



# OTRP *online*

office of teaching resources in PSYCHOLOGY

## Positive Psychology

Gannon University, Department of Psychology and Counseling

(PSYC340, 3 Credits)

Odd numbered Fall semesters

MWF 1:25-2:30

Instructor: Jessica Hartnett, [hartnett004@gannon.edu](mailto:hartnett004@gannon.edu), xxx-xxx-xxxx (Hint: Email is the best way to get a hold of me, but I probably won't respond to emails sent after 7 PM but will do my best to reply within 24 hours.)

Office Hours: M/W/F, 8-9 AM (Also, by appointment or feel free to drop by my office)

### Course Description:

Positive psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. This course will provide an introduction to positive psychology. Students explore the concepts, the research behind the concepts, cognitions, and practices that enhance well-being.

Prerequisite: Introduction to Psychology (PSYC111)

### Dr. Hartnett's unofficial description:

Psychology has long focused on human limitations and mental illness. Positive psychology takes a different perspective: Let's study the people who are living their best lives. How do they plan? What personality traits do they have? How do they deal with hardship? Once we have studied this scientifically, how can psychological science share this information in order to help all people live better lives? In this course, you will read a lot of positive psychology research, learn about a lot of psychological theories, and apply the theory to your own lives via group discussion and a final research project. I hope you leave this course better able to digest psychology research and better able to apply it to the world around you.

### Required Material:

Please see the course schedule and Blackboard (Bb) for the research articles for this course.

Walker, R., Scherer, C., & Hartnett, J. (2014). *Pollyanna's Revenge*. Kendall-Hunt: Dubuque, Iowa.

### Course Objectives:

- 1) Describe and evaluate positive psychology methodology.
- 2) Generate positive psychology research ideas.
- 3) Demonstrate the ability to read, evaluate, and discuss psychology research.
- 4) Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and think about the self from a positive psychology perspective.
- 5) Analyze and discuss core concepts, including affect, grit, fading affect bias, affective forecasting, flow, mindfulness, and resilience.

## Learning Experiences (or, how you are evaluated, why I evaluate you this way, and what you need to do for a good grade):

1. **Very Best Talk:** Students will tell a story about a time in their lives when they were at their best. Not necessarily their happiest or most comfortable, but their best. This does not necessarily mean how you are better than others (although it could). Rather, this has to do with showing a time when you were flourishing and/or living up to your potential and/or your best self...perhaps at school, interpersonally, at work, with your family, volunteering, etc. When you tell your story, describe when it happened, what led to this point in your life, how it made you feel at the time, how it makes you feel now, how it reflects upon who you are as a person.

This should be a 2-3 minute chat and an opportunity to introduce yourself to the class. This assignment will be worth 5 points. Then you will turn in a paragraph on Blackboard (Bb) summarizing your formal introduction.

**WHY?** This assignment sets the tone for the course. Positive psychology is not the psychology of happy (but does include happiness), but the psychology of understanding the conditions and characteristics that help people be their best. By sharing your story, and hearing the stories of others, I hope you can see how the principles of positive psychology have already applied to your, and your classmates, lives. I hope this assignment also demonstrates that our classroom is a collaborative space where students should speak up.

**What your professor expects:** Your story demonstrates a moment in time when you were your best self.

2. **Weekly reading(s) and quiz:** This is a 300-level course. As such, it is appropriate for you to read and understand psychology research. In this class, each week is a unit, and each reading is related to that week's unit. All articles are available on Bb. Some weeks, you will also be assigned to read a chapter out of Pollyanna's Revenge book and that content will be included in the quiz.

In order to gently encourage/incentivize reading, you will also have to complete a brief quiz in Bb on the reading. The quiz is to be completed by Monday at 10 AM every week. You will not be able to take this quiz late. Once you start the quiz, you must finish it. You have 20 minutes to take the quiz so it is strongly encouraged that you read the article at least twice prior to taking the quiz. The order of the questions is randomized and you cannot go back to previous questions. You will complete this quiz independently (Suspicious IP addresses/quiz completion times for quiz takers are considered cheating). Each quiz will be worth 15 points.

**Why?** These quizzes will teach you how to read psychology research, allow you to come to class each week prepared for that week's topic, and help prepare you for the final project. The feedback and grades will be promptly posted to Blackboard.

