

Positive Education

PSYC 466, Fall 2021

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Wednesdays: TBA

DRAFT SYLLABUS: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Course Description

This seminar will synthesize research about preserving and promoting well-being amongst students, while they simultaneously pursue traditional educational outcomes. Positive Education is an upper-level seminar.

The goals of the course are for you to explore the ideas and research of positive psychology. The activities of the course foster this, and engage you with the material via our major projects. All assessment is meaningfully connected to our course goals. The assessment is also valuable in its own right. Drafting a petition concerning something you are knowledgeable about, sharing ideas with young students that can benefit them, and articulating the evidence-based merits of positive education are all worthwhile activities, even without your associated grade.

To do well in this seminar, you must intellectually engage with your reading assignments, class discussions, and projects. Academic ability develops over time and takes effort. Persist. There will be much student collaboration, so intellectual engagement with your peers will be crucial to your success.

Class time will largely be used for discussion and group projects. Since two of the four major assignments for this course involve engagement with your peers, we will utilize our synchronous class time efficiently.

You are expected to read a lot of material outside of class. The majority of your out-of-class time will be spent reading. In a college environment, this isn't surprising. This seminar only meets once weekly, so the assignment load per class is roughly double what it would be for a twice-weekly course. We will use Perusall for scholarly material to have online discussions about the readings. This gives you the opportunity to offer insight into the material, and discuss ideas with each other.

Course Assessment

Assessment	Project type	Deadline	Percentage
Literature review	individual	TBA	20%
Petition project	individual	TBA	10%
Infographic project	group	TBA	20%
School pitch project	group	TBA	20%
Engaging with the literature (e.g., Perusall)	individual	<i>continuous</i>	20%
Participation / activities	both	<i>continuous</i>	10%
Total:			100%

Petition (individual project)

10%

You will write a petition about a meaningful psychology-based problem of your choosing that affects student education/wellbeing. For example, you could petition to incorporate mindfulness into the curriculum for high school students in a specific school district, or petition for mandatory teacher-training about inclusive teaching in an entire nation. The problem you choose may impact students locally, nationally, or in another region of the world (you are welcome to focus on West Philly, your hometown, a foreign country, etc.). You must be able to identify a specific problem that requires an evidence-based solution grounded in positive education. If you are struggling to identify a problem, consider circumstances that inhibit some aspect of PERMA in education (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment).

We will generally follow the template used by [change.org](https://www.change.org) for this project. This is an effective structure, but your project will require considerable depth (e.g., evidence), as well as citations. You are not required to post your petition on [change.org](https://www.change.org), send it to the intended recipient, or share it with a larger audience. If you would like to do so, that is your choice. We will discuss and workshop these projects in class, but this will be completed and graded individually. Please see the petition guidelines posted on Canvas.

Literature review

20%

In preparation of your petition, you will write a literature review about this meaningful psychology-based problem that affects student education/wellbeing. More details will follow. You are expected to cite at least ten sources. Please supply these references at the end of your review in APA style.

Though the same topic is selected for the literature review and the petition, the literature review will have a different purpose, as well as scope, compared to the petition. This literature review will present the relevant research on this topic, with the intention of informing the audience about the state of this problem. This will be an academic paper. This contrasts with the intention of the petition which is to implore the relevant groups to move forward with a solution to this problem. The petition will be more specific, focused, and brief.

Infographic (group project):

20%

As a group of 3-4 students, you will create an infographic about a positive education topic (such as growth mindset, resilience, or gratitude). An infographic conveys data clearly- it is a display that succinctly represents content and visual data. The intention of this infographic is to succinctly convey scientific content to this specific audience that will benefit from it. The intended audience of this infographic is high school students. You must sufficiently describe the concept you have selected, provide supporting evidence about it, and convey the benefits gleaned from this. You are encouraged to develop these ideas for this project early in the semester, and you will work on this with your group in class through the course.

The dimensions of your infographic should be 48" x 36" or something similar. You should use materials already available to you to create this. For example, if you have PowerPoint, search for 'infographic' and you will see materials to organize your content. I do not expect you to have any previous design experience/skill for this project. Do not buy software to complete this project. This is a psychology project, not a design project.

I suggest your group first agree on an overarching topic to provide a framework for your infographic (e.g., growth mindset). From here, you may choose to identify several content areas that contribute to your overarching focus. Provide supporting evidence with visuals of data, where appropriate. Your infographic should not merely reproduce content that was covered by class material. You are expected to include at least 6 sources.

