

CST228

Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions

Autumn session 2013

8 credit points, prerequisite 36 credit points at 100 level

SUBJECT OUTLINE

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Arts

School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication

Cultural Studies program

SUBJECT COORDINATORS

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Assessment Summary

	Assessment	Format	Length	Due Date	Weighting
1	Participation	Weekly oral reports plus participation	30–60 seconds	Weeks 1–12	15%
2	Reflective journal	Written report plus diary	1000 words plus diary	2pm Friday 19 April	20%
3	Activity	Class time organised by student group	<i>See notes</i>	Allocated in class	20%
4	Consultancy	Report	2500 words plus diary	2pm Wednesday 5 June	45%

Class times and locations are available from the University's website. Please note that times on the timetable are provisional. Students should enrol in classes via SOLS before week 1. Those with timetabling difficulties should see Chris or Brian.

Generic information relating to all Arts Faculty subjects including codes of practice, plagiarism, faculty handbook, grievance procedures and support services can be found at Arts Central's webpage, under the link Subject Outlines:
<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/current/artscentral/UOW061165.html>

Advice to you from previous students

- Make sure to read the weekly readings to be able to share your thoughts on them each class.
- Pick topics that interest you.
- Start early on your consultancy.
- Be happy!

This subject outline, plus information sheets and consent forms for the consultancy, are available at <http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/>.

Subject description

We will explore what is known about the causes and conditions for happiness as individuals, in interpersonal relationships and as society. The question “how can we be happy?” will be approached in an interdisciplinary fashion through various perspectives including cultural studies and cultural angles on psychology, economics and sociology. Students will develop skills and concepts for being informed, responsible independent learners who can solve problems, communicate effectively and use appropriate research methods of observation and questioning (interviews and surveys).

Learning outcomes; graduate qualities

1. Think critically about happiness and its connections with personal, social, political and economic issues (independent learners).
2. Develop understanding of a range of views about happiness and their relation to theories (informed).
3. Learn ways to reflect on and think creatively about happiness and related concepts (independent learners; problem solvers).
4. Develop research skills, including interviewing (effective communicators; problem solvers).
5. Develop and improve oral presentation and writing skills (effective communicators; responsible).

Informed

Have a sound knowledge of an area of a disciplinary study or interdisciplinary area of study offered by the Faculty of Arts through its majors with an understanding of its current issues, their contexts and developments over time.

Independent Learners

Engage with new ideas and ways of thinking, enquiry and critical analysis of issues and research through a sequence of subjects that culminates in the ability to reflect broadly on their field of study. Acknowledge the work and ideas of others.

Problem Solvers

Take on challenges and apply the relevant skills required to respond effectively to the central issues raised. Be flexible, thorough and innovative and aim for high standards.

Effective Communicators

Articulate ideas and convey them effectively using a variety of modes. Engage collaboratively with people in different settings. Recognise how culture can shape communication.

Responsible

Understand how decisions can affect others, and make ethically informed choices. Appreciate and respect diversity. Act with integrity as part of local, national, regional, global and professional communities.

The Faculty Graduate Qualities can be found on the following website:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/current/FacultyGraduateQualities/index.html>

Subject schedule

Week	Starting	
1	4 March	1-minute reports; meet-and-greet; subject overview
2	11 March	1-minute reports; set up activity groups
3	18 March	1-minute reports; form consultancy teams; model classroom activity
4	25 March	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy and classroom activity [<i>no class Friday</i>]
5	1 April	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity [<i>no class Monday</i>]
6	8 April	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity
7	15 April	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity Reflective journal due
	22 April	mid session recess
8	29 April	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity
9	6 May	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity
10	13 May	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity
11	20 May	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy; classroom activity
12	27 May	1-minute reports; preparation for consultancy
13	3 June	Consultancy report due review

What happens in “lectures”

- Journal-related activities (weeks 1–6)
- Consultancy-related activities (weeks 7–12)

Sessions listed as “lectures” will actually be interactive session rather than talks.

What happens in tutorials

- Weekly 1-minute reports (weeks 1–12)
- Activities organised by Chris/Brian (weeks 1–3, 12)
- Prepare for reflective journal (weeks 1–6)
- Classroom activities (weeks 5–11)

Textbook

Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The how of happiness: a new approach to getting the life you want* (New York: Penguin, 2008)

Weekly topics for 1-minute reports

1. *How happy are you?*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 1 and chapter 2 up to “The limits of life circumstances”

2. *Circumstances and set points*

Lyubomirsky, remainder of chapter 2

3. *Income and happiness*

Daniel Kahneman et al., “Would you be happier if you were richer? A focusing illusion,” *Science*, 30 June 2006, pp. 1908–1910. Available as an e-reading.

