

# GE2130: HAPPINESS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

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## Effective Term

Semester B 2024/25

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Happiness: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

### Subject Code

GE - Gateway Education

### Course Number

2130

### Academic Unit

Social and Behavioural Sciences (SS)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

### GE Area (Primary)

Area 1 - Arts and Humanities

### GE Area (Secondary)

Area 2 - Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

**Exclusive Courses**

Nil

**Part II Course Details****Abstract**

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. A variety of philosophical, biological, psychological, sociological, and religious approaches have striven to define happiness and identify its sources. Students will examine how happiness is defined, believed, studied and practiced from these perspectives. Students also will compare how happiness is understood and cultivated in different societies and times. In particular, students will learn the classic studies of happiness in Chinese society as well as in other societies. Ultimately, students will be able to enhance their subjective happiness while studying at CityU as well as their capacity to discover/pursue happiness in everyday life. In addition, given the increasing academic and social challenges of university life, enrolled students will learn to appreciate and engage life better. This course aims to enhance students' understanding and mastery of happiness, which is an essential goal of the whole-person education advocated by our CityU. It will lead students to discover how happiness is conceived and developed from philosophical, psychological, sociological, biological, and religious perspectives. It will introduce to students the essential facilitators of happiness, such as subjective well-being, optimism, resilience, humour, creativity, gratitude, and faith. It will enable students to develop positive emotions and positive traits for the benefit of mind flourishing at both individual and institutional levels. Students taking this course are encouraged to demonstrate creativity in completing the required coursework. Students are also encouraged to consult teachers for innovative ideas and approaches to making group projects of the course.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)**

| CILOs |                                                                                                                              | Weighting (if app.) | DEC-A1 | DEC-A2 | DEC-A3 |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1     | Describe how happiness is perceived from philosophical, psychological, sociological, scientific, and religious perspectives. | 30                  | x      | x      | x      |
| 2     | Explain how happiness is practiced in Eastern and Western cultures, and recognize their differences and mutual influences.   | 30                  | x      | x      | x      |
| 3     | Appreciate and/or investigate happiness via group surveys or group projects                                                  | 20                  | x      | x      | x      |
| 4     | Identify ways of discovering and enriching happiness in daily lives                                                          | 20                  | x      | x      | x      |

**A1: Attitude**

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

**A2: Ability**

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

**A3: Accomplishments**

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

**Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)**

| LTAs |                               | Brief Description                                                                                                                                                                                          | CILO No. | Hours/week (if applicable) |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| 1    | Lectures                      | Students will engage in lectures learn the key concepts and theories as well as classic survey and experimental studies in happiness around the world.                                                     | 1, 2, 3  | 2                          |
| 2    | In-class exercise/ discussion | Students will participate in class exercises or guided discussions in class so that they will apply whatever they learn in class to understand or explain their personal experiences or social behaviours. | 2, 3, 4  | 1                          |
| 3    | Video-tape/ YouTube Watching  | Students will watch episodes of movies or YouTube, demonstrating the applications of relevant psychological knowledge to studies of happiness.                                                             | 1, 2, 3  |                            |

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

| ATs |                                                                            | CILO No. | Weighting (%) | Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)                                                                   |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Class participation: Students will actively take part in class activities. | 2        | 10            | Students are expected to actively participate in class activities and to recall things learned in class. |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |      |    |                                                                                           |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | A Term Paper:<br>To complete the paper, students are requested to: (1) choose a topic of interest from a given list of topics; (2) search for relevant research literature for the topic, (3) write the paper based on what your library search on the chosen topic demonstrating a critical integration/evaluation of relevant information on understanding the topic. The paper should be written in English, typed on A-4 paper, double-spaced, and of approximately 2,000-2,500 words excluding figures and references. | 2, 3 | 50 | Students are expected to demonstrate innovation in learning.                              |
| 3 | Group Presentation:<br>Students will be actively involved in 3 tasks: (1) a team analysis of a case study of happiness; (2) a critique of some scientific studies of happiness; (3) an exploration of happiness experience at CityU                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 2, 3 | 40 | Students are expected to critically analyze examples and present their findings in class. |

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

1. Class participation

**Criterion**

Students need to demonstrate their active participation in class activities (e.g., raising and answering questions) and explain the theory and concepts learned in the class.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Strong evidence of active participation in class activities and ability to recall things learned in class.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Evidence of good participation in class activities and ability to recall things learned in class.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Evidence of sufficient participation in class activities and ability to recall things learned in class.

**Marginal (D)**

Lack of evidence of participation in class activities and ability to recall things learned in class.

**Failure (F)**

No evidence of participation in class activities and ability to recall things learned in class.

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**Assessment Task**

2. Term Paper

**Criterion**

Students explain both theoretical propositions and empirical evidence that are related to happiness in a written format.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Strong evidence of original thinking, good organization, and the capacity to analyze and synthesize happiness. The level of understanding is deeper than what is taught in classes or texts.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Being able to discuss the relevant literature about happiness. Descriptions are systematic, clear, and specific.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Demonstrate some understanding of happiness and the ability to develop solutions to simple problems in understanding happiness in Chinese society.

**Marginal (D)**

Lack of understanding of what is taught in class. Descriptions are weak and in some cases, irrelevant.

