

**COL 233**  
**Literature and Happiness**  
**Class #24275**  
**3 credits**  
**Fall 2017**

**COURSE INFORMATION**

MWF, 10:00-10:50 a.m., Clemens Hall 640  
 Instructor: Aykun Ozgen  
 Department of Comparative Literature  
 Office: Clemens Hall 642  
 Office Hours: 11:00-11:50 a.m., Mondays & Wednesdays or by appointment  
 Email: aykunozg@buffalo.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

We all want to be happy. But what is *happiness*? This course will investigate the answers given to this question. We will be reading, writing and talking about a wide variety of short texts from different fields such as art and literature, journalism, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, religion, and sociology. We will study visual media as well. Through literary and philosophical analysis, some of the questions we will try to answer will be the following: What makes us happy? Do we deserve to be happy? Can we create our own happiness? What is the relations between happiness, virtues, pleasure, money, and friendship?

Approved for SUNY Humanities requirement.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

- *Pursuing Happiness: A Bedford Spotlight Reader* by Matthew Parfitt and Dawn Skorczewski
- All other readings available via UBlerns.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to . . .

Course Learning Outcome	Instructional Method(s)	Assessment Method(s)
1. Identify and describe main conceptions of happiness.	Assigned readings, lectures, class discussions, critical writing assignments	Class participation, response papers, quizzes, critical writing assignments, e-portfolio project
2. Employ interdisciplinary resources to study happiness by analyzing art, literature, and philosophy.	Lectures, class discussions, critical writing assignments	Response papers, critical writing assignments, e-portfolio project

3. Analyze the way history, cultures and political differences shape our understanding of happiness.	Assigned readings, class discussions, critical writing assignments	Response papers, critical writing assignments, e-portfolio project
4. Identify main thinkers, explain philosophical and literary concepts.	Assigned readings, lectures, class discussions	Class participation, response papers, quizzes
5. Compare, analyze and evaluate different conceptions of happiness in ancient and modern world.	Assigned readings, lectures, class discussions	Response papers, critical writing assignments, e-portfolio project
6. Develop an e-portfolio project demonstrating a critical reflection.	Lecture, critical writing assignments	E-portfolio project
7. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of conceptual analysis in the humanities.	Assigned readings, lectures, class discussions, critical writing assignments	Class participation, response papers, quizzes, critical writing assignments, e-portfolio project

### **GRADING POLICY**

Weighting	Assessment / Assignment
30%	Quizzes
30%	Reading Responses
30%	Research Paper
10%	Reflective Essay

### **Assignments**

1. **Quizzes:** Weekly quizzes on the assigned readings.
2. **Reading Responses:** Short written responses (1-2 page) to the material analyzed in class.
3. **Research Essay:** An essay employing library research. A minimum of 2000 words.
4. **Reflective Essay:** An evaluation essay where you demonstrate what you have learned this semester. A minimum of 500 words.

Grade	Quality Points	Percentage
A	4.0	93.0% - 100.00%
A-	3.67	90.0% - 92.9%
B+	3.33	87.0% - 89.9%
B	3.00	83.0% - 86.9%
B-	2.67	80.0% - 82.9%
C+	2.33	77.0% - 79.9%

Grade	Quality Points	Percentage
C	2.00	73.0% - 76.9%
C-	1.67	70.0% - 72.9%
D+	1.33	67.0% - 69.9%
D	1.00	60.0% - 66.9%
F	0	59.9 or below

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### *Classroom Experience*

In order to create a positive environment for learning, students need to be present, prepared, and engaged. This includes refraining from distractions, disruptions, and disrespectful behavior. At minimum this means not using devices such as cellphones and laptops except as they are relevant to activity in which the class is currently engaged. Upon entering the classroom, students implicitly agree to abide by the University's policies on classroom decorum: <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/obstruction.shtml>. Please be mindful of others' rights to and vested interest in a valuable learning experience, as well as your own. Come to class prepared, having read carefully any text assigned for reading and having given your absolute best on writing assignments.

### *Digication e-portfolio*

As a major feature of this course, you will use Digication's e-portfolio to assemble materials for presentation at the end of the semester. This content platform will be extensively used as a part of the new UB curriculum, which encourages students to bring the various aspects of their university learning experience together. You should be able to access the Digication system using this URL: <https://buffalo.digication.com/> Your UB email address is your ID and your password should be sent to you when your account is created. If you have technical problems, please contact the Digication help desk at (888) 342-DIGI or [support@digication.com](mailto:support@digication.com), or look at guides and materials on the help desk's website: <https://support.digication.com/home>

### *Accessibility Resources*

If you require classroom or testing accommodations due to a disability, please contact Accessibility Resources, located at 60 Capen Hall. AR can be reached by phone at (716) 645-2608 or by email at [stu-accessibility@buffalo.edu](mailto:stu-accessibility@buffalo.edu). You may also visit the Accessibility Resources website for further information: [www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/](http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/). Please inform me as soon as possible about your needs so that we can coordinate your accommodations.

