The Social Construction

of

Happiness

COURSE SYLLABUS

University of Connecticut

Professor *N. A. Cazenave*
Sociology 2271
Fall 2013

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays and Thursdays
2:00- 3:00pm and by appointment

MEETING TIME AND PLACE:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:45pm
Room LH 306

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the pursuit of "happiness" as a social construction which is shaped by and helps shapes human societies and their various social structures and processes. To this end it explores the social causes, nature, and consequences of the pursuit of happiness as a socially defined and organized phenomenon. Based on the assumption that--whether it is called happiness, joy, spirituality, or simply, higher consciousness-- there is, indeed, a profoundly positive state of well-being and life meaning that can be either nurtured or inhibited by social forces, the course delineates the various social and cultural factors associated with its realization. Topics explored include: the cultural origins and evolution of the concept of happiness; the social, economic and political exploitation of the pursuit of happiness; insights into the nature of happiness offered by various religious and spiritual traditions and by modern human potential movements; the social correlates of happiness; and the social and cultural implications of widespread happiness.

TEXTS

Michael Argyle	*The Psychology of Happiness*
Tom Butler-Bowdon	*50 Spiritual Classics*
Richard Schoch	*The Secrets of Happiness*
Tal Ben-Shahar	*Happier*

EVALUATION

Please read carefully.

Students have the option of choosing one of three learning and evaluation tracks.

The **Scholars Track** offers students the greatest opportunity: to learn, to express themselves creatively, and to maximize their enjoyment of the course. To qualify for the Scholar's Track students must earn a grade of at least B+ (i.e., 85) on the Mid-Term Examination. The Scholars Track is comprised of three major evaluations. Each counts for one-third of the student's final grade. The first evaluation is a Multiple Choice MID-TERM EXAMINATION (see the more detailed description to follow). The second evaluation is the ELUSIVE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS PROJECT (see Guidelines). Students who receive a B, B+ or A- on the Elusive Pursuit of Happiness project paper will have an additional point added to their final average. Students who receive an A will earn two bonus points. For the Scholars Track the third major evaluation is a CONSTRUCTING A CULTURE OF GENUINE HAPPINESS PRESENTATION. The final examination for students on the Scholar's Track will consist of a multiple choice question based on a student presentation. If the student answers that question correctly one bonus point will be added to her or his final average.
The **Enhanced Track**. This track entails THE ELUSIVE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS PROJECT

in addition to the MID-TERM and FINAL EXAMINATIONS. Students choosing this track are eligible for the project bonus points described above.

The **Basic Track** involves two evaluations. Students on this track will take two multiple choice exams. Each counts for 50% of the student's final grade. With this track there is no opportunity for bonus credit. To be successful in this track students must do well on both of the two multiple-choice exams. If a student does poorly on one exam this could result in his or her failing the course. The two exams consist of the MID-TERM EXAMINATION described above and a Multiple Choice FINAL EXAMINATION which will include material covered since the Mid-Term Exam.

Students who do projects or presentations should save their work on a flash drive or by some other means as a back-up against their hard drive crashing or being damaged or their computer being stolen. Such excuses will not be accepted.

The University Senate mandates final examinations for **all** undergraduate courses. This policy is intrusive and is sometimes counter-productive to the learning objectives of courses. However, it is a University Senate mandate.

Random “pop” quizzes will be given as needed to ensure adequate student class preparation and discussion. Students are responsible for knowing any information given in class regarding changes in the course schedule or requirements.

Example of grading system:

78-75 C+ 74-70 = **C** 69 = **C-** 68-65 = **D+** 64-60 = **D** 59 and below = **F** (I do not assign grades of D-) The same range applies for the appropriate scores on a ten point interval for **A s** (100-89) and **B s** (88-79).

Classroom policies. **NO COMPUTERS, CELL PHONES, ETC. ALLOWED.** Students are not allowed to use computers, cell phones, or any other internet-accessible devices in class. Students who miss class lectures are expected to get the class notes from another student.

EXAMINATIONS

The Mid-Term Examination will cover all of the material assigned or discussed to that point. The Final Examination may include any material covered since the Mid-Term Exam. Both are multiple choice in format. Reviews for examinations are given orally, in class only. Neither reviews nor class notes will be provided for individual students. Students who provide written documentation of a valid reason for missing the Mid-Term Examination (not e.g., “I overslept,” “I missed my bus,” or “I made a mistake in my exam schedule”) may turn in a Missed Exam Paper within three weeks of that exam. Those students should see Husky CT for a copy of the

format sheet for the Missed Examination Paper. The Missed Examination Paper questions and concepts must be approved by me in advance.

