

## SOCIOLOGY OF HAPPINESS (SC082)

Instructor: Esteban Calvo  
Email: calvobra@bc.edu  
Office: McGuinn 410-C  
Mailbox: McGuinn 410, #4  
Office hours: M 3-4:30 and by appointment

Period: Fall 2008/2009  
Class time: M, W, F @ 2pm  
Credits: 3  
Class location: ????  
Web: [www2.bc.edu/~calvobra/teaching.htm](http://www2.bc.edu/~calvobra/teaching.htm)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is happiness? Can we measure happiness? What are the objections to the study of happiness? Are we getting happier? What does make us happy or unhappy? Does money buy happiness? Should happiness be pursued individually through private lifestyles or collectively through public policy? Does sociology have a clue? Students in this course will learn to find answers to these questions drawing from the sociology of happiness. Contributions from personal experiences and fields such as psychology, economy, psychiatry, theology and neuroscience are considered, but the emphasis is on sociological perspectives.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The final grade for the course will be calculated based on: group documents, in-class essays, participation, and final exam.

#### *Group Documents*

55% of the final grade will be based on group reports. The class will break into study groups that will select one topic to be studied, under my guidance, throughout the semester. During the second week of class, each group must schedule a meeting with me to get the topic approved. At least one day before the meeting, study groups should: create a Google Documents account, email me the URL, and upload two Word documents: a project summary and a study plan. The project summary should be a one page summary of the proposed topic and main questions. The study plan should describe goals and include a well-organized timeline describing specific tasks and individual responsibilities. Once my approval of the topic is granted, each group will start working on a progress report, including a first draft of an introduction and a literature review. Each group will be responsible for: (1) keep all three documents on-line throughout the semester, so me and other students in the class can read them; (2) give me privileges to comment and edit their documents (do not grant this privilege to other people); and (3) update all three documents on a weekly basis before 12pm on Mondays, incorporating relevant comments, class contents and readings. By the end of the semester, the progress report should turn into a final draft including an introduction, development, conclusion, and references. The progress report should never exceed 4,000 words (excluding references) at any given point in time. Please include a word count in the title page and update it as necessary. Each group will receive two grades for their documents: one by the end of October (25%) and another one by the end of the semester (30%). Both grades

will be based on the quality of the documents, as well as on the timing and periodicity of the updates. To ensure the participation of all group members, I will ask that group members evaluate each other's participation at the end of the semester. If there is any evidence of an unequal work load distribution, I will take this into account to adjust the grade of each member of the group. Unless groups have a valid and documented excuse (including phone numbers doctor or coach for me to call), I will not give credit for late group project submissions. We will address the group documents guidelines and requirements in detail during the first weeks of classes.

### *In-class Essays*

15% of the final grade will be based on 12 brief unannounced in-class essays. Each essay will be graded 0 or 10. On one side, this means that each person will be able miss up to 2 essays but still get the maximum of 100 credits. On the other side, it also means that it will be very difficult to get permission to make up essays missed beyond the first two, unless students bring notes from their doctor or coach (including phone numbers for me to call) for every essay missed out of the 12.

### *Participation*

15% of the final grade will be based on participation in class discussions and activities. For example, the class will be divided in debate teams that will defend a specific position regarding a controversial topic related to happiness. They will be responsible of collecting the evidence for its position AND against the position of its opponents. Debate teams will have to email me a one or two pages summary of the evidence they collected at least one week before their debate is scheduled. To ensure the participation of all team members, I will ask that team members evaluate each other's participation after their debate is over. Before the next class, each team will be required to revise their summary of evidence and upload it to their Google Documents Webpage so other students can access it.

### *Final Exam*

15% of the final grade will be based on a final exam. The final will be cumulative, covering the entire course contents, all required readings, and all the final drafts of the group documents. I will not give permission to take an exam early. Unless students have a valid and documented excuse (including phone numbers of the doctor or coach for me to call), I will neither give permission to take an exam late. It is not a valid excuse to have several exams on the same day or having purchased a non-refundable air ticket. Athletes who must be away for games may be allowed to take the exam late as long as they come to see me in advance with a letter from their coaches, and we have agreed to a time and date for the make-up exam before the actual exam day.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

The best way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom is through email. The course is based on collaboration among the students. Students are strongly encouraged to share their questions, thoughts, and findings. Students should format all their documents

using the 3d edition of the ASA Style Guide. They should cite all their sources, even unpublished work by their classmates. I take cheating and plagiarism seriously. Students are responsible for knowing the University's academic integrity policy is and how cheating and plagiarism are defined.