### *Center for Excellence in Writing*

UB's Center for Excellence in Writing supports writers across the university as they compose, construct, and share meaning. Since learning to write is a life-long endeavor, all members of the UB community are also students of their own writing processes. Committed to the idea that writing both creates and communicates knowledge, understanding, and individual reflection, the CEW provides attentive, respectful readers, offers workshops on writing and writing instruction, and conducts research to guide the future development of writing practices. The CEW, located in 209 Baldy Hall, is here to support any writing you might do while at UB—assignments, essays, research projects, as well as application materials, personal statements, and so on. Talking through challenges and choices and getting an audience's reaction is a healthy part of any writer's process. All writers are welcome to come in for free individual consultations. You can schedule from the CEW website, [www.buffalo.edu/cas/writing](http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/writing), drop by the Center, or call 645-5139.

### *Student Support Services*

Students interested in receiving guidance in overcoming obstacles, in addition to other services to ensure your success at UB, should check out UB's Student Support Services Program (SSS). SSS is located in 215 Norton and at [www.cpmc.buffalo.edu/sss](http://www.cpmc.buffalo.edu/sss) Students in any major are welcome to apply to SSS.

### *Academic Dishonesty*

Please familiarize yourself with the University's Academic Integrity policy, which can be found at <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.shtml>. We are particularly concerned with plagiarism, which the catalog describes as "Copying or receiving material from any source and submitting that material as one's own, without acknowledging and citing the particular debts to the source (quotations, paraphrases, basic ideas), or in any other manner representing the work of another as one's own." The first instance of plagiarism will result in an "F" on that assignment. Any additional instances of plagiarism will result in failure of the course.

### *Late Assignment Policy*

On occasion, students are unable to meet assigned due dates. If you believe you will be unable to meet a due date, you must email me prior to the day an assignment is due. In your email you should explain your situation and identify when you will complete the assignment. Typically I will grant students a week extension on one assignment during the semester. Assignments turned in late without prior arrangement will be reduced one full letter grade. Assignments later than one week may not be accepted.

### *Attendance Policy*

**You are allowed one week of unexcused absences. Each additional week of absence will reduce your final grade by one full letter. Accommodations will be made for unexpected documented and justified absences.**

### *Incomplete Policy*

An incomplete grade may *only* be given to students who have (1) fulfilled the attendance requirement for the course and (2) completed all but one of the assignments.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Unit 1: Spiritual Traditions and Happiness**

#### Week 1: The Eastern Spiritual Tradition, Part 1

28 August: Introduction. Explanation of course requirements and expectations. Discussion of the concept of happiness. Argyle and Hills, *The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire*

30 August: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 10-15, Laozi, *The Tao te Ching* (selections); pp. 16-20, *Dhammapada* (selections).

#### Week 2: The Eastern Spiritual Tradition, Part 2

4 September: Labor Day

6 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 21-33, Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler, "The Sources of Happiness"; pp. 34-42, Matthieu Ricard, "The Alchemy of Suffering"

#### Week 3: The Western Spiritual Tradition

11 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 43-58, *The Book of Psalms* (selections); pp. 59-63, *Gospel of Matthew* (selections); **quiz 1**

Readings:

13 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 64-66, Rumi, "How Should the Soul"; **response paper 1 due**

### **Unit 2: The Ethics of Happiness**

#### Week 4: Ancient Philosophy

18 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 82-87, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (selections); **quiz 2**

20 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 88-95, Epictetus, *The Handbook of Epictetus* (selections)

#### Week 5: Post-Enlightenment Philosophy

25 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 123-130, Mill, "Of What Sort of Proof the Principal of Utility is Susceptible"; pp. 106-122, Nussbaum, "Who Is the Happy Warrior? Philosophy Poses Questions to Psychology"; **quiz 3**

27 September: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 131-136, Haybron, "Happiness and Its Discontents"; **response paper 2 due**

### **UNIT 3: What Makes People Happy**

#### Week 6: Learning From Our Mistakes

2 October: Film and discussion: *Groundhog Day* (1993, dir. Harold Ramis)

4 October: Film discussion cont.

Week 7: Can Money Buy Happiness?

