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:

Recommended:
Topics & Readings

Meeting 1 (Monday, April 6th) – Introduction (Book Group 1/Articles Group 5)
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)
Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 (50 pages)

Meeting 2 (Monday, April 20th) – Gross National Happiness (Book Group 2/Articles Group 4)
Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Chapters 3 & 4 (36 pages)

Meeting 3 (Monday, May 4th) – (Book Group 3/ Articles Group 1)
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)
Haidt The Happiness Hypothesis Chapters 7 & 8 (46 pages)

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