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## Harnessing Emotion and Reason to Achieve Goals Fall, 2014 (LBAR 181)

**Meetings:** Thursdays, 12:45-1:35, ZACH 333A  
**Instructor:** Dr. Heather C. Lench  
**Office:** PSYCH 233  
**Phone:** 845-0377  
**email:** hlench@tamu.edu  
**Office Hr.:** Thursday 10-11, or by appointment  
**Website:** www.heatherlench.com, under "courses"

### Reading:

Main text: Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A new approach to getting the life you want*. The Penguin Press: New York.  
(electronic version okay, as long as you can bring it to class and won't be distracted by your device)

There are also short weekly readings from scientific journals that will be provided to you.

**Course description:** Emotion and reason can help or harm our ability to achieve goals in daily life. This course will introduce you to research on the best ways to identify and achieve goals (in other words, what to want and how to get it). The goal is to provide you with a foundation to continue your college career and to think critically about psychological research and its relationship to your daily life.

**Learning Outcomes:** This class will teach you to: neither fear nor revere emotion or reason and to think critically about how to set goals and strategies that will enhance your ability to achieve them. Given that happiness, health, and relationships are often listed as life goals, the course will also focus on factors that impact success in these areas of life. You will also develop the ability to engage with other learners during discussion and synthesize diverse perspectives.

**Lecture and Reading Policy:** Attendance and reading are both required to be successful in this course. The reading will be most helpful to you if you have completed it before the class. I will assume that you've already read the text in class and will refer to it during discussion. The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located on-line at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>

**Attendance and participation (10 points):** This is a seminar-style course. I will present some course material every week, but most of class will consist of discussion of the material from the week and your reactions to it. You are encouraged to compare across

topic areas, integrate perspectives from other courses and experiences, and to relate the material to your own life and experiences during these discussions.

**In-class debates (30 points):** Once during the semester you will be asked to select a topic to debate from a list of controversial subjects. Using the readings from the week, you will participate in an in-class debate by presenting and developing a theoretical perspective. Another student will be assigned the contrasting perspective. The goal of these debates is to think critically about the course material by synthesizing and evaluating diverse perspectives on a topic.

**Written response papers (10 points):** Every week a one-page written response paper is due at the end of the class session. These assignments should include your reactions to the material from the previous week. You will also complete exercises every week related to the class material, such as setting goals using strategies covered in the material or completing a happiness-promoting exercise. These experiences and your reactions to them can also be incorporated into your weekly response paper.

**Self-Study Final Presentation and Paper (50 points):** After completing each of the weekly exercises related to class material, you will complete ratings of your current happiness, goal success, and reactions. This “data” will form the basis of your final paper (5 pages, double-spaced, 1” margins) and a short in-class presentation (5 minutes) at the end of the semester. You will discuss the science behind the approaches, your reactions to the exercises, and how these strategies could be incorporated (or not) into your daily life.

**Grading:** Grades will be based on the total number of points obtained in the course.

**Total Points: 100**

Scores required for each letter designation in the grading system:

A: 90-100 points

B: 80-89 points

C: 70-79 points

D: 60-69 points

F: any score below 60 points

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>

**Academic Integrity**

For additional information please visit: <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>

*“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”*

### **Week 1 (Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>): Introduction**

No reading

Optional: Foreword of main text

### **Week 2 (Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>): Deciding what to want**

Main text, Chapter 1 (“Is it possible to become happier?”)

Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2005). Affective forecasting: Knowing what to want. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 131-134.

**Homework:** Develop list of goals

In class debate: Is happiness changeable and does it matter?

### **Week 3 (Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>): The impact of different goals**

Main text, Chapter 2 (“How happy are you and why?”)

Kahneman, D., & Deaton, A. (2010). High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107, 16489-16493.

**Homework:** Revise list of goals

In class debate: What affects happiness?

### **Week 4 (Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>): Developing cognitive strategies**

Main text, Chapter 4 (“Practicing gratitude and positive thinking”)

Optional: main text, Chapter 3

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410-421.

**Homework:** Pick one activity and implement it once a day for the week

In class debate: Advantages versus disadvantages of this approach

### **Week 5 (Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>): Developing relationships**

Main text, Chapter 5 (“Investing in social connections”)

Klimecki, O. M., Leiberg, S., Lamm, C., & Singer, T. (2012). Functional neural plasticity and associated changes in positive affect after compassion training. *Cerebral Cortex*, 23, 1552-1561.

**Homework:** Pick one activity and implement it once a day for the week

In class debate: Advantages versus disadvantages of this approach

### **Week 6 (Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>): Developing coping efficacy**

Main text, Chapter 6 (“Managing stress, hardship, and trauma”)

Wortman, C. B., & Silver, R. C. (1989). The myths of coping with loss. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57, 349-357.

**Homework:** Pick one activity and implement it once a day for the week

In class debate: Advantages versus disadvantages of this approach

**Week 7 (Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>): Managing emotional responses**

Main text, Chapter 7 (“Living in the present”)

Stolarski, M., Matthews, G., Postek, S., Zimbardo, P. G., & Bitner, J. (2013). How we feel is a matter of time: Relationships between time perspectives and mood. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

**Homework:** Pick one activity and implement it once a day for the week

In class debate: Advantages versus disadvantages of this approach

**Week 8 (Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>): Committing to goal pursuits**

Main text, Chapter 8 (“Committing to your goals”)

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 1087-1101.

**Homework:** Pick one activity and implement it once a day for the week

In class debate: Advantages versus disadvantages of this approach

**Week 9 (Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>): Taking time out**

Main text, Chapter 9 (“Taking care of your body and soul”)

Kozhevnikov, M., Louchakova, O., Josipovic, Z., & Motes, M. A. (2009). The enhancement of visuospatial processing efficiency through Buddhist deity meditation. *Psychological Science*, 20, 645-653.

**Homework:** Pick one activity and implement it once a day for the week

In class debate: Advantages versus disadvantages of this approach

**Week 10 (Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>): Maintaining goal pursuits**

Main text, Chapter 10 (“The five hows behind sustainable happiness”)

Polivy, J., Herman, C. P., & Deo, R. (2010). Getting a bigger slice of the pie. Effects on eating and emotion in restrained and unrestrained eaters. *Appetite*, 55, 426-430.

In class debate: Is it really possible to sustain happiness changes?

**Week 11 (Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>): The Paradox of Choice**

Schwartz, B., Ward, A., Monterosso, J., Lyubomirsky, S. J., White, K., & Lehman, D. R. (2002).

Maximizing versus satisficing: Happiness is a matter of choice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 1178-1197.

Dar-Nimrod, I., Rawn, C. D., Lehman, D. R., & Schwartz, B. (2009). The maximization paradox:

The costs of seeking alternatives. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 46, 631-635.

In class debate: Advantages and disadvantages of choice

**Week 12 (Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>): Self-study presentations**

Presentations should demonstrate that you have thought about the material and present new perspectives that will be useful to your classmates

**Week 13 (Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>): THANKSGIVING**

**Week 14 (Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>): Self-study presentations**

Presentations should demonstrate that you have thought about the material and present new perspectives that will be useful to your classmates