

## Positive psychology L4 Ho.1

URL <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/posl4.html>

My web page: the starting point for all course resources, with crucial pointers.

### Student work on this course

#### Overall aim of the course

The aim of the course is to introduce you to positive psychology, and its distinctive position with roots in both the unevidenced self-help literature, and the scientific psychology literature. Critical thinking is, as you now know, a key criterion in most work in this department. PosPsy is a gift in this respect: it desperately requires it, it is particularly easy to apply it both because some claims are unfounded and because most topics are relatively new and the evidence could easily be improved upon; yet there are solid experimental results here too so we are not wasting our time. While original insights would be welcome, the main criterion I will look for (e.g. in exam answers) is a balanced critical assessment i.e. what is your best opinion of the work on a given topic, and what degree of certainty would you assign to your judgement?

Most of the material in this course will not come from lectures but from reading:

- fellow-students' wikis, introducing you to 19 or so PosPsy topics; and
- the further reading which that may lead to.

Reading the coursework produced by other students should provide everyone with a useful starting point on each topic, plus pointers for those who decide to study that topic more deeply. It would be wise for everyone, before the exam, to read all the wikis plus the one most recommended reference for each topic: that should give them a minimum breadth, allowing you to make at least a brief mention of any topic if relevant. Exam questions will be on general issues to be discussed with reference to some specific topics selected by the exam candidate. A student who only knew one topic well would look poorly informed; knowing 2 topics might or might not let you get by; knowing 6 topics well should put you in a strong position to tackle any question and illustrate it with 2-4 topics selected as particularly relevant illustrations (good and bad) of the question. While the coursework wikis are mostly about getting a first grip on a topic, and not (much) about the authors' deep analysis, students may well later develop their own particular views (and evidence for them). There should be room for such original argumentation in the exam questions.

#### Course and coursework (assessed) structure and rationale

Course work will be done in groups. Each group will produce a wiki web page on their allocated topic. The aims of this approach to a course include: giving students experience (for their CV) of producing something for this new medium; having practice in a different form of writing than psychology essays (see next paragraph); producing something useful for fellow students and conversely experiencing how useful other students' work can be for you. Students in this department don't really realise how good they are, that they are doing useful work. If I were starting a new topic, or had to look it up from scratch, I'd certainly start from a CR from a student if one were available. I'd hope eventually to go beyond it, but it would be a real time-saving boost to starting up: listing much of the relevant literature, alerting me to some of the critical questions. The wikis will also serve in this way.

#### Coursework (assessed): requirements

The objective for each group's wiki is to be as helpful as possible to other students in the class in getting started on that topic in positive psychology. The overall criterion is: being helpful to other students not in your group. If you can get a few students from other groups to comment on your wiki page, orally or by email, that would be excellent: what's the best thing about it, the worst, what they would find useful if it were added. Above all, this kind of writing is NOT a standard essay which (egocentrically and

unrealistically) assumes that all readers will read from beginning to end. This is not how you yourself read even a journal paper, and certainly not a web page.

My starting suggestion for format (but feel free to improve on this, and look at last year's wikis and think about what does and doesn't seem useful to you) would be:

- Title (reconsider whether the allocated name is best)
- If you were only going to read one paper: what would it be, and why.
  - Preference: a key experimental result: best single starter reference that has an experiment in.
- A very short critique of whether there is a gap between the announced theory, and the empirical result
- An example of wild uncritical claims in this area
- One or more practical exercises an individual could carry out. (Many experiments contain these; others are only in books. Possibly some topics do not have any.)
- An old cultural connection. E.g. for gratitude, thanksgiving prayers in church; for exercise, ancient Greek olympics showing non-functional physical exercise being admired.
- If you were only going to read, say, 3 things: which would they be.
- History of the topic. And what area of (non-positive) psychology it derives from; what area would claim to cover it.
- Clinical applications: if there are any? are health measures relevant?
- A longer reference list of other possibly relevant papers, annotated by how good you think each is, and what it is about.

#### Homework for week 1 (i.e. completed before session 2)

Aims:

- To read many student wikis from previous years in order to familiarise yourself with them AND to develop informed opinions about what kinds of format were more or less useful to you as a student reader.
- To decide as a group what topic you will select.

Download a wiki-critique form from the web page, and fill it in for several past student wiki pages to ensure you engage with aim 1 properly. Bring the completed forms with you to session 2.

Your group is allocated a provisional topic, but that is only a starting point so that the whole class does not start in the same place and end up doing the same thing. If you come up with a new topic not on the list that is OK (if it is part of PosPsy). If you take a past topic but reduce its scope, that is very sensible (previous years have used groups of about 6, this year you have groups of about 3).

Next week (session 2) I will ask each group to give me their provisional choice of topic in writing; and we must decide on topic allocation then i.e. avoid any serious duplications of topics, though without being fussy about topics which are somewhat related.

