

The Political Economy of Happiness

POSC 337 – Fall 2014
(T & Th 10:10 - 11:55 am)
Weitz 233

Instructor: Kent Freeze

Phone: 507-222-4158

Email: kfreeze@carleton.edu

Office: Willis 413

Office Hours: Mon. 10am to 12 Noon & Thurs. 2pm-4pm and by appt.

Course Description

Masochists aside, all human beings desire personal happiness – something which many of us spend our lives searching for but often struggle to obtain. While this search for happiness is a critical component of our day-to-day lives (and keeps the self-help industry in business), it is somewhat surprising that social science disciplines such as economics and political science have only recently undertaken empirical study of the factors that shape human happiness. In this class, we will have three primary goals.

First, we start the course by defining the dependent variable of “happiness.” We will unpack the definition of what happiness is, and how we can best measure it empirically. In addition, we will begin to discuss a normative theme that will be present over the course of the term: Is happiness a desirable goal for political systems to achieve? We will discover that the answer is not as simple as it may first appear.

Second, during the bulk of the course, we will examine the various factors which predict human happiness – at the micro and macro levels. This section of the course will most heavily engage the economics literature. As part of our study of this material, we will build off of and think about public policy prescriptions based on these findings.

Finally, we will examine the fledgling political science literature examining political factors that might influence human happiness.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Classroom discussion and participation will be a critical component of our classes. To facilitate insightful and interesting discussions, you are required to complete the assigned readings *before* each class and contribute to class discussions. Generally the reading load will be around 150 to 200 pages per week. In addition to the readings which will be made available electronically on Moodle and Dropbox, there are two required texts for purchase: Benjamin Radcliff’s book *The Political Economy of Human Happiness*, and Bruno Frey’s book *Happiness: A Revolution in Economics*.

Grading

Your grade will be based on the following:

Class Participation and Attendance	10%
Introducing Two Class Discussion Sessions	20% (10% Each)
Two Critical Analysis Papers	20% (10% Each)
Course Research Project	50%
Proposal (Due Sept. 30)	5%
Theory and Research Design Paper (Due Oct. 7)	5%
Analysis Paper (Due Oct. 16)	5%
Draft Paper (for peer review) (Oct. 28)	5%
Peer Review of Draft Papers (Nov. 4)	5%
Class Presentation (Nov. 13 & Nov. 18 in class)	5%
Final Paper (Nov. 11)	20%
<hr/>	
Total	100%

Class Preparation, Attendance and Participation - 10%

Attendance and participation is required. In preparation for each class, you are expected to come to class having read and thought about the readings for the day. You should prepare on a 3 by 5 in. note card two comments:

1. A question, comment or criticism based on the reading(s) for the day.
2. A policy prescription of some kind that builds off the readings for the day¹.

We will take some time during each class session to go over some of the comments and policy prescriptions that you have had for the readings for that day. At the end of class, you will submit your notecard, which I will grade in a simple check/no check system – you will not receive a check for the day if you either fail to turn in a note card or after looking at your note card I think you have not actually done the reading. I will not accept late note cards – if you can't be in attendance that day, have a classmate bring your card on your behalf or turn it in to me early.

Both note cards and in class participation will each count for 5% of your overall grade.

Introducing Two Class Discussions - 20%

You will introduce discussion of two class topics for the classes between Sept. 23 and Nov. 11. You will select the sessions you wish to lead in class on Sept. 18.

¹I realize that some readings will lend themselves more readily to a policy prescription than others. Don't stress it and just come up with something. My goal with this is that I want you to connect the readings back to real world policy debates.

Two Critical Analysis Papers - 20%

For two class session *other* than the two sessions in which you are introduced to discussion, you will write a three to four page critical analysis of the readings for the class that day. You will select the classes you wish to write an analysis for in class on Sept. 18.

Original Research Paper - 50%

Over the course of the semester, you will work on an original research paper in which you discuss and examine some topic relating politics with economic inequality. The final paper will be between 15 and 20 double spaced pages (not including references).

Research Proposal - 5%

Prepare a research question that is of interest to you and formulate a hypothesis that can potentially answer the question. Your proposal will be 2 or 3 double spaced pages, and will outline what your proposed research is, and how you intend to carry it out.

Theory and Research Design Paper - 5%

In this paper of around 4 to 6 pages, you will explore the literature around your research topic, and outline your plans to answer your research questions.

Analysis Paper - 5%

The analysis paper will be a sketch of the empirical findings of your independent research. This will become the results section of your final paper.

Rough Draft for Peer Review - 5%

Prepare a rough draft that matches the basic guidelines of the final paper. This will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and there will be NO EXCEPTIONS for late rough drafts.

Peer Review of Rough Drafts- 5%

Prepare a one or two page memo review of the rough draft for one of your peers, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of their paper project, as well as suggestions on how to improve it.

Class Presentation- 5%

In one of the final classes, you will present your research project to your peers.

Final Paper- 20%

The final paper should be a polished, finished project - perhaps something that you would feel comfortable submitting to an undergraduate research journal.

Course Policies

Grading Policies

I will assign grades using the following scale : A (93.33), A- (90), B+ (86.67), B (83.33), B- (80), C+ (76.67), C (73.33), C- (70), D+ (66.67), D(63.33) D- (60) F (Below 60). I do not round your final grade up or down (so if you receive a 93.327, you will receive an A- for a final grade).