## REQUIRED READINGS

The required readings are listed in the following section. They can be accessed from electronic reserve in the BC library, journals' web pages, electronic databases (e.g. sociological abstracts), and authors' web pages. Students can access electronic reserve, journals' web pages, and electronic datasets at: <http://www.bc.edu/libraries/materials.html>. Links to authors' web pages are provided at the end of each reference whenever they are available.

In addition to the readings listed below it is likely that a few additional required readings will be announced during the semester.

Students are strongly encouraged to get a copy of: American Sociological Association. 2007. *Style Guide*. 3rd edition. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

## TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

### *September 2-5: The Study of Happiness*

- Ferriss, Abbott L. 2004. "The Quality of Life Concept in Sociology." *The American Sociologist* 35:37-51.
- Friedman, Elisha Tarlow, Robert M. Schwartz, and David A. F. Haaga. 2002. "Are the Very Happy Too Happy?" *Journal of Happiness Studies* 3:355-72.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2007. "Quality of Life Research." Pp.54-62 in *21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook*, vol. 2, edited by D. L. Peck and C. D. Bryant. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Available at: <http://www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/veenhoven/Pub2000s/2007d-full.pdf>.

### *September 8-12: The Concept of Happiness*

#### **First draft of group documents due this week**

- Keyes, Corey L. M., Dov Shmotkin, and Carol D. Ryff. 2002. "Optimizing Well-being: The Empirical Encounter of Two Traditions." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82:1007-22.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2000. "The Four Qualities of Life. Ordering Concepts and Measures of the Good Life." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 1:1-39. Available at: <http://www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/veenhoven/Pub2000s/2000c-full.pdf>.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2008. "Questions on Happiness." Pp. 1-13 (Section 4.1. of Chapter 4) in *Happiness in Nations, Introductory Text*. Available at: [http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap\\_nat/nat\\_fp.htm](http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/nat_fp.htm).

*September 15-19: Measurement of Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 15 at 12pm**

- Arthaud-Day, Marne L., Joseph C. Rode, Christine H. Mooney, and Janet P. Near. 2005. "The Subjective Well-being Construct: A Test of its Convergent, Discriminant, and Factorial Validity." *Social Indicators Research* 74:445-76.
- Staudinger, Ursula M., Susan Bluck, and P. Yorck Herzberg. 2003. "Looking Back and Looking Ahead: Adult age Differences in Consistency of Diachronous Ratings of Subjective Well-being." *Psychology and Aging* 18:13-24.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2008. "Questions on Happiness." Pp. 14-20 (Section 4.2 of Chapter 4) in *Happiness in Nations, Introductory Text*. Available at: [http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap\\_nat/nat\\_fp.htm](http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/nat_fp.htm).

*September 22-26: Sociological Theories of Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 22 at 12pm**

- Glatzer, Wolfgang. 2000. "Happiness: Classic Theory in the Light of Current Research." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 1:447-64.
- Turner, Jonathan H. and Jan E. Stets. 2006. "Sociological Theories of Human Emotions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32:25-52.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2008. "Sociological Theories of Subjective Well-being." Pp. 44-61 in *The Science of Subjective Well-being: A Tribute to Ed Diener*, edited by M. Eid and R. Larsen. New York: Guilford Publications. Available at: <http://www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/veenhoven/Pub2000s/2008c-full.pdf>.

*September 29-October 3: Fluctuations in Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 29 at 12pm**

- Diener, Ed, Richard E. Lucas, and Christie Napa Scollon. 2006. "Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill: Revising the Adaptation Theory of Well-being." *American Psychologist* 61:305-14.
- Lykken, David and Auke Tellegen. 1996. "Happiness is a Stochastic Phenomenon." *Psychological Science* 7:186-9.
- Veenhoven, Ruut and Michael Hagerty. 2006. "Rising Happiness in Nations 1946-2004: A Reply to Easterlin." *Social Indicators Research* 0:1-16.

