

Social Science Honor Sequence: The Good Life (Spring 2015)

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-2pm SSPA 1100

Instructors:

Cailin O'Connor (cailino@uci.edu)

Office SST 793 – Office hours: Wednesday/Thursday 11:30-12:30 pm Au Bon Pain on campus

James Weatherall (weatherj@uci.edu)

Office SST 781 – Office hours: Tuesday 2-3pm

Teaching Assistants:

Chris Mitsch (cmitsch@uci.edu)

Office SST 708 – Office hours: Wednesday 12-1pm

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Office SST 740 – Office hours: Wednesday 11-12am, 12-1 pm

Nicole Winter (wintera@uci.edu)

Office SST 691 – Office hours: Monday 11-12 am, Wednesday 4-5 pm

Course Description:

What is a good life? How do you live one? We start with philosophical answers to these questions, moving from the ancient Greeks to Nietzsche to Foucault. From there we employ findings from economics, anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience to try to understand what makes people happy. As will become clear, we discover that goodness, happiness, and sociality seem to go hand in hand for humans. We conclude the class by looking at the evolution of human sociality and morality to understand why this is so.

Required Texts:

All course readings will be made available on the class website.

Assignments/Evaluations:

- 1) Midterm Exam 1: Students will complete a midterm examination on class material. (In class, Thursday of week 3.)
- 2) Midterm Exam 2: Students will complete a midterm examination on class material. (In class, Tuesday of week 9.)
- 3) Final Exam: Students will complete a final examination.

Grade Breakdown:

40% Final Exam:

25% Midterm 1

30% Midterm 2

5% Attendance/In-class participation

Policies:

Attendance- Section and class attendance are mandatory.

Safe Space- This class, including lectures and sections, is a safe space for students of all genders, sexual orientations, races, religions, etc. Please don't use derogatory language in this class. Please talk to us if you have a preferred name or pronoun that you would like us and/or your TA to use.

Extra Credit- Extra credit will be offered for students who complete the mid-course evaluation. If further opportunities for extra credit arise, we will announce them in class.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism- The penalty for *any* violation of academic integrity -- including but not limited to plagiarism -- is failure for the course and a letter recording the violation sent to the Dean. Please acquaint yourself with UCI's academic honesty policy at <http://www.editor.uci.edu/catalogue/appx/appx.2.htm>.

Course Outline/Readings:

Week 1 – Utility and the Good Life

i. No reading

ii. Plato, *The Apology*, *Gorgias* readings, Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1.7-1.10, 10.7, 10.8

Week 2 – Stoicism, Epicurianism, and Hedonism

i. Epictetus, "The Enchiridion"; Epicurus, "Letter to Menoecues"

ii. Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chs. 1-5.

Week 3 – The Problem of Socrates/Midterm

i. Nietzsche, "The Problem of Socrates" and "Morality as Anti-Nature"; Foucault, "Lecture to the College de France, 15 February 1984, Second Hour".

ii. Midterm

Week 4 – The Bare Necessities

i. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation" 370-385; Graham & Ramsey, *The Happiness Diet*, chapters 1, 3 & 4

ii. Penedo and Dahn, "Exercise and wellbeing"; Steptoe, et al. "Positive affect, psychological well-being, and good sleep".

Week 5 – Sex & Money

i. Rosen & Bachmann, "Sexual-Well Being, Happiness, and Satisfaction, in Women"; Blanchflower & Oswald, "Money, Sex, and Happiness".

ii. Easterlin, "Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?"; Veenhoven, "Is Happiness Relative?".

Week 6 – Happiness Across Cultures

i. Schyns, "Crossnational Differences in Happiness"; Ye et al., "Culture and Happiness".

ii. Kitayama and Markus, "Culture and Subjective Well-Being". (**)

Week 7 – What's Good about Feeling Good?

i. Gable & Haidt, "What (and Why) is Positive Psychology?"; Diener et al. "Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill" (**); Ryff, et al. "Positive health".

ii. Isen & Levin, "Effect of Feeling Good on Helping"; Dumbaer et al. "Social laughter is correlated with an elevated pain threshold"; Coan et al. "Lending a Hand".

Week 8 – Neuroscience of Happiness

i. Kringelbach & Berridge, "Towards a Functional Neuroanatomy of Pleasure and Happiness"; Ishak et al, "Oxytocin Role in Enhancing Well-Being"; Churchland, *Braintrust* Ch. 2.

ii. Churchland, *Braintrust*, Chs. 3 & 4.

Week 9 – Midterm / Evolutionary Game Theory

i. Midterm II

ii. Skyrms, *The Stag Hunt* readings, O'Connor, "The Evolution of Guilt"

Week 10 – The Evolution of Happiness: Cooperation and Prosociality

i. Nesse, "Natural selection and the elusiveness of happiness"; Frank, *Passions Within Reason* readings

ii. No reading.