Below is an example of an infographic and how it can be structured to convey information. I make no claims about the accuracy of the content of the infographic below, but this can give you ideas about how data can be conveyed clearly:

https://i0.wp.com/42bis.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/21mei_infographic.jpg

School pitch (group project):**20%**

As a group of 3-4 students, create a presentation conveying the merit and utility of positive education. This should convey that the principles and practices of positive education warrant integration into existing school practices in a K-12 school setting. Consider this as a pitch to a school providing evidence of why they should integrate positive education into their curriculum. This 15-minute presentation should be evidence-based and requires at least 10 references. Please see more details about this on Canvas.

For this project, I suggest you look at [Research Discoveries from Geelong Grammar School: Our contributions and discoveries to date 2009-2019](#) and the Positive Education chapter in The Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report 2019. Both of these are available on Canvas.

Engaging with the literature (e.g., Perusall)**20%**

All readings are posted as assignments in Canvas. The vast majority of your reading assignments use Perusall. You will automatically access Perusall when you open these assignments in Canvas. You are expected to read and comment upon the assigned reading, as well as respond to your classmates' comments. Engaging with the readings counts towards your grade in this course. Your two lowest Perusall assignment grades will be dropped.

FYI: If you make a comment in Perusall that is 'anonymous', your classmates will not see your identity, but I will. Anonymous comments will be recognized as yours, thus counting toward your total contribution for that assignment.

Participation / activities**10%**

Students will earn credit for in-class participation as well as completing assigned activities. Most of these activities will earn credit for completion if a solid effort was made. These activities will often be in class, some of them will involve groupwork.

	Discussion Preparation	Class contribution	Engagement	Synthesis
Excellent	Posting thoughtful and relevant contributions that can be catalysts for discussion	Active participation with thoughtful insight, respectful interaction with peers	Responding critically to others' ideas and active listening	Integrating questions, others' responses, and assigned readings to build thoughtful analysis
Good	Posting contributions that are relevant, but lacking sophistication	Relevant frequent participation, but without critical insight	Adequate engagement, but limited involvement with peers' contributions	Adequate integration of material, but with limited complexity
Mediocre	Tangential or uninspiring contributions posted	Adequate contributions; or dominating discussions with irrelevant points	Inattentive when not speaking, or reiterating what others have already said	Restating others' conclusions rather than drawing your own
Inadequate	Not posting, or poor contributions	Infrequent or anecdotal contributions	Disengaged, or making superficial points	Unoriginality in contributions

Course Culture

A primary goal of this course is to immerse students in the ideas and research of positive education. I do not expect you to have background knowledge of positive education prior to this course. You will develop your knowledge of positive education through exploration and discussion in this seminar. Please reach out to me if you need assistance to fully participate in this course, and please contact me if you have suggestions to improve the quality of the course.

I aim to provide an intellectually engaging and supportive environment for students. Your unique perspective is valuable, it deepens the experience of your peers', and it contributes to the success of this class. Please contribute your insight throughout the semester.

All participants in this seminar deserve to be treated with respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, religious beliefs, physical or mental health status, or socioeconomic status. To this end, you should expect respect from your peers and myself. Similarly, you are expected to demonstrate respect to others through your words and actions, including respectfully engaging with opposing perspectives. I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class by anyone that made you uncomfortable, please talk to me. Preserving positive relationships with each other is part of the success of this course.

Grading Policy

The grading policy is below. If you would like to dispute a grade, you must do so within one week of receiving this grade.

A+	100-97	C+	79-77
A	96-94	C	76-74
A-	93-90	C-	73-70
B+	89-87	D+	69-67
B	86-84	D	66-64
B-	83-80	F	59-0

Final course grades that are 0.5 or higher are rounded to the next whole number. This applies only to your overall grade for the course, not individual grades (e.g., individual assignments).

For example, a 93.5% for this course would be an A, while a 93.4% would remain an A-.

Final course grades are not negotiable. The grade you earned from your assessment is the grade that will appear on CIT. All requests for higher grades will be denied. Granting these requests is unfair to other students, and it undermines the value of educational assessment. If

you are unable to complete coursework during the semester, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to move forward with your assessment.

Late days

Late days aim to help you during the semester. Each late day allows you to submit an assignment up to twenty-four hours late. You have two (2) late days to use during the semester. To use your late days, submit your assignment after the deadline. You do not need to ask permission to use your late day(s), nor provide any explanation. Both late days may be used for one assignment. Late days may not be used for group assignments.