**What to expect on the quizzes:** Quiz format will include a variety of question types, including short response, matching, multiple choice, and fill in the blank. Quiz questions may ask you to apply research findings to your own life, explain the findings in plain English, and/or identify parts of the study (sample size, independent variable, population, etc.).

NOTE: I have selected research articles that are appropriate for a 300-level course. The first reading/quiz is an article that teaches you how to read a psychology research article. For more information on how to digest research articles, I recommend this blog post from Dr. Jennifer Raff. She is a biologist, but her guide to reading research still applies to psychology:  
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/05/09/how-to-read-and-understand-a-scientific-paper-a-guide-for-non-scientists/>

- 3. Questionnaire Reflection:** Four times this semester, you will complete positive psychology assessments (<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/>, requires free registration). These are valid, reliable scales created and used by psychologists. You will then submit a one-page reflection (via Bb) on your performance on this assessment (please include your score(s)). Each reflection will be worth 5 points and due Monday at 10 AM for that week.

**Why?** This is an advanced psychology elective. In addition to reading and understanding research, you should also be able to evaluate research methods. These methods include the scales that psychologists use in the research articles we read.

**What your professor expects:** Show me that you completed the scale and read the feedback you received. Show me you can think about the scale critically. Your reflection can include: Your reaction to your performance on the assessment. Was your performance on the assessment a surprise or what you expected? Do you think the assessment tool is actually measuring what it says it is measuring? How could you improve this scale? When might a research use this scale?

- 4. Weekly discussion prompt:** Write one good, in-depth discussion question and submit it by Thursday at 10 AM every week. Typically, a good prompt is at least 100 words long. I will gather the questions and distribute them to the class for our Friday Discussion Days.

**Grading Criteria:** Suggestions for writing a good prompt: Discuss shortcomings, alternate explanations, or future directions related to the theory and studies that we learned about that week. Discuss (attack?) the underlying assumptions of the research, the methodology, the findings, and results of the week's topic. Integrate the week's topic into current events, historical context, your future career/current major, or other psychology topics. What are future directions for the topics discussed this week? If you had a strong reaction to the topic (positive or negative), describe your reaction, and expand upon it as to turn it into a discussion prompt and invite input from your peers. What questions were raised by the things you learned about this week? (Don't limit yourself to this list! These are just some ideas to get you thinking.) The feedback and grades will be promptly posted to Blackboard.

**Why?** I want to see you and your classmates synthesize the information you learn in this class. You come from varied personal and professional backgrounds, and I think you can learn a lot from your peers and their reactions to class material.

**5. Research Project:** Reading research papers, attending class lectures, and discussing course materials with your classmates will give you a firm understanding of positive psychology. At the end of the semester, you will demonstrate this knowledge by designing an original positive psychology study. Students will not actually conduct this study, but you will generate a hypothesis, a research design, a brief literature review, and complete an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application for this project. This idea should be informed by the topics we learn about in class as well as your other psychology (and, perhaps, non-psychology) classes. At the end of the semester, you will submit a completed Gannon University IRB application and give a brief presentation to the class about your research idea. For more information on Gannon's IRB:

<https://my.gannon.edu/universityresources/committeesandgovernance/irb/Pages/default.aspx>

The IRB form will contain the brief literature review for your study, a description of the actual data collection process, including your independent and dependent variables as well as copies of materials you will present to your research participants. You will also need to create an informed consent for your project. The completed IRB form, and any materials you will use, are due the final Monday of the semester at 10 AM (not the Monday of Finals Week).

This project will be more formally presented to you the Monday prior to Fall Break. I am waiting until then because you will be more acquainted with positive psychology research methodology and research questions at that point in the semester.

**WHY?** Psychology is research. In this class, you read a research article every week. You are discussing the implications, limitations, and applications of this research during your discussion days. In order to demonstrate your understanding of research methodology and your ability to think about new directions in positive psychology, you will create your own, original, simple, research idea. You will demonstrate this via an IRB application to familiarize yourself with the IRB process, which is integral to all research involving human subjects.

Research Project Rubric/Grading Criteria	Raw Points
Literature review (as cited in IRB application q. 24, including APA formatted citations, copies of the three articles)	13
Informed consent (conforms to the standards set by GU IRB)	6
Experimental Materials (create the materials that your participants will complete/encounter)	6
Complete an IRB application (conforms to the standards set by GU IRB)	15
Brief class presentation (discuss your inspiration, how your idea adds to the literature, your materials, and your hypothesized findings).	10
Thoroughness of research idea (adds something new to the research, grounded in previous research, well stated hypothesis).	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

**6. Participation:** If you miss more than two classes (without an official excuse/documentation of illness/athletic event/family emergency) you don't get any of 20 attendance points.