*October 6-10: Correlates and Causes of Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 6 at 12pm**

- Blanchflower, David G. and Oswald, Andrew J. 2004. "Money, Sex, and Happiness: An Empirical Study." *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 106:393-415.
- Diener, Ed, Eunkook M Suh, Richard E. Lucas, and Heidi L. Smith. 1999. "Subjective Well-being: Three Decades of Progress." *Psychological Bulletin* 125:276-302.
- Myers, David G. 2000. "The Funds, Friends, and Faith of Happy People." *American Psychologist* 55:56-67.

*October 13: No Classes, Columbus Day*

*October 14-17: No Classes, Groups Meet to Work on their Projects*

*October 20: Progress report*

**Progress report of the group project due October 20 at 12pm in my email**

*October 22-24: Does Money Buy Happiness?*

- Arthaud-Day, Marne L. and Janet P. Near. 2005. "The Wealth of Nations and the Happiness of Nations: Why "Accounting" Matters." *Social Indicators Research* 74:511-48.
- Kahneman, Daniel, Alan B. Krueger, David Schkade, Norbert Schwarz, and Arthur A. Stone. 2006. "Would You Be Happier if You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion." Working Paper No. 125, CEPS, Princeton, NJ.
- Schnitker, Jason. Forthcoming. "Diagnosing Our National Disease: Trends in Income and Happiness, 1973 to 2004." *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

*October 27-31: The Happiness of Nations*

**Update group documents due Monday 27 at 12pm**

- Inglehart, Ronald and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 2000. "Genes, Culture, Democracy, and Happiness." Pp. 163-84 in *Culture and Subjective Well-being*, edited by E. Diener and E. M. Suh. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Radcliff, Benjamin. 2005. "Class Organization and Subjective Well-being: A Cross-national Analysis." *Social Forces* 84:513-30.

*November 3-7: The Benefits of Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 3 at 12pm**

- Lyubomirsky, Sonja, Laura King, and Ed Diener. 2005. "the Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?" *Psychological Bulletin* 131:803-55.
- Rablen, Mathew D. and Andrew J. Oswald. 2007. "Mortality and Immortality." Working Paper No. 785, Department of Economics, The University of Warwick, UK.

*November 10-14: Stumbling on Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 10 at 12pm**

- Gilbert, Daniel. 2005. "Foreword." Pp.xiii-xvii in *Stumbling on Happiness*. New York: Vintage.
- Gilbert, Daniel. 2005. "In the Blind Spot of the Mind's Eye." Pp. 83-105 in *Stumbling on Happiness*. New York: Vintage.

*November 17-21: Happy Aging*

**Update group documents due Monday 17 at 12pm**

- Calvo, Esteban, Kelly Haverstick and Steven A. Sass. Forthcoming. "Gradual Retirement, Sense of Control, and Retirees' Happiness." *Research on Aging*. Available at: <http://www2.bc.edu/~calvobra/publications.htm>.

- Siegrist, Johannes, Olaf Von Dem Knesebeck, and Craig Evan Pollack. 2004. "Social Productivity and Well-being: A Sociological Exploration." *Social Theory and Health* 2:1-17.

*November 24: Inequality in Happiness*

**Update group documents due Monday 24 at 12pm**

- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2005. "Return of Inequality in Modern Society? Test by Dispersion of Life-satisfaction Across Time and Nations." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 6:457-87. Available at: <http://www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/veenhoven/Pub2000s/2005d-full.pdf>.
- Yang, Yang. 2008. "Social Inequalities in Happiness in the United States, 1972 to 2004: An Age-Period-Cohort Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 73:204-26.

*November 26-28: No Classes, Thanksgiving*

*December 1-5: Happiness and Public Policy*

**Update group documents due Monday 1 at 12pm**

- Diener, Ed and Martin E. P. Seligman. 2004. "Beyond Money: Toward and Economy of Well-being." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 5:1-31.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2002. "Why Social Policy Needs Subjective Indicators." *Social Indicators Research* 58:33-45.

*December 8: Conclusions*

**Final group documents due December 8 at 12pm in my email**

**December 13: Final Exam**

**Final exam, 9am**