4. *Happiness activities that fit*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 3 and foreword to part two

5. *Gratitude and positive thinking*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 4

6. *Social connections*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 5

7. *Stress, hardship and trauma*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 6

8. *Flow and savouring*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 7

9. *Critique of positive psychology*

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided* (2009), chapter 6, available as an e-reading.

10. *Goals*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 8

11. *Body and soul*

Lyubomirsky, chapter 9

12. *Education*

Tal Ben-Shahar, “Happiness in education,” *Happier* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), pp. 83–96. Available as an e-reading.

For any given week you can, if you prefer, use a different reading that covers similar issues. You can also have a look at other e-readings. If you find a reading that you think is equal to or better than the one listed, be sure to tell Brian or Chris.

Task 2

Reflective journal

Due date 2pm Friday 19 April

Weighting 20%

Length 1000-word journal plus diary

Choose an activity that research says increases personal happiness, such as expressing gratitude, helping others, being optimistic or practising mindfulness. (See Lyubomirsky for ideas.) Undertake this activity for at least 5 weeks, keeping a personal diary of your observations about your experience, with entries once a week or more. You can keep the diary on a blog or as typed or handwritten notes.

During the time you undertake the activity, you should also read academic and popular writing (such as news stories) about it. In your diary, you can comment on the connection between what researchers and popular writers say about the activity and your experience of it.

Your submission is in two parts:

1. A 1000-word reflective journal
2. Your diary.

In the reflective journal, you should report on 3 or more pieces of academic research (e.g. journal articles) and 3 or more pieces of popular writing (newspapers, magazines, websites, etc.) that recommend your activity as enhancing happiness. Your reflective journal should address:

- The evidence provided by academic sources for the benefits of the nominated activity
- The similarities and differences between academic and popular reporting of the evidence
- Your implementation of the activity
- Your reflections (observations and assessments) about your experience
- Your evaluation of the evidence for the activity based on the sources and your experience. For example, does your experience reinforce or contradict the academic evidence and popular reporting?

Restrict your account to 1000 words and provide a word count at the end of the journal. This requires focused thinking and succinct writing which are skills we are asking you to develop here. As author Mark Twain is quoted as saying; “If I’d had more time, I’d have written a shorter letter.”

Provide access to your diary, either by giving a web address or attaching a copy to your journal. We probably will not read your diary, but we will check that you’ve done it.

Normally you should continue the same activity through the five weeks, but you may decide to change, for example because it is not a good fit for you. If so, explain your reasoning in your diary and journal.

Reflective journals will be assessed using these criteria

- Understanding of happiness research and writing
- Insights concerning your experience
- Use of evidence (academic research, popular writing, data about how you carried out your activity)
- Quality of writing

Submission

Send your journal (and diary or link) to Chris or Brian by email, as an attachment. Name the attachment with your student number, e.g. 1234567.pdf or 1234567.doc. In the text of your journal, include your student number but not your name.

Task 3
Classroom activity

Due dates In tutorial time in weeks 5 to 11
The week for your activity will be decided in class.
Weighting 20%

Students will form teams of 2 or 3 individuals. Your team will run a learning activity within a tutorial, designed to engage other students in connecting happiness ideas with one of the following topics.

advertising
architecture
cognition
communication technology
community
competition
diet
economics
ethics
fashion
friendship
love
medicine
money
music
psychology
religion
sport
television
work

Your activity should relate one of these topics to some aspect of happiness research and practice. You should prepare a take-away handout, with a copy for each class member, including information about the topic and happiness, and an annotated list of references on the topic.

Maximum time allocated for each classroom activity will be

- individual, 18 minutes
- team of two, 34 minutes
- team of three, 48 minutes

It's okay to take less than this amount of time.

Classroom activities will be assessed using these criteria (roughly equally)

- understanding of happiness-related practice (including research in the area)
- understanding of case study
- audience involvement
- aids (handouts, slides, posters, videos, costumes, props, music)

This is an activity, *not a presentation*.

Here are some examples of activities that are effectively organised to involve the audience and use many aids (the third and fourth assessment criteria). You show understanding of the practice and the case study (the first two assessment criteria) by the content and organisation of materials used.

Example 1

Students are put into groups of three according to the team's prearranged plan. Each group deals with a series of tasks: studying a handout and filling in a questionnaire; drawing a diagram; watching a two-minute video clip and writing a critic's summary comment; playing a game; and preparing questions for the other groups. At the end, each student answers a single probing question.

Example 2

Each student, on entering the classroom, is given an animal token and a questionnaire. After filling out the questionnaire and depositing it in a box, students go to one of four groups according to their token. Each group spends 12 minutes at each of four stations around the room. At each station, one of the team members runs an activity: a video followed by discussion, a game, a set of handouts followed by a quiz, and construction of a diagram. At the end, students fill out the same questionnaire in order to see how much they learned.

