



El Camino College
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD – Official

Subject:	HDEV
Course Number:	130
Descriptive Title:	The Science of Happiness
Division:	Behavioral and Social Sciences
Department:	Human Development
Course Disciplines:	Human Development
Catalog Description:	This course provides an introduction to the science of happiness and examines research, theory, and practices related to personal fulfillment, human relationships, social functioning, and neuroplastic changes that can help people live happier, healthier, and more successful lives. Topics include biological and physiological determinants of happiness, the measurement of happiness, bi-directional relationships between physical health and positive affect, and roles of neuroanatomical structures, positive emotions, meaning and engagement, accomplishment, resilience, and motivation in happiness. Students will learn research-based happiness practices.
Prerequisite:	
Co-requisite:	
Recommended Preparation:	Eligibility for English 1A
Enrollment Limitation:	
Hours Lecture (per week):	3
Hours Laboratory (per week):	0
Outside Study Hours:	6
Total Course Hours:	54
Course Units:	3
Grading Method:	Letter Grade only
Credit Status:	Credit, degree applicable
Transfer CSU:	Yes
Effective Date:	FALL 2025
Transfer UC:	Yes
Effective Date:	pending
General Education ECC:	Area 2C - Social and Behavioral Science
Term:	
Other:	
CSU GE:	Area D - Social Sciences
Term:	
Other:	
IGETC:	Area 4 - Social and Behavioral Sciences

Term:	
Other:	
Student Learning Outcomes:	<p>SLO #1 - Science of Happiness Upon completion of the course, students will be able to analyze neuroscience research associated with structures and functions of the brain in relation to happiness.</p> <p>SLO #2 - Happiness Correlates Upon completion of the course, students will be able to explain psychological and cross-cultural approaches to understanding happiness and its correlates.</p> <p>SLO #3 - Happiness Practices Upon completion of the course, students will be able to evaluate and apply research regarding the effectiveness of contemplative practices on happiness and well-being.</p>
Course Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define subjective happiness and identify its sources and outcome correlates. 2. Analyze research on affective, cognitive, social, biological, and behavioral aspects of happiness. 3. Explain research in neuroscience that reveals behaviors and mindsets that promote positive life engagement and the neural circuits that influence this. 4. Identify the physiological mechanisms of the brain and nervous system in relation to cognition, emotion, and other factors associated with happiness. 5. Analyze how genetic, social, and economic influences impact happiness. 6. Discuss the experience of subjective happiness and well-being from a cross-cultural perspective. 7. Evaluate psychological research on factors that impact happiness, including resilience, gratitude, self-compassion, goal orientation, and career satisfaction. 8. Describe the bi-directional relationships of well-being with social relationships and health. 9. Apply theories of positive psychology to critique individual beliefs, thoughts, actions, and emotions to understand their interrelated contributions to personal well-being and happiness. 10. Identify scientifically validated strategies for increasing happiness.
Major Topics:	<p>I. Introduction to Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. Defining and measuring happiness B. Historical research in subjective well-being</p> <p>II. The Brain, Nervous System, and Functions Related to Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. The nervous system, genetics, and neuroplasticity B. How the brain processes emotions</p> <p>III. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. Eudaimonic and hedonic happiness B. Happiness and theories of positive psychology (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, Diener, Lyubomirsky, Fredrickson)</p> <p>IV. Research in the Study of Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. Demographic correlates B. Environmental correlates</p> <p>V. Happiness and Culture (5 hours, lecture) A. Cultural approaches to well-being B. Individual and societal factors</p> <p>VI. Personal Correlates Influencing Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. Personality, temperament, and individual traits B. Outcomes of positive affect versus negative emotions</p> <p>VII. Environmental Factors Impacting Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. Circumstances and life events B. Economic and career factors</p>