Links between course objectives and learning experiences					
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Very Best Talk</b>				x	
<b>Questionnaire reflections</b>	x			x	x
<b>Weekly Quiz</b>	x		x		x
<b>Weekly Prompt</b>	x		x		x
<b>Research Project</b>	x	x	x		x

**More ideas on how to succeed in this class:**

Having taught this class several times, I find that some students have trouble remembering that there is a quiz and discussion prompt due *EVERY WEEK*. Please use whatever method is necessary so that you remember to complete both of these assignments every week (day planner, cell phone calendar/alerts, alarm on your cell phone, Google calendar, etc.)! **Please see the table below for a weekly outline for this class.**

**Weekly Schedule (with exceptions noted in course calendar):**

<b>Sunday</b>	Prepare for next week! This may include reading an article, reading a book chapter, completing a positive psychology questionnaire, and writing a reflection paper. Don't forget about your end of the semester project!
<b>Monday</b>	Reading quiz completed by 10 AM. You may also have a questionnaire reflection. See you in class for a lecture based class.
<b>Tuesday</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	See you in class for a lecture based class.
<b>Thursday</b>	Complete and submit Discussion prompt by 10 AM
<b>Friday</b>	Come to class ready to discuss the week's materials.
<b>Saturday</b>	Prepare for next week! This may include reading an article, reading a book chapter, completing a positive psychology questionnaire, and writing a reflection paper. Don't forget about your end of the semester project!

In order to help you understand your ongoing performance in this class, prompt feedback will be provided via Bb on all quizzes, discussion prompts, etc. Please speak to me if you are having trouble accessing the feedback.

**Assessment Procedures and Grading Policies:**

Grading Criteria	Raw Points	% Points
Very Best Talk and Paper	5	1.45%

Questionnaires Reflections (4 x 5 pts)	20	5.80%
Reading Quiz (12 x 15 pts)	180	52.17%
Weekly Discussion Prompt (12 x 5 pts)	60	17.39%
Research Project	60	17.39%
Attendance	20	5.80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100%</b>

Letter Grade	GPA	% Intervals
A+	4.0	100+
A	4.0	99.9-91.6
A-	3.7	91.5-90.6
B+	3.3	90.5-89.6
B	3.0	89.5-82.6
B-	2.7	81.5-80.6
C+	2.3	80.5-79.6
C	2.0	79.5-72.6
C-	1.7	71.5-70.6
D	1.0	70.5-61.5
F	0	<61.4

## Course and University Policies

**Policy on Resolving Concerns with an Instructor:** If you have a concern with an instructor or a course, the resolution begins by speaking with the instructor. If the concern continues after this conversation, the student should speak with the chair/director of the instructor's department. Any continuing concerns should be taken to the Dean's Office.

**Disabilities Statement:** The University will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The purpose of accommodations is to provide equal access to educational opportunities for eligible students with academic and/or physical disabilities. Gannon students who require accommodations due to a documented diagnosed physical, emotional or learning disability should contact Gannon's Office of Disability Service at extension 5522 or find more information at:

[Link to Gannon University's Disability Support Services](#)

### **Sensitive Topics and Discussions:**

At times this quarter we will be discussing topics, like resilience, negative autobiographical memories, striving during difficult times. These discussion may remind you of difficult personal experiences. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. (You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually.)

If you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to this material, either with the class or with me afterwards, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our coursework.

### **Student Civil Rights:**

I, and the University, are committed to an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Federal and State laws, as well as University policies, protect students, faculty and staff against discrimination based on the following legally protected characteristics: Race, Color, Creed, Religion, National Origin, Sex, (including pregnancy and parenting status), Age, Disability, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, Genetic Information and Veteran Status. (See Equal Opportunity and Policies on Providing Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination and Preventing Sexual Harassment.)

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Adherence to the Academic Integrity Policy of Gannon University is expected.