**Table 1: sorted by name**

Version 2

**Table 2: sorted by self-teach group**

Name	Self-teach group
Askew, Peigi	1
Awiss, Kathryn	17
Black, Georgia	8
Brown, Katherine	7
Byrne, Ruth	3
Calderwood, Stephanie	2
Carus, Amy	18
Cawood, Helen	8
Chepi, Claudia	9
Chung, Helen	7
Connor, Rachel	5
Corke, Jennifer	5
Crossan, Alexandra	19
Davidson, Amy	12
Duffus, Chloe	4
Easto, Jake	9
Frepp, Rebecca	4
Gallacher, Zoe	9
Gomez Escudero, Miriam	13
Gubbels, Evelien	18
Harvey, Tara	11
Hult Skogs, Hanna	11
Hunter, Kerstin	4
Joseph, Edward	3
Kandsberger, Jacqueline	5
Kuliesiute, Rusne	14
Law, Ka	18
Logan, Fiona	16
Lynch, Amanda	10
Martin Canton, Esther	17
Martinmaki, Saara	10
Mcalpine, Oonagh	17
Mcarthur, Scott	7
McCallum, Claire	2
McComb, Nichola	12
Mcintosh, Nicole	3
Nenadlova, Klara	10
Nordqvist, Matilda	9
O'Shea, Karl	13
Osinska, Paulina	2
Palmer, Leah	14
Payne, Rachel	19
Piotrowska, Zofia	15
Quee, Lauren	6
Robertson, Lisa	3
Robijns, Wesley	0
Shih, Sally	19
Stanley, Lillian	15
Stenson, Johanna	11
Stewart, Ashleigh	8
Tan, Colin	10
Timmons, Luke	15
Trotter, Antony	16
Truninger, Michael	13
van Vlijmen, Linde	12
Verstraten, Karlijn	14
Watson, Louisa	6
Weir, John	6
Welsh, Scott	1
Wild, Miriam	16
Wilson, Mia	19
Wilson, Oliver	7
Zilberter, Evgenij	1

Self-teach group	Name	Topic
0	Wesley Robijns	#N/A
1	Peigi Askew	Balanced time perspective
1	Scott Welsh	Balanced time perspective
1	Evgenij Zilberter	Balanced time perspective
2	Stephanie Calderwood	Altruism, eudaimonia, and meaning in life
2	Claire McCallum	Altruism, eudaimonia, and meaning in life
2	Paulina Osinska	Altruism, eudaimonia, and meaning in life
3	Ruth Byrne	False praise: self-esteem vs. resilience
3	Edward Joseph	False praise: self-esteem vs. resilience
3	Nicole Mcintosh	False praise: self-esteem vs. resilience
3	Lisa Robertson	False praise: self-esteem vs. resilience
4	Chloe Duffus	Gratitude and Education
4	Rebecca Frepp	Gratitude and Education
4	Kerstin Hunter	Gratitude and Education
5	Rachel Connor	Owning a pet animal
5	Jennifer Corke	Owning a pet animal
5	Jacqueline Kandsberger	Owning a pet animal
6	Lauren Quee	PosPsy for clinical benefits
6	Louisa Watson	PosPsy for clinical benefits
6	John Weir	PosPsy for clinical benefits
7	Katherine Brown	PosPsy for non-clinical benefits
7	Helen Chung	PosPsy for non-clinical benefits
7	Scott Mcarthur	PosPsy for non-clinical benefits
7	Oliver Wilson	PosPsy for non-clinical benefits
8	Georgia Black	Writing cures
8	Helen Cawood	Writing cures
8	Ashleigh Stewart	Writing cures
9	Claudia Chepi	PosPsy is only remarketing traditional topics
9	Jake Easto	PosPsy is only remarketing traditional topics
9	Zoe Gallacher	PosPsy is only remarketing traditional topics
9	Matilda Nordqvist	PosPsy is only remarketing traditional topics
10	Amanda Lynch	Rebalancing good and bad perspectives
10	Saara Martinmaki	Rebalancing good and bad perspectives
10	Klara Nenadlova	Rebalancing good and bad perspectives
10	Colin Tan	Rebalancing good and bad perspectives
11	Tara Harvey	Social not solo exercises
11	Hanna Hult Skogs	Social not solo exercises
11	Johanna Stenson	Social not solo exercises
12	Amy Davidson	Strengths vs. developing new abilities
12	Nichola McComb	Strengths vs. developing new abilities
12	Linde van Vlijmen	Strengths vs. developing new abilities
13	Miriam Gomez Escudero	Volunteering
13	Karl O'Shea	Volunteering
13	Michael Truninger	Volunteering
14	Rusne Kuliesiute	Well being/happiness to replace GDP
14	Leah Palmer	Well being/happiness to replace GDP
14	Karlijn Verstraten	Well being/happiness to replace GDP
15	Zofia Piotrowska	Well-being and public health
15	Lillian Stanley	Well-being and public health
15	Luke Timmons	Well-being and public health
16	Fiona Logan	What is the hottest new topic in PosPsy
16	Antony Trotter	What is the hottest new topic in PosPsy
16	Miriam Wild	What is the hottest new topic in PosPsy
17	Kathryn Aviss	CBM: cognitive bias modification
17	Esther Martin Canton	CBM: cognitive bias modification
17	Oonagh Mcalpine	CBM: cognitive bias modification
18	Amy Carus	Mindfulness
18	Evelien Gubbels	Mindfulness
18	Ka Law	Mindfulness
19	Alexandra Crossan	Educational benefits of mindfulness
19	Rachel Payne	Educational benefits of mindfulness
19	Sally Shih	Educational benefits of mindfulness
19	Mia Wilson	Educational benefits of mindfulness