



HSS 404: The Pursuit of Happiness and the Good Life Syllabus

FALL 2025

HSS 404 STS SEMINAR

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office Hours
Neel Khichi	nkhichi@njit.edu	730AM-830AM
Classroom:	Section 021 93547 MW 830am-950am KUPF 103 Section 023 93548 MW 1000am-1120am KUPF 205	

I will typically respond to direct communications, such as email, within 24-48 hours. Allow up to 2 weeks for feedback on submitted assignments. This feedback will be provided in Canvas.

General Information

Course Description

What is “happiness?” What is your definition of happiness? In this course, we will explore the various meanings of happiness throughout time. What makes people and cultures “happy?” What is the science of happiness? Can happiness be taught? Is it innate? What is the ultimate pursuit of happiness for individuals in their lifetimes? This course will examine and analyze sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, artists, and musicians, among others, and their views and experiences with happiness and what constitutes a “good life.” This course will not make you “happy.” However, it will provide insight, exploration, and understanding into the social and cultural changes that evolved what it means to be “happy.” Together, we will examine the “science” behind happiness, and individually, the

course will provide students tools to aid in the creation of their own individual definition of happiness.

Prerequisites/Co-requisites

Prerequisites: [ENGL 102](#) with a grade of C or higher, and 6 credits at the 300-level History and Humanities GER with a grade of C or higher; 3 credits at the 300-level may be taken concurrently as a co-requisite. Restrictions: Registration requires senior standing. The capstone seminars allow students the opportunity to work closely with an instructor in a specific area of the instructor's expertise. Students are required to bring together interests and skills developed in previous courses. Students make in-depth oral and written presentations.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Define and discuss the term “Happiness” and demonstrate the basic terminology, concepts, and principles of positive psychology.
2. Identify, evaluate, and compare the major perspectives in “Happiness.”
3. Discuss the ways that social-psychological theories are used to assess, predict, or change human behavior.
4. Discuss your own and/or others’ experiences, applying theories on how various “Happiness” perspectives can influence and improve human lives and our overall well-being.
5. Analyze and write about your personality and relationships as they relate to interpersonal "Happiness."
6. Compare the digital world and offline world through the lens of psychological theories and connection to “Happiness.”
7. Evaluate thoughts, behaviors, and expectations towards "Happiness" outside of yourself.

Required Materials

- Positive Psychology: The Science of Well-Being. Author: John M. Zelenski. Sage Publications © 2020. ISBN: 978-14739-0214
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2012). Mindfulness for beginners: reclaiming the present moment--and your life. Boulder, CO, Sounds True.

Grading Policy

[NJIT Grading Legend](#)

Final Grade Calculation

Final grades for all assignments will be based on the following points:

Syllabus Quiz	2.5 points
Introduce Yourself	2.5 points
Quizzes (3)	30 points
Essays (2)	100 points
Group Assignment/Questions	30 points
In Class assignments (5)	100 points
Interview Project	100 points
Interview Selection	5 points
References	10 points
Interview Questions	15 points
Final Presentation	30 points
Final Reflection	40 points
Attendance/Participation	50 points
Total	400 points

Course Work

Syllabus Quiz (2.5 points). You have a syllabus quiz due at the end of the first week of the semester. Please **read** the syllabus in order to complete the assignment.

Introduce Yourself (2.5 points). You have an introductory post in which you introduce yourself to the class.

Quizzes (30 points). There will be 3 quizzes, which contain short-answer and open-ended questions, throughout the course. They are meant to help you practice course concepts. They are worth 6 points each, and you are allowed to use your notes/articles/work together with a partner.

Essays (100 points): There are TWO in/out class essay assignments due this semester. Each are worth 50 points

Group Assignment Questions: 30 points. Your group is required to have 6 questions ready for discussion for **both** class days, the week are you assigned.

In Class assignments (100 points) (5): There will be multiple in class assignments that we will be work on together and you will submit in class.

Interview Project (100 points) For your final project, you will interview an individual about their perspectives and views on happiness. Ideally, the individual should be 25 years older ~~or younger~~ than you. Why this age demographic? Because learning from someone 1-2 generations older or younger than you will provide insight into topics that you may not have yourself. Be thoughtful in

your selection process. If you think interviewing a 5-year-old will provide you with enough content and data, then it is acceptable. But please do not interview someone your own age. If you have questions about your selected person, please email me to discuss. The project is broken into multiple parts:

- **Interview Selection (5 points).** You will submit a brief description of the background/reason for your choice of interviewee.
- **References (15 points).** You will submit between 7 and 10 references (theories, articles, texts, class notes, etc.) that you plan on building your interview questions around.
- **Interview Questions (10 points).** You will provide a list of 15-20 interview questions based on your references in addition to an explanation for how they align.
- **Final Presentation (30 points).** You will have a final presentation due at the end of the semester. It will be a 5-10 minute presentation, providing an overview of your interview and interviewee to the class. I want you to think about how you will take the concepts we discuss during the semester and transform that into an opportunity to teach/educate/share/learn from someone who is about 25 years older or younger than you.
- **Final Reflection (40 points).** There is a final reflection paper based on your presentation due at the end of the semester.