Here are several important details regarding my policy on course grades

1. I will not receive grade complaints if more than two weeks have passed after the assignment has been returned. Before I review your grade you must first:
 - Wait 24 hours.
 - Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
 - Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not to vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”

The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments are not tolerated. Your grade will be lowered 5 points for each day it is late (the exception is for the reading questions/comments, which will not be accepted if late). That is if the assignment is due on Wednesday and you complete it on Thursday, the highest grade you can make is 95. If you complete it on Friday, the highest grade possible will be a 90. And so forth.
3. The **ONLY** acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time **ONLY** if you communicate with me **BEFORE** the assignment is due and you provide **DOCUMENTATION** of the circumstance.

Electronics in Class Policy

You are welcome to bring digital equipment (laptop, ebook reader, etc.) to class. However, I expect you to be responsible in your use of electronic equipment: please avoid visiting social networking sites, or otherwise browsing the internet on sites unrelated to the course. I would

also recommend you read through the discussion (including comments), *Computers in the Classroom*, to think about the possible pros and cons of using computers in a classroom setting. Individuals who abuse this privilege will be asked to turn off their computer. Please turn off all cell phones during class. If I notice that the use of an electronic device is distracting you in class, your participation grade will suffer.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by fundamental standards of academic honesty. A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/>. All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources!

Disability-Related Accommodations

It is the policy of Carleton College to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the 1st week of the semester), so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at <http://apps.carleton.edu/disabilityservices/>.

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed prior to class. I reserve the right to make changes to the course schedule. I will alert you to any changes made in class, via email, and I will post the updated syllabus on Moodle.

PART I: Introduction, Concepts and Measurement

Sept. 16: Introduction to Happiness

- Introduction to the Course

Sept. 18: Defining Happiness

- Daniel M Haybron. *Happiness: A very short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2013, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 1-41.

Sept. 23: Problems in Operationalizing Happiness

- Martha C Nussbaum. Who is the happy warrior? philosophy poses questions to psychology. *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 37(S2):S81–S113, 2008

Sept. 25: Gross National Happiness?

- Daniel M Haybron. *Happiness: A very short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2013, Chapter 4, pgs. 42-51.
- Frey, Chapter 2, pgs. 15–26.
- Carol Graham. *The pursuit of happiness: An economy of well-being*. Brookings Institution Press, 2011, Chapter 5, pgs. 106–126.

Sept. 30: Gross National Happiness? – A case study of Bhutan

- Kent Schroeder. *The Politics of Gross National Happiness*. PhD thesis, University of Guelph, 2014. Skim chapters 5 and 6, and the chapters on implementing GNH policies in Bhutan.
- Research Proposal Due!

PART II: Sources of Happiness

Oct. 2: Happiness, Left, Right and Center

- Radcliff, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 1–76.

Oct. 7: Measuring Happiness: Data and Methods

- Radcliff, Chapter 4, pgs. 77–96
- Theory and Research Design Paper Due!

Oct. 9: Preferences and Outcomes: Do people pursue goals that result in happiness?

- Daniel Kahneman and Richard H Thaler. Anomalies: Utility maximization and experienced utility. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(1):221–234, 2006
- Frey Chapter 11, pgs. 127–137.

Oct. 14: Income and Happiness

- Bruno S Frey. *Happiness: A revolution in economics*. 2008, Chapter 3: How Income Affects Happiness, pp. 27–45.

Oct. 16: The Easterlin Paradox

- Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers. Economic growth and subjective well-being: Reassessing the easterlin paradox. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 2008(1):1–102, 2008
- Analysis Paper Due!

Oct. 21: Income Inequality

- Carol Graham. *Happiness around the world: The paradox of happy peasants and miserable millionaires*. Oxford University Press, 2009, Chapter 6, pgs. 145–186.
- Alberto Alesina, Rafael Di Tella, and Robert MacCulloch. Inequality and happiness: are europeans and americans different? *Journal of Public Economics*, 88(9):2009–2042, 2004

Oct. 23: Personal and Family Relationships

- Frey, Chapter 8, pgs. 87–93.
- Derek Bok. *The politics of happiness: What government can learn from the new research on well-being*. Princeton University Press, 2010, Chapter 8, pgs. 139–155.

Oct. 28: The Labour Market/Leisure Time/Employment Type

- Frey, Chapters 4 (pgs. 45-54), 7 (pgs. 71-86) and 9 (pgs. 93-106).
- Rough Draft Due IN CLASS!

Oct. 30: Other factors

- Paul Dolan, Tessa Peasgood, and Mathew White. Do we really know what makes us happy? a review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being. *Journal of economic psychology*, 29(1):94–122, 2008

Section III: Politics and Happiness

Nov. 4: The Welfare State and Happiness

- Radcliff, Chapters 5–8, pgs. 110-188.
- Peer Review Due IN CLASS!

Nov. 6: Partisanship/Identity and Happiness

- Rafael Di Tella and Robert MacCulloch. Partisan social happiness. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 72(2):367–393, 2005

Nov. 11: Political Institutions and Happiness

- Frey, Chapters 6 (pgs. 61–70) and 14 (pgs. 177–198).
- Final Paper Due!

Nov. 13: Student Presentations

Nov. 18: Student Presentations