9 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 160-174, Diener and Biswas-Diener, "Can Money Buy Happiness?"; pp. 140-157, Csikszentmihalyi, "If We Are So Rich, Why Aren't We Happy?"; **quiz 4**

11 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 210-220, Diener and Seligman, "Very Happy People"

Week 8: The Science of Happiness

16 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 179-197, Lyubomirsky, "How Happy Are You and Why?"; pp. 175-178, Horsfield, "The Sociology of Happiness and Contentment: An Interview with Dr. Jordan McKenzie";

**quiz 5**

18 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 198-209, Klein, "Enjoyment"; **response paper 3 due**

**UNIT 4: Do We Deserve to be Happy?**Week 9: The Uses of Suffering, Part 1

23 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 284-287, Brooks, "What Suffering Does"; **quiz 6**

25 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 264-266, Keats, "Ode on Melancholy"; pp. 259-260, Dürer, *Melencolia I*

Week 10: The Uses of Suffering, Part 2

30 October: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 247-258, Wilson, "Terrible Beauty"; **quiz 7**

01 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 261-263, Fraser, "Taking Pills for Unhappiness Reinforces the Idea That Being Sad Is Not Human"

Week 11: Other Ways of Looking at Happiness and Suffering

6 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 227-232, Lewis, "We Have No Right to Happiness"; pp. 267-283, Joshanloo and Weijers, "Aversion to Happiness Across Cultures"; **quiz 8**

8 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 233-246, Hecht, "Remember Death"; **response paper 4 due**

**UNIT 5: Can We Create Our Own Happiness**Week 12: Baby Steps?

13 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 324-339, Mochon et al., "Getting Off the Hedonic Treadmill, One Step at a Time"; **quiz 9**

15 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 291-307, Rubin, "July: Buy Some Happiness"; pp. 322-323, Van Gogh, *Sunflowers*

Week 13

20 November: Annas, "Happiness As Achievement" (on UBLearn)

22 November: Fall Recess

Week 14: Simplify, simplify

27 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 308-313, Hill, "Living with Less. A Lot Less"; **quiz 10**

29 November: *Pursuing Happiness*, pp. 314-321, Oxenhandler, "Ah, But the Breezes..."; **response paper 5 due**

Week 15

4 December: Haybron, "A Good Life" (on Ublearns)

6 December: Course summary; **research paper due**

13 December: **Reflective essay due**

## Research Essay

### *The Assignment*

As you know, research is a primary activity of academic life. It takes place in many sites across the disciplines from science labs to archeological dig sites to rare manuscript collections. There are also many methods of research. All disciplines share the need to communicate their research with colleagues doing similar studies, with other researchers in their field and beyond who might find their work valuable, and, at times, with the general public. Though we might generally say that academic researchers publish journal articles for this purpose, there are many differences among those articles from one discipline to the next. Different disciplines also make varied use of other genres including websites and other digital media, books or monographs, posters, essay collections, and so on. Given all these differences it's not really possible to teach undergraduate students once and for all how to do research or write a research paper in a first-year writing course. Furthermore, writing research papers in a specific discipline requires disciplinary knowledge that you probably haven't acquired yet. These are many things you'll need to learn later in your major. That said, there are some fundamental rhetorical strategies and library research skills that we can address here and that will serve as a foundation as you learn to write in your discipline later in your academic career.

In this class, you will formulate a research question that arises from your readings. We will devote time in class to constructing a good research question.

### *Words of Advice*

In case it isn't already clear, articulating a good research question is often the determining factor in success in any research project.

### *The Process*

1. **Formulate a productive research question:** this means asking a question for which you do not have a readymade answer and in which your audience has some interest.
2. **Find and evaluate primary source material:** primary sources differ from one discipline to the next. They might be lab experiments, observations of people in a community, or pieces of art. Regardless, the primary source provides direct evidence for answering your research question. For example, in geology it might a collection of rocks; in literary studies it might be a novel. So, if a geologist asks a question about the formation of a particular feature of the planet, she might examine rock samples from that location as a primary source. A literary scholar interested in the representation of women in a particular historical moment might examine a novel from that period. In our class, the primary source(s) will be one or more pieces of popular media which will serve as evidence for a question you have about how a particular issue is discussed or represented in the world.
3. **Find and evaluate secondary sources:** briefly put, secondary sources are texts produced by other researchers (academic and sometimes non-academic, like journalists or government officials) who are asking questions related to your own. Secondary sources are employed in different ways in different disciplines, but all disciplines refer to them. In our case, your task will be to select a few sources, analyze how they relate to one another, and then situate your own research in relation to them (e.g. where do you agree or disagree, what open questions do they have that you also ask, what new questions do you introduce).
4. **Make a contribution:** all research adds something to an existing conversation. Often we call this a "thesis statement." The important thing to realize here is that while the final product of your researched essay might begin with a thesis statement (typically at the end of the first paragraph



or beginning of the second), the research project does not. That is, as researchers we do not start by imagining we will make certain claims in a journal article and then go about doing research that will provide evidence in support of those claims. In fact, that would be unethical. Instead, we discover what our contribution—the claims or argument we will make—will be *through* the activities of research.

**Requirements**

- A researched essay at least 2000 words in length.
- At least 3 secondary sources (as described above).

**Evaluation Criteria**

You will be evaluated by the following criteria, roughly in order of decreasing importance:

- A productive research question
- A useful contribution/thesis statement
- Effective use of secondary sources
- Appropriate use of citation
- Spelling, grammar, other stylistic concerns