Attendance/Class Participation (50 points)

- **More than 3** unexcused absences or consistently lateness will result in an automatic 25/50 for this grade. Chronic absenteeism and/lateness (6 or more) will result in a 0/50

Feedback

I will provide feedback, thoughts, and comments on each assignment. In some cases, I will provide audio/visual feedback to the entire class on discussion assignments, where I address a few of your posts. On individual assignments, I will provide feedback in the comments section in Canvas.

Letter to Number Grade Conversions

A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
90-100	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	0-64

Exam Information and Policies

This course does not have any exams. Per the NJIT [Online Course Exam Proctoring Policy](#), this course will use authentic assessment, meaning you will be assessed and graded on your ability to deliver real-world outputs as well as your participation and feedback to other students.

Policy for Late Work

For all assignments, please email me if you will be submitting work late. You are allowed a 2 day extension for any **two** assignments without penalty. 3 or more late assignments will be given ½ credit. Anything submitted after a week will be given a zero. If there are extenuating circumstances, please reach out to me and let me know and I will do my best to accommodate your specific circumstance.

Academic Integrity

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the [NJIT academic code of integrity policy](#).

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”

Turnitin

This course leverages Turnitin, a plagiarism detection tool that may be used by your instructors to assess your work for plagiarism. After a document has been processed, a Similarity Report will be generated that calculates how much text in your document matches another source and what the source is. For additional information and guidance, please see the following [Students:Turnitin](#) knowledgebase article.

Netiquette

Throughout this course, you are expected to be courteous and respectful to classmates by being polite, active participants. You should respond to discussion forum assignments in a timely manner so that your classmates have adequate time to respond to your posts. Please respect opinions, even those that differ from your own, and avoid using profanity or offensive language. **It is okay to disagree**, in fact, it is encouraged and expected. But the manner in which you disagree is important to both civility and your grade. Please approach the discussion forums with curiosity, an open mind, and a willingness to challenge and be challenged. You can disagree in a respectful manner and learn from one another. This is expected and required. Any rude or inappropriate comments will be deleted and you will be given a 0 for the assignment.

Weekly Expectations

This course is organized into 14 modules. Each module will require you to complete reading assignments and watch lecture videos as well as complete quizzes, participate in

discussions, submit article analysis, engage in reflection activities, and produce interview project deliverables.

Discussions require initial posts by Thursday at 11:59 pm and replies to classmates by Sunday at 11:59 pm.

During Weeks 1, 3, 7, and 9, you will be completing two modules in one week as part of the accelerated summer schedule, so please plan accordingly and see the schedule below for additional details and due dates.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments (in/out class)	Due Dates
1 September 2- September 7	Introduction to Happiness	1. Syllabus Quiz 2. Introduce Yourself Module 1 Reflection: How Happy Are You? (Optional)	1. Quiz due by Sunday at 11:59 pm
2 September 8 th -September 14 th	"You Got Me Feeling Emotions!" and Antifragility (Post-Traumatic Growth)	1. Module 2 Quiz: Positive Psychology and Emotions 2. Module 2 Discussion: Basic Emotions	
3 September 15 th - September 21 st	Emotional Intelligence	1. Module 3 Discussion: SPIRE and ASPIRE Model 2. Module 3 Article Analysis: Leading with Emotional Intelligence 3. Module 3 Reflection: Emotional Intelligence and Success	I have been called to jury duty this week. Please pay attention to your email and Canvas, as we will NOT meet in person on Monday, 9/15/25. All assignments will be posted on Canvas.
WEEK 4: September 22 nd - September 28 th	Defining Personality	1. Module 4 Discussion: Understanding Personality 2. Module 4 Reflection: Personality Throughout Life	Group 1 Questions (Monday) IN or Out of Class Essay #1: Wednesday, September 24th, 2025

