

The Pursuit of Happiness

Political Science 192

SSB 353

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Spring 2009
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Class Meets: Monday 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. on April 6 & 20, May 4 & 18, June 1

Office Hours: Thursday, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

My Mission as a Teacher:

“To enable my students to learn joyfully, think clearly, read carefully, and write well.”

Abstract

The Declaration of Independence describes the pursuit of happiness as an inalienable right. Economists are investigating subjective well-being. And, positive psychology is providing new insights. How might political science contribute to our individual and collective pursuit of happiness?

Books

Required:

Jonathan Haidt (2006) The Happiness Hypothesis (\$10.85)

Recommended:

Martin Seligman (2005) Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment (\$10.20)

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1998) Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life (\$10.17)

Topics & Readings

Meeting 1 (Monday, April 6th) – Introduction (Book Group 1/Articles Group 5)

Alexander Weiss (2008) “Happiness Is a Personal(ity) Thing: The Genetics of Personality and Well-Being in a Representative Sample” Psychological Science (6 pages)

Christopher K. Hsee and Reid Hastie (2006) Decision and experience: why don't we choose what makes us happy? Trends in Cognitive Sciences (7 pages)

Carol Graham (2005) “The Economics of Happiness: Insights on globalization from a novel approach” World Economics (15 pages)

Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 (50 pages)

Meeting 2 (Monday, April 20th) – Gross National Happiness (Book Group 2/Articles Group 4)

Ed Diener (2000) “Subjective Well-Being: The Science of Happiness and a Proposal for a National Index” American Psychologist (10 pages)

Daniel Kahneman et al (2004) “Toward National Well-Being Accounts” The American Economic Review (7 pages)

Rafeael di Tella & Robert MacCulloch (2005) “Gross National Happiness as an Answer to the Easterlin Paradox?” Social Science Research Network (43 pages)(27 pages of text)

Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Chapters 3 & 4 (36 pages)

Meeting 3 (Monday, May 4th) – (Book Group 3/ Articles Group 1)

Daniel Kahneman and Alan B. Krueger (2006) “Developments in the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being” Journal of Economic Perspectives (22 pages)

James Fowler and Nicholas Christakis (2008) “Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network: longitudinal analysis over 20 years in the Framingham Heart Study” British Journal of Medicine (9 pages)

Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Chapters 5 & 6 (54 pages)

Meeting 4 (Monday, May 18th) – The Hedonic Treadmill (Book Group 4/Articles Group 2)

Andrew E. Clark et al (2006) “Lags and Leads in Life Satisfaction: A Test of the Baseline Hypothesis” IZA Discussion Paper (32 pages)

Ed Diener et al (2006) Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill: Revising the Adaptation Theory of Well-Being American Psychologist (10 pages)

Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Chapters 7 & 8 (46 pages)

Meeting 5 (Monday, June 1st) – (Book Group 5/Articles Group 3)

Eric Wilson (2008) “In Praise of Melancholy” Chronicle of Higher Education (8 pages)

John F. Helliwell & Haifang Huang (2006) “How's Your Government? International Evidence Linking Good Government and Well-Being” National Bureau of Economic Research (44 pages)(22 pages of text)

Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Chapters 9-11 (64 pages)

Final Paper Due (June 1st)

Assignments & Grading

20% -- Participation

80% -- Final Paper (10 pages)

- D Regurgitation – Like an infant, you are good at spitting it back out.
- C Basic – Applying the facts and skills "as is."
- B Intermediate – Applying the facts and skills to new problems or situations.
- A Advanced – Asking counter-factual questions, modifying operative principles to illustrate command of the core concepts in challenging contexts.

Grade Changes and Extensions

All requests for grade changes must be made formally to your teaching assistant. Requests must be typed, double spaced, and include precise textual citations that support your contention. A review of any grade may result in either a higher or a lower grade. Extensions on assignments and make-up exams will only be granted in cases of documented illness or family medical emergencies. Please contact your teaching assistant as soon as possible if you need to request one.

Late Policy

Papers are due at the **beginning** of class. 2% bonus if an assignment is turned in more than 25 hours early. A 5% penalty applies for any papers turned in after the beginning of class, with a 5% additional penalty for each day an assignment is turned in late. No papers will be accepted electronically. A paper is not submitted until I have a physical copy of it.

Plagiarism

Fidelity to ones' own ideas and the ideas of others dictates that proper citation be made for any work or idea of another. If I believe that you have violated this principle, I will change from being your advocate to being your prosecutor and I will seek the strongest penalty consistent with university policy.