

Social Science Honor Sequence: The Good Life (Spring 2017)

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50pm SSPA 1100

Instructors:

Cailin O'Connor (cailino@uci.edu)

Office: SST 793 – Office hours: Thursday 11:30-12:30 pm Au Bon Pain on campus

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Office: SST 781 – Office hours: Tuesday 2-3pm

Teaching Assistants:

Elliott Chen (chened@uci.edu)

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Office: SST 708 – Office hours: Wednesday 9-11am

Course Description:

What is a good life? How do you live one? We start with philosophical answers to these questions, from both Ancient and Modern figures. From there we use findings from economics, anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience to try to understand what makes people happy. As will become clear, we discover that goodness, happiness, and sociality seem to be deeply intertwined in humans. We conclude the class by looking at the evolution of human sociality and morality to understand why this is so.

Required Texts:

All course readings will be made available on the class website.

Assignments/Evaluations:

- 1) Midterm Exam 1: Students will complete a midterm examination on class material. (In class, Tuesday of week 4.)
- 2) Midterm Exam 2: Students will complete a midterm examination on class material. (In class, Tuesday of week 8.)
- 3) Final Exam: Students will complete a final examination.

Grade Breakdown:

40% Final Exam:

25% Midterm 1

30% Midterm 2

5% Attendance/In-class participation

Policies:

Attendance- Section and class attendance are mandatory.

Safe Space- This class, including lectures and sections, is a safe space for students of all genders, sexual orientations, races, religions, etc. Please don't use derogatory language in this class. Please talk to us if you have a preferred name or pronoun that you would like us and/or your TA to use.

Extra Credit- Extra credit will be offered for students who complete the mid-course evaluation. If further opportunities for extra credit arise, we will announce them in class.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism- The penalty for *any* violation of academic integrity -- including but not limited to plagiarism -- is failure for the course and a letter recording the violation sent to the Dean. Please acquaint yourself with UCI's academic honesty policy at <http://www.editor.uci.edu/catalogue/appx/appx.2.htm>.

Course Outline/Readings:

Week 1 – Utility and the Good Life

- i. No reading
- ii. Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chs. 1-5.

Week 2 – Stoicism, Epicurianism, and Hedonism

- i. Plato, *The Apology*, *Gorgias* readings,
- ii. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1.7-1.10, 10.7, 10.8

Week 3 – The Problem of Socrates

- i. Epictetus, “The Enchiridion”; Epicurus, “Letter to Menoecus”

ii. Nietzsche, “The Problem of Socrates” and “Morality as Anti-Nature”.

Week 4 – Midterm / Methodology

i. Midterm

ii. Alexandrova, “Well-Being as an Object of Science”; Wasserstein, et al. “ASA Statement on Statistical Significance and P-Values”.

Week 5 – The Bear Necessities

i. Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation” 370-385; Pollen, *In Defense of Food*, Part III.

ii. Penedo and Dahn, “Exercise and wellbeing”; Steptoe, et al. “Positive affect, psychological well-being, and good sleep”.

Week 6 – Sex & Money

i. Blanchflower & Oswald, “Money, Sex, and Happiness”; Lowenstein et al, “Does Increased Sexual Frequency Enhance Happiness?”

ii. Easterlin, “Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?”; Veenhoven, “Is Happiness Relative?”

Week 7 – Happiness Across Cultures / Positive Psychology

i. Schyns, “Crossnational Differences in Happiness”; Kitayama et al. “Culture, Emotion, and Well-being”.

ii. Gable & Haidt, “What (and Why) is Positive Psychology?”; Diener et al. “Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill”.

Week 8 – Midterm / What’s Good about Feeling Good?

i. Midterm

ii. Dunbar et al. “Social laughter is correlated with an elevated pain threshold”; Coan et al. “Lending a Hand”.

Week 9 – Neuroscience of Happiness

i. Kringelbach & Berridge, “Towards a Functional Neuroanatomy of Pleasure and Happiness”; Ishak et al, “Oxytocin Role in Enhancing Well-Being”; Churchland, Ch. 2.

ii. Churchland, *Braintrust*, Chs. 3 & 4.

Week 10 –Evolution, Morality, and Well-Being

- i. Skyrms, *The Stag Hunt* readings; Frank, *Passions Within Reason* readings
- ii. Nesse, “Natural Selection and the elusiveness of happiness”.