Example 3

Each student is given a workbook, with text, pictures, cut-outs and quizzes. Slides are automatically projected on the screen; posters are on the walls; music is playing; a pile of cards is on a table. Some of the workbook exercises require use of information or clues from the slides, posters, songs and cards. Team members are available to answer individual queries. At the end, the team collects the pages of the workbooks filled out by students, leaving the main content of the workbooks for students to take away.

Guidelines

- *Don't* talk to the class about the case study or theory.

Why not? Because it's low on audience involvement, and it's inefficient.

Instead, use a handout with the same information. People can read text in a fraction of the time it takes to say it out loud.

- *Don't* rely on verbal instructions.

Why not? Because half the class won't be listening and some people won't hear them correctly.

Instead, provide written instructions in a handout, on a poster or a slide show. Only give instructions verbally, if necessary, to explain or reinforce written instructions.

- *Don't* show a video for more than a minute or two at a time.

Why not? Because it's low on audience involvement. Viewers quickly switch into passive entertainment mode.

Instead, have a quiz or other exercise to fill out during the video, or show a minute's worth of the video, have a break for discussion, then show another minute, etc.

- *Don't* tell the class to "get into groups."

Why not? Because self-selected groups may not be the size or composition that you want.

Instead, decide in advance the size of groups and — possibly — who you want in each one. You can allocate people to groups by some arbitrary criterion, such as birthdays, height or random numbers. Or you can allocate people according to their views about specific issues, such as about money or love. Or you can select the groups in advance, to get a desired mix of personality types. For example, to foster balanced participation, you might put the most talkative students in a group together.

A few specific points:

- Identify sources for any quotes, for example in handouts.

- Plan every detail. For example, if you want responses to a question, you might display the instruction "Everyone write down a response on a slip of paper" rather than "What do you think?" Planning details will make your workshop more engaging.

- Practise in advance to iron out difficulties and check that you can stay within the allotted time. Keeping to time can be a big challenge.

Task 4

Happiness consultancy

Due date 2pm Wednesday 5 June

Weighting 45%

Length 2500 words plus diary

Submission

Send your consultancy report (and diary or link) to Chris or Brian by email, as an attachment. Name the attachment with your student number, e.g. 1234567.pdf or 1234567.doc. In the text of your report, include your student number but not your name.

The consultancy is a continuation of your reflective journal.

- You continue with the activity you used for your journal, or a different one, and/or an additional one.

- You recruit two or more individuals — called clients — to undertake an activity known to increase happiness, either the same activity as your own or a different one.

- You introduce your clients to the activity, for example through a presentation, talk, workshop and/or handout.

- You monitor their engagement with the activity on a regular basis (at least weekly) through observations, interviews, survey and/or other means.

- You evaluate the effect of the activity on yourself and your clients using questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and/or other techniques.

Note Your role is to introduce, monitor and evaluate the activity. You do this by observing and talking to your clients. You are not to play the role of teacher, coach or counsellor.

In tutorials, you will be part of a team to help find suitable individuals for your consultancy. At most one of your individuals can be a student (but not a student in CST228 or a previous happiness class). You can recruit individuals from anywhere in the world, and use email, Skype and other techniques for monitoring

and evaluation. If you do this, you should comment on the advantages and disadvantages of this option.

To satisfy the ethics requirements covering this assignment, the individuals you recruit must be competent adults who are not in a vulnerable category (including being unemployed, in prison, Indigenous or under 18).

You should submit a consultancy report telling about your experience and what you learned about and from the individuals in your programme. You should use findings from both happiness research, both academic and popular sources.

Your report should include

- how you chose the activity
- how you recruited individuals
- how you introduced them to the activity
- how you monitored their involvement with the activity
- how you evaluated your own and their experiences
- how your and their experiences relate to academic research about the activity and happiness
- how your and their experiences relate to popular writing about the activity and happiness
- benefits and disadvantages of the activity
- recommendations for helping people to continue with the activity (or choose a better one).

Supplement your report with your diary (as with the journal).

UNHAPPY RADICAL



HAPPY RADICAL



Interview protocol

Participant information sheets, interview consent forms and sample questions will be provided, and ethical and practical aspects of interviewing covered in class. You must obtain signed consent forms from any person that you interview and you must hand in any recording of an interview to Chris or Brian at the end of the subject.

Assessment criteria for consultancy reports

- Understanding of research on happiness, especially in relation to your chosen activity
- Understanding of the individuals you recruited and the causes and conditions of their happiness
- Use of sources about happiness generally and the activity in particular, and the use of interviews, observations and other methods to introduce, monitor and evaluate the activity
- Expression and appearance