THE "ELUSIVE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS" PROJECT

This paper will focus on the cultural pursuit and realization of happiness in a contemporary society of your choosing. Each student will choose a topic related to the elusive pursuit of happiness involving some aspect of that culture (e.g., money, sex, drugs, power, success, prestige and celebrity, consumerism and conspicuous consumption, media images, self-improvement movements, utopian movements, religion, spiritual beliefs). The student should critique (i.e., critically evaluate)--consistent with the available evidence on the factors actually associated with happiness—a myth about happiness involving the pursuit of happiness related topic chosen that is perpetuated by the major institutions of that society. Evidence should be presented that reveals that, indeed, it is a myth. Discuss the negative personal and societal consequences of the pursuit of that myth. Then discuss how debunking that myth can help people realize genuine happiness.

Format for the Elusive Pursuit of Happiness Project

Observe minimum page limits, typed pages requirements (i.e., at least seven **typed** pages, not including the title or reference pages; but no more than nine pages) and deadlines. Divide the project into the following three sections: **Critique of the Myth, Negative Consequences of the Myth**, and **Positive Consequences of Debunking the Myth**. Projects are due at the *beginning* of the class period. They will *not* be accepted after that. Pages must be double spaced. Please number pages. Do not use onion-skin (i.e., very thin) paper. Staple pages together. Do not put the project paper in a folder or in plastic.

References should be documented according to the following format. In the body of the paper, for example, Davis (2013) or (Davis 2013). If you quote directly you **must** use quotation marks or "block" quotes (for quotations longer than four lines) and **must** give the page number, e.g., (Davis 2013: 532). Page numbers must also be cited if you refer to specific facts taken from a particular source. On the reference page at the end of the paper list references alphabetically using the following format.

> Davis, John R. 2013. *The Sociology of Deviance*. New York: McGraw-Hill

or

> Davis, John R. 2013. "A Re-analysis of Sutherland's Theory of Differential Association." *American Journal of Sociology* 153: 319-22

For further details see:

> *The Chicago Manual of Style* or the *American Sociological Association Style*

Guide

You must use a minimum of seven citations. They should include at least two of the books assigned for this course and at least five other sources not assigned for the class. Useful resources for this project are John Storey's *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*: *An Introduction* and the *Journal of Happiness Studies*. Only **three** web site references may be used. The name of the organization sponsoring the web site must be cited with its address in the references section of the paper.

See Husky CT for an example of the Happiness Project and for the Happiness Project Checklist.

For help with your writing see William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White's *The Elements of Style* and visit UConn's Writing Center.

Again, projects are due at the **beginning** of the class period of the projects due date. **Late projects will not be accepted.** Class work may **not** be submitted by e-mail.

CONSTRUCTING A CULTURE OF GENUINE HAPPINESS PRESENTATION

You are the chief policy analyst for a national government and you have been asked to develop a plan to enhance happiness in that society. That plan consists of two parts. A critique of that culture's pursuit of happiness that identifies three things people do to be happy that actually results in their being unhappy. Then, based on the critique and the lessons you learned from your course readings on Western and Eastern conceptualizations of happiness, you are to suggest three changes in that society and its culture that better encourage the realization of maximum happiness for the majority of its citizens.

Just prior to the presentations to be given that day each presenter must turn in a **detailed** topic outline (in standard **outline** form. Do **not** use sentences or paragraphs) and a bibliography of at least seven references. Please make a copy if you need this material to present from. The topic outline should follow the 3 points, 5 format. That is, it should consist of an Introduction (I) and Conclusion (V) and three major topic points (II, III, IV) with appropriate levels of sub-headings (e.g., A, B, C; 1,2,3; a, b, c). Again, only three of the references may be properly documented web sites (see previous section). Presenters will turn in a minimum of 3 full typed pages. Each presenter will be allowed 15 minutes for his or her presentation. Students will be graded individually, not as a group. Only **typed** material will be accepted, at the **beginning** of the class period of the scheduled presentation. Students may use media equipment for presentations but must be prepared to give their presentations without such equipment if it doesn't work. Before preparing and giving presentations see the "Presentation Rating Sheet" which is available at Husky CT.