	<p>VIII. Emotional Intelligence and Happiness (4 hours, lecture) A. Theory of emotional intelligence in relationship to happiness B. Emotional intelligence competencies and happiness</p> <p>IX. Research on Happiness and Behavior (5 hours, lecture) A. Physiological and psychological impacts of mindfulness B. Bi-directional relationship between health and happiness</p> <p>X. Relationships and Happiness (5 hours, lecture) A. Correlational research on relationships and well-being B. Role of community and social support in happiness</p> <p>XI. Research-Based Factors for Increasing Happiness and Well-Being (5 hours, lecture) A. Goal orientation, grit, resilience, self-appreciation, self-compassion B. Altruism, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion</p>
Total Lecture Hours:	54
Total Laboratory Hours:	0
Total Hours:	54
Primary Method of Evaluation:	1) Substantial writing assignments
Typical Assignment Using Primary Method of Evaluation:	Consider the research-based strategies for increasing happiness and well-being discussed in this course. Choose at least three methods or concepts you believe will bring the most benefit to you personally. Compose a three- to five-page essay describing the specific concepts/methods you selected, explaining research supporting their impact on happiness, and identifying how you will incorporate them into your daily life.
Critical Thinking Assignment 1:	In a three- to five-page paper, compare and contrast a minimum of three theoretical frameworks for understanding physiological and psychological correlates of happiness. Discuss your recommendations for increasing happiness.
Critical Thinking Assignment 2:	Write a three- to five-page paper analyzing research on one or more happiness constructs (e.g., altruism, gratitude, forgiveness, mindfulness) or theories/frameworks for understanding and increasing happiness (e.g., Seligman, Lyubomirsky, Fredrickson). The paper must include an introduction to the construct(s) or theories, a review of literature with a minimum of three sources, and an analysis of correlations or contributions to happiness.
Other Evaluation Methods:	Completion, Essay Exams, Journal kept throughout course, Matching Items, Multiple Choice, Objective Exam, Other Exams, Presentation, Quizzes, Term or Other Papers, True/False, Written Homework
If Other:	
Instructional Methods:	Demonstration, Discussion, Group Activities, Guest Speakers, Lecture, Multimedia presentations, Role play/simulation
If other:	
Work Outside of Class:	Answer questions, Journal (done on a continuing basis throughout the semester), Required reading, Skill practice, Study, Written work (such as essay/composition/report/analysis/research)
If Other:	
Up-To-Date Representative Texts:	Cheavens, J., & Feldman, D., <i>The Science and Application of Positive Psychology</i> . Cambridge University Press, (2021).
Alternative Texts:	

Required Supplementary Readings:	
Other Required Materials:	Supplementary materials from instructor
Requisite	
Category	
Requisite course:	
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	
Requisite Skill:	
Requisite Skill and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill(s). if applicable	
Requisite course:	
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	
Requisite Skill:	Eligibility for English 1A
Requisite Skill and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s). if applicable	<p>This course involves reading college level textbooks, developing written projects, and answering essay questions. A student’s success in this class will be enhanced if they have these skills. Students need well-developed reading skills in order to understand and interpret information in their textbooks and writing skills to develop critical thinking papers and written homework.</p> <p>Students who have college-level reading skills will understand, analyze, and interpret concepts and theoretical perspectives discussed in assigned readings. Students who demonstrate college-level research and writing skills will have better success with the written assignments in this course.</p> <p>Apply knowledge of academic habits of mind.</p> <p>Summarize, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize college-level texts.</p> <p>Write a well-reasoned, well-supported expository essay that demonstrates application of the academic writing process.</p> <p>Demonstrate intermediate-level reading comprehension within a variety of time limitations.</p> <p>Apply basic reading skills such as skimming, scanning, reading for comprehension, and critical reading in academic, personal, and professional situations.</p> <p>Predict outcomes, interpret events, identify and restate main ideas, and draw inferences from various readings of advanced-level difficulty.</p> <p>Employ academic vocabulary and literary terms in written and oral analyses of advanced-level readings.</p>

Enrollment Limitations and Category:	
Enrollment Limitations Impact:	
Course Created by:	Juli Soden
Date:	02/23/2024
Original Board Approval Date:	06/17/2025
Effective Term:	FALL 2025