Late major projects

You must upload your assignment to Canvas prior to the specified deadline. The deadline for each assignment is provided at the beginning of the semester so you have plenty of time to prepare. Any assignment submitted after the deadline will be penalized, (except in cases where you use one or two of your allocated 'late days' for individual projects). Aside from a few unique cases, there are no extensions. Grades for late assignments will be reduced as follows:

- Submitted after the deadline on the day the assignment is due: -5%
- Submitted between 12am and 11:59pm one day after the assignment is due: -10%
- Submitted between 12am and 11:59pm two days after the assignment is due: -20%
- Submitted between 12am and 11:59pm three days after the assignment is due: -30%
- Any assignment submitted after this will not be graded. It will receive a zero.

Course success: how to get an A in this course

- Read the material in advance of class (as posted on Canvas). This is a reading-intensive course, so give yourself plenty of time for each assignment.
- Engage with the reading material. Comment and respond to comments on Perusall.
- Participate in all classes. Use class time to flesh out your ideas and speculate. I applaud students for stretching their thinking in class discussions. Try to become comfortable sharing your 'half-baked' ideas so we can develop them together.
- Do not wait until the last minute to complete your major assignments. Many readings were specifically selected to help with these assignments as we progress through the semester. The coursework of this course is manageable *if* it is dispersed through the semester. Do not unnecessarily make your life stressful by procrastinating.
- For your group projects, challenge each other's ideas and engage with the material. Work within your group and support each other. Ask me questions. I specifically allocate class time to group work, so use this time wisely.
- Relate course material to your education and the world around you. Think about how you can apply what you learn. Reflect upon your past and consider your future here.

- If you feel wary of this course, or you are concerned about your performance, reach out during office hours. I want to hear from you.

I have high, and achievable, expectations of you in this course. I will support you to reach your educational goals. This seminar will be challenging, but your effort will be evident in your performance. If your performance in class is impacted by experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to contact me. I want to be a resource for you.

Course Outline

Date	Class #	Assigned Reading	Reading volume (excludes refs)
TBA	1	The current state of education	~23 pages popular press
TBA	2	Beyond the 'cognitive hypothesis'	~92 pages popular press
TBA	3	The role of positive education	~60 pages academic chapters
TBA	4	Positive education concepts	~51 pages research articles
TBA	5	Methods & critique	~62 pages research articles
TBA	6	Character strengths Due: Petition	~20 pages research articles Due: Petition
TBA	7	Grit	~277 page popular press book
TBA	8	Perseverance and self-control	~47 pages research articles, academic chap.
TBA	9	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	~40 pages research articles, academic chap.
TBA	10	Mindset	~246 page popular press book
TBA	11	Due: Infographic	Due: Infographic
TBA	12	Whistling Vivaldi	~219 page popular press book
TBA	13	Social-Belonging	~29 pages research articles, popular press
TBA	14	Final readings Due: School pitch	~71 pages popular press Due: School pitch

Relevant College policies

[Code of Academic Integrity](#)

You must familiarize yourself with the Code of Academic Integrity in the University of Pennsylvania. It is your responsibility to ensure your behavior does not violate this code. You must observe the policies regarding various forms of academic dishonesty. The following statement about academic dishonesty has been provided by the University of Pennsylvania, “Activities that have the effect or intention of interfering with education, pursuit of knowledge, or fair evaluation of a student’s performance are prohibited.” Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and may be handled by the Office of Student Conduct. More information is available here: <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>

[Student Financial Services](#)

Any student may consult with Student Financial Services to find out what support they are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure their health, safety, and secure learning environment.

[HELP Line](#)

This is a 24-hour-a-day phone number for members of the Penn community who are seeking time sensitive help in navigating Penn’s resources for health and wellness. Any member of the Penn community can utilize this service by calling **215-898-HELP**. Calls will be answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by Division of Public Safety professionals trained in mental health referrals by staff from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students who are dealing with the complex emotional challenges of university life can use the HELP Line to receive information and referrals to the many health and wellness resources at Penn, including CAPS, Student Health Service, Student Intervention Services, Public Safety, and others. They may also call on behalf of a friend or acquaintance. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the HELP Line at **215-898-HELP**.

<https://www.publicsafety.upenn.edu/announcing-the-898-help-line/>

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)

Your wellbeing is of utmost importance to me. I am happy to chat, or just listen, if you need someone to talk to, even if it’s not specifically about this course.

College can be challenging. Penn has a Counseling and Psychological Services program (CAPS). CAPS offers confidential free professional mental health services. The goal is to assist students in their adjustment to university life and help them take full advantage of the academic and social environment at Penn. Students can learn to manage personal problems and situational crises effectively, learn strategies to cope with academic stress, and develop self awareness, personal responsibility, and skills for life-long learning.