COURSE LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Course Goals, Objectives, and Content

II. Introduction to the Social Construction of Happiness

III. The Sociology of Culture: Perspective, Theories, and Concepts

IV. Overview of Happiness as a Social Phenomenon

V. What is Happiness? Definitions and Other Conceptualizations

VI. Contemporary Myths in the Elusive Pursuit of Happiness

VII. The Anti-Happiness Movement

VIII. Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
A. Western Conceptualizations
B. Eastern Conceptualizations

IX. The Realization of Genuine Happiness, Part I: Social Correlates
A. Macro-Institutional Factors
B. Micro-Level Factors

X. The Realization of Genuine Happiness, Part II: Realization-Focused Practice

XI. Conclusion: Lessons Learned
A. Beyond the Myths: Toward the Cultural Realization of Genuine Happiness
B. Lessons Learned in the Course

COURSE SCHEDULE: LECTURES, READINGS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

FIRST WEEK

Tuesday August 27th

Video: "The Pursuit of Happiness" CBS, 60 Minutes (60 minutes)
--Introduction to Professor
--Pass out course syllabi and give brief lecture
--Course Goals, Objectives and Content
--Assignment: Read syllabus carefully and bring to class on next time any questions you may have.

Thursday August 29th

Introduction to the Social Construction of Happiness
Argyle Ch 1

SECOND WEEK

Tuesday September 3rd

The Sociology of Culture: Perspective, Theories, and Concepts
Schoch Introduction

Thursday September 5th

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THIRD WEEK

Tuesday September 10th

What is Happiness? Definitions and Other Conceptualizations
Argyle Chs 2 & 3

Thursday September 12th

Contemporary Myths in the Elusive Pursuit of Happiness

FOURTH WEEK

Tuesday September 17th

The Anti-Happiness Movement

Thursday September 19th

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
–Western Conceptualizations
Schoch Ch 2

FIFTH WEEK

Tuesday September 24th

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
–Western Conceptualizations (Cont'd)
Schoch Ch 7

Thursday September 26th

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Schoch Chs 1, 5 & 8
Review for Mid-Term Examination

SIXTH WEEK

Tuesday October 1st

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness

--Western Conceptualizations of Happiness (Cont'd)
Butler-Bowdon Chs 5, 8 & 12

Thursday October 3rd

MID-TERM EXAMINATION

SEVENTH WEEK

Tuesday October 8th

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
--Western Conceptualizations of Happiness (Cont'd)

Thursday October 10th

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Eight WEEK

Tuesday October 15th

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
--Western Conceptualizations of Happiness (Cont'd)
Butler-Bowdon Chs 20 & 21
–Students Sign up for Presentations

Thursday October 17th

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Butler-Bowdon Chs 32 & 34

NINTH WEEK

Tuesday October 22nd

Western Conceptualizations of Happiness (Cont'd)

Butler-Bowdon Ch 36

Thursday October 24th
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Butler-Bowdon Ch 43

TENTH WEEK

Tuesday October 29th

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
–Eastern Conceptualizations
Schoch Chs 3, 4 & 6

Thursday October 31st

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Video: Meditation DVD, Lectures 3, 5 & 6
Butler-Bowdon Chs 6, 9, 10, 11, 13 & 14

ELEVENTH WEEK

Tuesday November 5th

Historical Conceptualizations of Happiness
–Eastern Conceptualizations (Cont'd)
Butler-Bowdon Chs 19, 31, 33, 37, 39, 44 & 49

Tuesday November 7th

The Realization of Genuine Happiness, Part I: Social Correlates
Macro-Institutional Factors
Video: "The Pursuit of Happiness," ABC, 20/20 (15 minutes)
–Economics and Politics
Argyle Chs 4, 7, 9, 12

TWELFTH WEEK

Tuesday November 12th

The Realization of Genuine Happiness, Part I: Social Correlates
Micro-Level Factors: Close Interpersonal Relationships
Video: "Happiness Is" 1st hour.
--Sociability as a Personality Trait
Argyle 10,
--Sex, Love, Marriage & Family
Argyle Ch 6, Ben-Shahar Ch 8

THE ELUSIVE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS PROJECTS DUE.

Thursday November 14th

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--Education
Ben-Shahar Ch 6
--Friendship
– Humor and Leisure
Argyle Chs 5 & 8
– Neighborhood and Community
--Religion
Argyle Ch 11
--Work Ben-Shahar Ch 7

THIRTEENTH WEEK

Tuesday November 19th

The Realization of Genuine Happiness, Part II. Realization Focused Practice
Ben-Shahar Chs 1thru 5

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Thursday November 21th
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Ben-Shahar Chs 9 thru 15

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

FOURTEENTH WEEK

Tuesday November 26th

NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING DAY HOLIDAY

Thursday November 28th

NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING DAY HOLIDAY

FIFTEENTH WEEK

Tuesday December 3rd

Conclusion: The Social Construction of Happiness: Lessons Learned
Argyle Ch 13, Schoch Conclusion, Ben-Shahar Conclusion

Thursday December 5th

Review for Final Examination

Final Exam Period: December 9th thru the 15th