<b>D</b>	62—67.99	248—271.99
<b>F</b>	0—61.99	0—247.99

Students must earn the listed point values within the given assignments to earn the listed grade. Requests to adjust one's grade outside the parameters of the listed course structure will not be granted.

## Course Policies and Expectations

***Respect and Sensitivity Policy:*** The content of this course includes some sensitive topics. To ensure fruitful discussions, all students are expected to contribute to a learning environment characterized by respect for one another. Generally, if you have any problems or concerns regarding this course, please contact me as soon as possible. We will strive to respect and value the diversity that exists in RU-N classrooms (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, national origin, disability, geographic background, political orientation, sexual orientation, etc.). While we may sometimes disagree with each other on topics discussed in class, we should remember that appreciating diversity in perspectives and background is an important part of the learning process. If you ever feel that you are not being given the respect you deserve in class, please let me know.

***Netiquette Policy for Online Interactions:*** It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. It is important to remember that behind every name, there is a person. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette. Please respect the following the following general guidelines in your communications for this course.

1. Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in email, on discussion boards, or in any other communication.
2. Respect the privacy of your classmates and what they share in class.
3. Ask classmates for clarification if you find a discussion posting offensive or difficult to understand.
4. Avoid sweeping generalizations. Back up your stated opinions with facts and reliable sources.
5. Understand that we may disagree and that exposure to other people's opinions is part of the learning experience.
6. Be respectful of each other. We're all in this together. Before posting a comment, ask whether you would be willing to make the same comment to a person's face.
7. Do not make personal or insulting remarks.
8. Be aware that typing in all capital letters indicates shouting.
9. Be careful with humor and sarcasm. Both can easily be misunderstood!
10. Check your writing for errors by reviewing what you've written before submitting it.
11. Keep in mind that you are taking a college class. Something that would be inappropriate in a traditional classroom is also inappropriate in an online classroom.

***Attendance Policy:*** Regular attendance and active participation are expected in this course. I understand that unforeseen conflicts and illnesses can occur, particularly in these trying times, and so up to two absences will not affect your participation grade.

***Religious Holiday Policy:*** Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

**Communication Policy:** If you have a question about the course structure or content:

- 1) **Check the syllabus**—the answers to many of your questions are in the syllabus.
- 2) Attend office hours.
- 3) Email me with your question stated clearly.
  - a. Use your Rutgers email account.
  - b. Compose a professionally worded email, e.g., “Dear Dr. Heintzelman,”
  - c. Allow 24 - 48 hours for a response.
- 4) Email to schedule an appointment outside of regular office hours.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University’s educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire academic integrity policy can be found here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

The Department of Psychology at Rutgers University-Newark has established specific guidelines for handling all potential incidents of Academic Integrity violations. Since Academic Integrity is a core component of the guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association, all students will be expected to follow both the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy and the [American Psychological Association](#) ethical code, specifically, APA’s Ethical Code 8.11 Plagiarism: "Psychologists do not present portions of another's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally". As such, every potential violation of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy or APA’s Ethical Principles may be reported and handled by either an Academic Integrity Facilitator or the Instructor. Failure to abide by the department’s policies can result in the student becoming ineligible to pursue a major in psychology at Rutgers University-Newark.

**Plagiarism Checks:** Submitted writing assignments may be submitted to plagiarism detection software for screening.

Students shall adhere to the policies as established by the Office of Academic Services. <http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/oas/ai>

**Disability Services Policy:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the RU-N Office of Disability Services at <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/disability-services>, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. Information about documentation can be found here: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, the Office of Disability Services will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible.

### Course Schedule Outline

\*\*This is a working draft of the course schedule and is subject to change.\*\*

	<b>Class Meeting Date</b>	<b>Class Meeting Topic</b>
1	Wednesday, September 1	What is Happiness?
2	Wednesday, September 8	Measures and Methods
3	Monday, September 13	Happiness Across Cultures
4	Wednesday, September 15	Happiness and Race
5	Monday, September 20	Happiness and Social Relationships
6	Wednesday, September 22	Happiness and Social Relationships
7	Monday, September 27 --Asynchronous--	Happiness and Health
8	Wednesday, September 29	Happiness and Health
9	Monday, October 4	Happiness and Money
10	Wednesday, October 6	Happiness and Money
11	Monday, October 11	Happiness and Time Use
12	Wednesday, October 13	Happiness and Time Use
13	Monday, October 18	Happiness and Technology
14	Wednesday, October 20	Happiness and Technology
15	Monday, October 25	Happiness in Society and Public Policy
16	Wednesday, October 27	Happiness in Society and Public Policy
17	Monday, November 1	The Challenges of Becoming Happier
18	Wednesday, November 3	Becoming Happier: Positive Psychology Interventions
19	Monday, November 8	Gratitude
20	Wednesday, November 10	Prosociality
21	Monday, November 15	Savoring

22	Wednesday, November 17	Values and Goals
23	Monday, November 22	Self-Compassion
24	Monday, November 29	Resilience
25	Wednesday, December 1	Meaning in Life
26	Monday, December 6	Psychological Richness
27	Wednesday, December 8	<i>Final Project Presentations</i>
28	Monday, December 13	<i>Final Project Presentations</i>
FINAL	Monday, December 20	<i>Final Papers Due</i>