- Online scheduling: <https://uapps.vpul.upenn.edu/capsform/>
- Phone: 215-898-7021,
- Email: caps@pobox.upenn.edu (please do not email for an appointment)
- Website: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/>
- Address: 3624 Market Street, First Floor West, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2615

If you or someone you know is experiencing an emergency that cannot wait until the next day office hours, please call the main number (215-898-7021) and press # 1.

If you are uncomfortable reaching out to CAPS directly, I am happy to contact them on your behalf. In addition, there are various a range of other support resources on campus such as resident advisers, faculty members living on campus, academic advisers, and undergraduate advisers in each program of study. The Office of the Chaplain is also helpful.

[CaseNet](#)

CaseNet is an academic support team in the College Office charged with providing a centralized response to all College students in academic difficulty (www.college.upenn.edu/casenet).

CaseNet can be reached at col-casenet@groups.sas.upenn.edu or by calling 215-898-6341.

Cases referred to CaseNet include:

- Students who are ill or otherwise prevented from attending class for more than five days.
- Students in serious academic difficulty.
- Students who are hospitalized or who have other kinds of acute problems (victim of crime, etc.) that interrupt their normal schedule.
- Students who are experiencing personal or family concerns significant enough to interfere with their academic work or to impinge on those around them, including a death in the family.

[Reach-A-Peer Helpline](#)

The Reach-A-Peer Helpline is a peer help line established in 1996 to provide peer support, information, and referrals to any and all students of the University of Pennsylvania. The service is open to all students who wish to share a problem, are in need of information, or just want to talk to someone about anything on their mind. RAPLine offers two services:

- Helpline: Our phone line is available every night while classes are in session (except holidays) from 9 pm to 1 am. Reach us at 215-573-2727. Don't be shy!
- Texting: Our text service is available 24/7. Text us anytime at 215-515-7332 and one of our supporters will response as soon as possible.

Course structure details if Fall 2021 is remote:

- **In-person component:** No in-person instruction.
- **Synchronous sessions:** During class time on Wednesdays. These will predominantly consist of discussion and active learning. Students would work in small groups to complete group projects using class time (with some out-of-class work necessary).
- **Asynchronous activities:** Numerous asynchronous activities. First and foremost, reading the assigned material. Also, some project work may require time outside of class.
- **Course demands:** Roughly 10 hours per week are expected of undergraduate students per course. These anticipated ten hours would be divided between synchronous sessions (Zoom classes) and assignments (reading and projects).
- **Assessment:** There are no quizzes, midterms, or exams. All assignments would be structured so students can work on them in class or in their own time (depending on the assignment, alone or in groups). Some assignments would have class time allocated to them.
- **Materials:** Most materials are available online, so you should incur minimal costs for the materials of this course. Class materials will include texts and peer-reviewed psychology journal articles. These are all posted on Perusall via Canvas, with the exception of two required books, Grit and Mindset. Unfortunately, these books have limited availability in Penn's library system. If you struggle to gain access to these from the library, these are both immensely popular books. You may try to (1) check this ebook out of Penn's library earlier than assigned so you do not have issues of availability during high demand, (2) check out an eBook from a public library, (3) borrow a copy from someone, or (4) consider buying a second-hand copy on eBay (or similar).

Participation guidelines:

- Use your name on your Zoom account.
- If your name is ever mispronounced in class, please email me the phonetic pronunciation.
- Keep yourself muted if anticipate background noise.
- Attend all Zoom sessions having read and engaged with the assigned material.
- Attend all Zoom sessions ready to discuss the assigned material in the main "classroom" and/or in breakout rooms.
- Keep your camera on to facilitate classroom community, however, if your internet connectivity is lacking, turning off your camera may be beneficial.

- Be mindful that virtual "classrooms" are, in many ways, just like real classrooms. The more we can be present and attentive to one another, the better. Abrupt noises and abrupt departures can be just as jarring on Zoom as they would be in a regular classroom setting.
- You are expected to be respectful of others and to think critically about all ideas.

Here is a schedule reflecting a typical weekly workload if Fall 2021 is remote:

Monday	Work on assigned readings, contribute to online discussions about these. Complete any assigned activities prior to Wednesday's synchronous session.
Tuesday	Work on assigned readings, contribute to online discussions about these. Complete any assigned activities prior to Wednesday's synchronous session.
Wednesday	Participate in online synchronous class, and complete remote 'in-class' activities. If relevant, engage with group members about group assignments, or work on individual assignments.
Thursday	Work on assigned readings, contribute to online discussions about these. Wrap up individual or group projects, if necessary.
Friday	Work on assigned readings, contribute to online discussions about these. Wrap up individual or group projects, if necessary.