## Proposed Course Schedule. You will be notified in advance of any changes.

Day:	Date:	Topic:	What you need to do:
W	8/26	1. Introduction	“Very Best” talk and paragraph on 8/28 by 11 AM.
F	8/28		<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Christian, J.H. & Zanna, M.P. (1999). How to Read a Journal Article in Social Psychology. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), <i>The Self in Social Psychology</i> (pp. 461-470). Philadelphia: Psychology Press. <b>DUE SATURDAY 8/29 AT 10 PM!</b>
M	8/31	2. What is Pos. Psych/Research Methods in Positive Psychology	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Gabel, S.L., & Haidt, J. (2005). What (and why) is positive psychology? <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 9, 103-110., Pollyanna’s Revenge: Introduction, Chapter 1 due 8/31 at 10 AM
W	9/2		<b>Do/Reflect:</b> Authentic Happiness Inventory and General Happiness Questionnaire due 8/31 at 10 AM  <b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
F	9/4		
M	NO CLAS S	3. Biology of Happiness/Subjective Well Being	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Abel, E.L. & Kruger, M.L. (2010). Smile Intensity in Photographs Predicts Longevity. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 21, 542-544. Pollyanna’s Revenge, Chapter 3
W	9/9		<b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
F	9/11		
M	9/14	4. Character Strengths	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Peterson, C., & Seligman, M.E.P. (2003). Character strengths before and after September 11. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 14, 381-384.
W	9/16		<b>Do/Reflect:</b> VIA Survey of Character Strengths
F	9/18		<b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
M	9/21	5. Positive Relationships	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Leslie C.B., & Langer, E.J. (2005). Mindfulness and marital satisfaction. <i>Journal of Adult Development</i> , 12, 43-51.
W	9/23		<b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
F	9/25		
M	9/28	6. Flow v. Mindfulness	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Killingsworth, M.A., & Gilbert, D.T. (2010). A wandering mind is an unhappy mind. <i>Science</i> , 330, 932.
W	9/30		<b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
F	10/2		
M	10/5	7. Enabling Institutions	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Porath, C., Spreitzer, G., Gibson, C., & Garnett, F.G. (2011). Thriving at work: Toward its measurement, construct validation, and theoretical refinement. <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i> , 33, 250-275.
W	10/7		<b>Do/ Reflect:</b> Work-Life Questionnaire  <b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
F	10/9		
M	10/12	Touching base/discussion of final research projects.	
W	10/14	Fall Break	
F	10/16	Fall Break	
M	10/19	8. Self-discipline, grit, and striving	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Duckworth, A.L. & Seligman, M.E.P. (2005). Self-discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance in adolescents. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 16, 939-944. Read Chapter 7 of Pollyanna’s Revenge.
W	10/21		<b>Do/Reflect</b> the Grit Survey
F	10/23		<b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
M	10/26	9. Positive Psychology Interventions	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Seligman, M. E. P. Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 60, 410-421.
W	10/28		



F	10/30		<b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
M	11/2	10. Materialism	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Mogliner, C. (2010). The pursuit of happiness: Time, money, and social connection. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 21, 1348–1354.  <b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
W	11/4		
F	11/6		
M	11/9	11. Fading Affect Bias	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Walker, W.R., Skowronski, J.J., & Thompson, C.P. (2003). Life is pleasant – and memory helps to keep it that way! <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 7, 203-210. Pollyanna’s Revenge, Chapter 5  <b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
W	11/11		
F	11/13		
M	11/16	12. Affective Forecasting	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Hartnett, J.L., & Skowronski, J.J. (2010). Affective forecasts and the Valentine's Day shootings at NIU: People are resilient, but unaware of it. <i>Journal of Positive Psychology</i> , 5, 275-280. Pollyanna’s revenge, Chapter 4  <b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
W	11/18		
F	11/20		
M	11/23	Work on research assignment in class. This will include “workshopping” with your peers. No reading, no discussion.	
W	11/25	Thanksgiving Break	
F	11/27		
M	11/30	13. Resilience and Post-traumatic growth.	<b>Read/Quiz:</b> Bonanno, G.A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? <i>American Psychologist</i> , 59, 20-28. Pollyanna’s revenge, Chapter 6  <b>Discussion Prompt:</b> Due to Bb Thursday at 10 AM
W	12/2		
F	12/4		
M	12/7	Research Idea Presentations	Your completed IRB application will be due (via email) and a copy of your presentation are due to me by <b>Monday at 10 AM.</b>
W	12/9		
F	12/11		