**Failure (F)**

Not able to explain the subject matters being taught in class; or the assignments are found to be plagiarized.

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**Assessment Task**

3. Group Presentation

**Criterion**

Students need to present on topics of self interests that demonstrate both theoretical propositions and empirical evidence that are related to happiness.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Strong evidence of original thinking in applying relevant concepts/perspectives to analyse and synthesize happiness, good relevance to local contexts.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Evidence of original thinking in applying relevant concepts & perspectives to analyse happiness, appropriate relevance to local contexts.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Evidence of applying relevant concepts & perspectives to analyse and synthesize happiness.

**Marginal (D)**

Lack of evidence of applying relevant concepts/perspectives to analyse and synthesize happiness.

**Failure (F)**

No evidence of applying relevant concepts/perspectives to analyse and synthesize happiness; or the group project is found to be plagiarized.

## Part III Other Information

### Keyword Syllabus

biopsychosocial model of happiness, hedonic treadmill, paradox of hedonism, philosophy of happiness, altruism, social cohesion, group solidarity, subjective well-being, optimism, resilience, humor, character strength, empathy, gratitude, etc.

### Reading List

#### Compulsory Readings

| Title |                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Seligman, Martin (2002). <i>Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment</i> . Free Press |

#### Additional Readings

| Title |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Argyle, Michael (2001). <i>The Psychology of Happiness</i> . Routledge.                                                                                                                                                              |
| 2     | Compton, W. C. (2005). <i>An Introduction to Positive Psychology</i> . Wadsworth Publishing. pp. 1–22. Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1990). <i>Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience</i> . HarperCollins Publishers.                |
| 3     | David, S., Boniwell, I., & Conley Ayers A. (Ed.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Happiness</i> . London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.                                                                                                |
| 4     | Gilbert, Daniel (2006). <i>Stumbling on Happiness</i> . Knopf.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5     | Haidt, Jonathan (2005). <i>The Happiness Hypothesis</i> . Basic Books.                                                                                                                                                               |
| 6     | Kahneman, Daniel, Diener, Ed, Schwarz, Norbert (2003). <i>Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology</i> . Russell Sage Foundation Publications.                                                                              |
| 7     | McMahon, Darrin M. (2006). <i>Happiness: A History</i> . Atlantic Monthly Press. Peterson, Christopher and Seligman, Martin (2004). <i>Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification</i> . Oxford University Press. |
| 8     | Seligman, Parks, & Steen (2004) <i>A Balanced Psychology and a Full Life</i> .                                                                                                                                                       |
| 9     | Levine, Marvin (2000). <i>The Positive Psychology of Buddhism and Yoga : Paths to a Mature Happiness</i> . Lawrence Erlbaum.                                                                                                         |
| 10    | Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. <i>Social Indicators Research</i> , 46, 137-155.                                                          |
| 11    | 岳曉東、李健秋《幸福公開課》高等教育出版社 2012 年出版 (Yue, X.D. & Li, J.Q, <i>Happiness: Public Lectures Beijing: Higher Education Press</i> )                                                                                                             |
| 12    | 岳曉東。《做個 A+青少年：積極心理學必修的 8 堂課》香港：香港城市大學出版社 2008 年出版 (Yue, X. D. (2008). <i>Be an All-Round Youth: 8 Lessons from Positive Psychology</i> , Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press)                                              |
| 13    | 岳曉東。《青少年創造力培養：思考與研究》香港：香港城市大學出版社 2011 年出版 (Yue, X. D. (2011). <i>Nurturing Creativity in Young People</i> , City University of Hong Kong Press)                                                                                      |
| 14    | 岳曉東。《幽默心理學：思考與研究》香港：香港城市大學出版社 2011 年出版 (Yue, X. D. (2012). <i>On Psychology of Humor</i> , Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press)                                                                                            |
| 15    | Harvard happiness course online, <a href="http://edu.sina.com.cn/video/open/Xinfu.html">http://edu.sina.com.cn/video/open/Xinfu.html</a>                                                                                             |

## Annex (for GE courses only)

**A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:**

Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)

**PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning**

3, 4

**PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology**

1, 2

**PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills**

1, 2, 3, 4

**PILO 4: Interpret information and numerical data**

3, 4

**PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text**

3, 4

**PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills**

3

**PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team**

3

**PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues**

1, 2

**PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions**

1, 2, 3, 4

**PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation**

3, 4

**B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.**

### Selected Assessment Task

Group Presentation. Each student is expected to work in groups of 6-8 people to make one group presentation during the semester. The goal of this exercise is to help students to learn to apply the relevant concepts/perspectives of happiness to analysis of a particular event, incident, or a celebrity in Hong Kong or elsewhere. To complete the group project, students are requested to: (1) form a group of 6-8 people; (2) choose a topic of interest; (3) search and prepare for relevant information for the topic; (4) present the collected information on selected dates; (5) offer your own critical comments of the significance of the chosen topic. The group projects should be presented primarily in English. Lively and vivid presentations are encouraged. Each group presentation is about 30 minutes and will account for 40% of the total course work. Finally, to accommodate for OBTL, students are welcome to approach me for initiatives in the course work.