WEEK 5: September 29 th -October 5 th	Lose Your Self!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module 5 Quiz: Personality and the Self 2. Module 5 Discussion: You and the Transitional Self 3. Module 5 Article Analysis: Eudaimonia and Life Satisfaction 4. Module 5 Reflection: Self-Awareness 	<p>1. Quiz #1 on the Modules 1-4 (in or out of class) Wednesday, October 1st, 2025</p> <p>Group 1 Presentation (Monday)</p>
WEEK 6: October 6 th -October 12 th	Whatcha Thinkin About? Thinking and our Thoughts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module 6 Discussion: Thinking and Our Thoughts! 2. Interview Project: Interview Selection 3. Module 6 Reflection: Affective Forecasting— Predicting the Future 	<p>1. Interview Selection due by Sunday at 11:59 pm</p> <p>Group 3 Presentation (Monday) Group 4 Presentation (Wednesday)</p>
WEEK 7: October 13 th -October 19 th	Social, Cultural, and Physical Environments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module 7 Quiz: Critical Thinking 2. Module 7 Discussion: Who You Hang Out With, Where You Hang Out, and What You Do When You Hang Out 3. Module 7 Article Analysis: Social Determinants of Health 	<p>1. Article Analysis due by Sunday at 11:59 pm</p> <p>Group 5 Presentation (Monday) Group 6 Presentation (Wednesday)</p>
WEEK 8: October 20 th -October 26 th	What's Love Got to Do With It? Exploring Friendships and Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module 8 Discussion: On Friendship 2. Interview Project: References 3. Module 8 Reflection: Close Relationships 	<p>1. Interview References due by Sunday at 11:59 pm, March 16th, 2025</p> <p>Group 7 Presentation (Monday)</p> <p>Essay #2 (in/out of class) October 22nd, 2025</p>
WEEK 9: October 27 th -November 2 nd			<p>Quiz #2: Wednesday, October 29th, 2025 (online: In person or online.</p> <p>Group 8 Presentation (Monday)</p>

<p>WEEK 10 November 3rd-November 9th</p>	<p>Winds of Change</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module 9 Quiz: Stability and Change 2. Module 9 Discussion: Dealing With Change 3. Module 9 Article Analysis: Finding Meaning in Trauma 	<p>Group 9 Presentation (Monday) Group 10 Presentation (Wednesday)</p> <p>Interview Questions (10 points). You will provide a list of 15-20 interview questions based on your references in addition to an explanation for how they align.</p>
<p>WEEK 11 November 10th- November 16th</p>	<p>What Does the Future Hold?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module 10 Discussion: Grit and Resilience 2. Interview Project: Interview Questions 	<p>Final Presentation Due: Monday November 20th, 2025 (submitted on Canvas)</p>
<p>WEEK 12: November 17th- November 23rd</p>	<p>What is Mindfulness? A Journey Into Ourselves</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Module 11 Quiz: "Hello, Mindfulness! Nice to meet you!" 4. Module 11 Discussion: Mindfulness and Stress Reduction 5. Module 11 Article Analysis: 10 Minutes a Day, Keeps the Negative Thoughts Away! 6. Once you receive feedback on your interview questions begin your interview process, which should be complete by the end of this module. 	<p>QUIZ #3 (in person/online) Monday, November 24^h, 2025</p> <p>FINAL PRESENTATIONS ARE DUE Monday, November 24th, 2025</p>

WEEK 13: November 24 th - November 30 th		FINAL PRESENTATIONS ARE DUE Monday, November 24th, 2025 @1250pm No Class Monday: Individual conferences by appointment only in Cullimore 314 during class time	FINAL PRESENTATIONS ARE DUE Monday, November 24th, 2025 @1250pm No Class Monday: Individual conferences by appointment only in Cullimore 314 during class time
WEEK 14 December 1 st - December 7 th . Week 15 December 8 th -December 14 th	Continuing Our Mindfulness Journey— Deepening Our Understanding	1) Presentations:12/1/25 2) Presentations: 12/3/25 3) Presentations 12/8/25 4) Presentations:12/10/25 5) Final Reflection due by Sunday, 12/7/25 at 11:59 pm LAST DAY OF CLASS, 12/10	1) Presentations:12/1/25 2) Presentations: 12/3/25 3) Presentations 12/8/25 4) Presentations:12/10/25 5) Final Reflection due by Sunday, 12/7/25 at 11:59 pm 6) LAST DAY OF CLASS, 12/10/25

Additional Information and Resources

Accessibility:

This course is offered through an accessible learning management system. For more information, please refer to the following accessibility statements:

- [Canvas Accessibility Statement](#)
- [Turnitin Accessibility Statement](#)

Requesting Accommodations:

The Office of Accessibility Resources and Services works in partnership with administrators, faculty, and staff to provide reasonable accommodations and support services for students with disabilities who have provided their office with medical documentation to receive services.

If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability, please contact the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) to discuss your specific needs.

Resources for NJIT Online Students

NJIT is committed to student excellence. To ensure your success in this course and your program, the university offers a range of academic support centers and services. To learn more, please review these [Resources for NJIT Online Students](#), which include information related to technical support.