

Course name: PSYCH 329: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

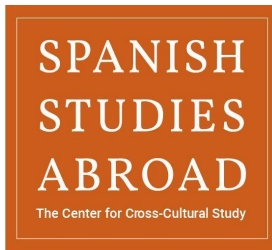
Psychology has done thousands of studies of unhappiness, anxiety, depression, distress, personality disorders and so on. Only recently Psychology began to study the theories, concepts and techniques that enhance well-being and happiness.

Positive psychology is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of **love, work, and play**. Positive Psychology has three central concerns: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. Understanding **positive emotions** entails the study of contentment with the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future. Understanding **positive individual traits** consists of the study of the strengths and virtues, such as the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom. Understanding **positive institutions** entails the study of the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance. Positive psychology studies how human beings prosper in the face of adversity. It attempts to identify and enhance the human strengths and virtues that make life worth living and allow individuals and communities to thrive.

This course explores the concepts, research, techniques, and exercises that enhance well-being and happiness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will construct critical knowledge about the science of positive psychology.



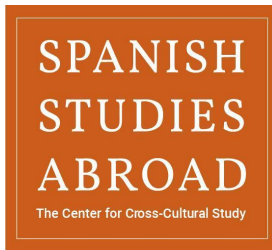
- Students will develop an understanding of the 6 dimensions of happiness/subjective well-being (Courage, Justice, Humanity, Temperance, Transcendence and Wisdom) and the 24 strengths.
- Students will become familiar with the empirical measurements and tools used in positive psychology and will be able to apply to themselves and others and interpret the scores.
- Hands-on experience with many of key concepts in positive psychology.
- A solid sense of how to distinguish between science and intuition on a topic about which most people have a strong intuitive basis.
- A toolkit for putting scientific findings and theories into real-world practice.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

As an introductory course, there are no specific pre-requisites. A student does not have to have previously studied psychology. The course requires an enthusiasm and disposition to study and complete projects at the university level. This usually guarantees success for the achievement of the course objectives.

METHODOLOGY

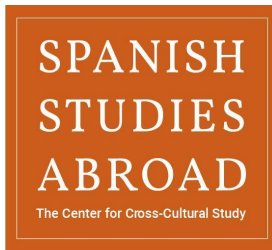
- The methodology is based on the constructivist model; we will begin to work based on your previous ideas about the topic, we will debate and connect ideas with our own experience in order to achieve meaningful knowledge.
- Most of the work will be done during the classes; however, you will have to read and do some exercises at home, especially to prepare your final project (Project-based learning). I will explain it in detail during the classes.
- Participation is essential. You are the one who constructs your knowledge! I will give you lot of information and guide you in this process, but in the end what you learn will depend on your implication.



- All the students must prepare an **experiential final project** (for this reason I will try not to set you too much homework). Your final project will be presented in class. You are free to choose the topic and the way to do it, but I will help you. While you are exposing a topic, you are the leader of the class and should keep the attention of the rest of the class. This class-leadership attitude should be a good exercise for your academic and professional development.
 - o The ultimate goal is for students to experience the positive psychology construct first hand, self-reflect in a meaningful way, and, as a result, gain insight into the mechanisms and processes of the “good life.”
- The presentation comprises three parts:
 - An explanation of the main ideas and concepts of your topic, illustrated with some videos, photos, etc. (20 minutes)
 - An activity in which the rest of the class is involved and has an active participation (it could be a test, an outdoor exercise, etc.. 20 minutes)
 - Final debate and discussion (15 minutes)

The structure of a typical class would be:

- Students' previous ideas about the topic. What do I know about it?
- Presentation of the topic (using different resources, multisensory ones). What do others know about it?
- Work based on your own experiences. How can I link what others say and what I think?
- Discussion and feedback. What have I learned? What would I like to know more and how?
- Each theme has at the end a series of assessing activities to be completed by the student. These activities must be done before their correction and discussion in class. This is an important part of the class so keep in mind that you would lower your final grade if do not bring the activities by the scheduled day.
- Each theme will be accompanied by a wide range of questionnaires and tests. This will give us the opportunity to deepen our knowledge on each theme and develop a critical thinking.



- All the activities should be sent to castrilf@stjohns.edu in a doc. file.
- During this course we will watch one or two positive psychology movies, which will help us discuss key points.

WEEKLY COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 The science of Positive Psychology: An Introduction

Main readings¹

- Vazquez y Hervas (2008) Modelos Psicológicos del Bienestar. En *Psicología Positiva aplicada* (pp. 7-15). Bilbao: Desclee de Brower.
- Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55 (1), 5-14.
- Gable, S.L., & Haidt, J. (2005). What (and why) is positive psychology? *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 103-110.

Week 2 Universal Virtues? The high Six across History and East and West Cultures

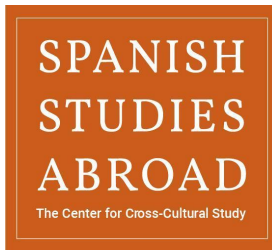
Main Reading:

- Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. (2004) Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification. New York: Oxford University Press. Pages 33-53.

Week 3 Understanding Emotions I

Readings

¹ Readings can be both in English or Spanish.



- Doring, S (2012) Razón y Emoción. *Cuadernos Mente y Cerebro*. Pgs. 4-8
- Ayan, S. (2016) Regulación de las emociones *Mente y Cerebro* 26-31.

Emotional Intelligence Test

Week 4 Understanding Emotions II

- Newen,A; Zinck, A. (2012) Somos lo que sentimos. *Cuadernos Mente y Cerebro*. Pgs. 8-14

Week 5 Happiness and Subjective Wellbeing

- Hartmann et al (2003) La búsqueda de la Felicidad. *Mente y Cerebro*. 78-83

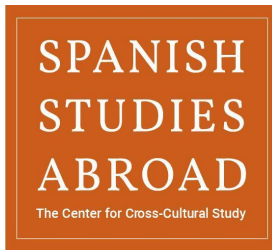
Week 6

EXAM

Week 7 The Importance of Play

- Melinda Wener (2011). La Importancia de Jugar. *Mente y Cerebro* 39-45.
- Benveniste, D. (1998). The Importance of Play in Adulthood: An Interview with Joan M. Erikson. *Psychoanal. St. Child*, 53:51-64.
- https://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_brown_says_play_is_more_than_fun_it_s_vital
- https://www.ted.com/talks/isabel_behncke_evolution_s_gift_of_play_from_bonobo_apes_to_humans

Week 8 Creativity



- Zeibig, D. (2015) Estrategias para un pensamiento creativo. *Mente y Cerebro*, 70: 36-41.
- Kraft, U (2005) Pedagogía de la Creatividad, *Mente y Cerebro*, 15: 39-40
- Evolución de la Creatividad, *Mente y Cerebro*, (2013), 63

Week 9 Flow and Mindfulness

- *Workshop with PILAR ARIZA*
- Ayan, S. (2011) Ejercicio corporal para la mente. *Mente y Cerebro*, 47: 22-31

Week 10 Humor

- Kraft, U (2004) Investigación sobre el humor, *Mente y Cerebro*, 8: 35-39
- Gielas, A. (2012) Efectos positivos del mal humor. *Mente y Cerebro*, 57, 26-29.
- Gueguen, N. (2013) Poder curativo de la Risa, *Mente y Cerebro*, 60: 8-13
- Polimeni, J. Reiss, J. (2006) The First Joke: Evolutionary Roots of Humor. *Evolutionary Psychology* 4: 347-366

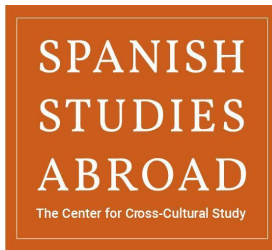
Week 11 Resilience

- Gary, S. (2011) Claves de la Resiliencia, *Investigación y Ciencia*, 416. Pags. 33-40.

Week 12 Final Project and Exam

List of videos:

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/learn-more/readings-and-videos/video-lectures-leading-scholars>



Out of Class Activities

- ✓ Mindfulness Workshop
- ✓ Creatividad Workshop

We will chose a **film** among *Koyla* (Czech) *Colors of Paradise* (2000- Iranian), *Salam Bombay* (1988-Indian); *Cinema Paradiso* (Italian)

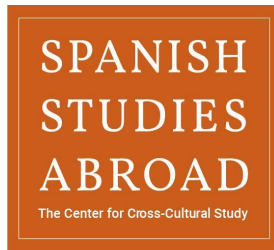
And will **debate** about different conceptualizations of well-being among cultures and societies.

ASSESSMENT AND FINAL GRADE

The evaluation will be in accordance with the policies of CCCS

CCCS classes are not graded on a curve nor is there extra credit work. The final grade will be based upon the following criteria:

- The average grade of the **two theoretical examinations** represents **40%** of the final grade.
- The correct completion of all course **activities** represents **25%** of the final grade. Activities turned late, but during the same week, will receive 50% less, and 75% less for those activities more than one week late.
- **Active class participation** will also be factored into the final grade **20%**: asking questions, reflecting, and even questioning the professor's comments can increase the grade! (as well as Spanish level!)
- The **final project 15%**.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

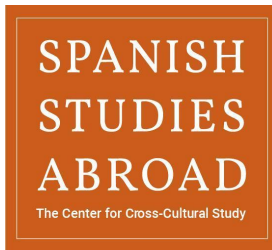
Attendance policy

Students are not allowed to miss class for unjustified reasons. For each unexcused absence, the participation portion of the grade will be lowered. Hence, it will be very difficult to receive a 10 in the class. Please keep this in mind. If a student misses class twice without a valid excuse (a note from a physician in the event of an illness), then the professor will automatically lower the final grade by 0.5 points (on a 10 point scale) for each class missed thereafter. Students with 6 or more unexcused absences will fail the course. Students should arrive to class on-time. Arriving more than 15 minutes late for a class will count as an unexcused absence. Please note that an excused absence is one that is accompanied by a doctor's note: signed stamped and dated. Travelling and/or travel delays are not considered valid reasons for missing class.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to act in accordance with their university and CCCS's standards of conduct concerning plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Use of online translators for work in Spanish will result in an automatic failure.

Linguistic Resource Center



Students are encouraged to use the Writing Center for help with class activities as well as for the final essay.

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compton, W. Hoffman, E. (2013). *Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Flourishing*, 2nd Edition. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Hefferon, K; Ilona Boniwell, I. (2011) *Positive Psychology: Theory, Research and Applications*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. (2004) *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Siegel, R. (2009) *Harvard Medical School Positive Psychology: Harnessing the power of happiness, personal strength, and mindfulness*. Boston: Harvard University Press

Snyder, C.R & Lopez, S.J (eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press