

The Political Economy of Happiness

POSC 337 – Winter 2019
(M & W 1:50 - 3:35 pm)
Willis 203

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Office Hours: Tues 10am - 11:45am. Fri. 2-4pm.

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 concept 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, 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, but we will also examine the fledgling political science literature on the topic. 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 briefly explore happiness as an independent variable by examining how happiness influences (or doesn't) influence participation in social movements as well as political behavior.

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. There are no required texts for purchase – all readings will be made available electronically on Moodle.

Grading

Your grade will be based on the following:

Class Participation and Attendance	10%
Leading Two Class Discussion Sessions	20% (10% Each)
Two Critical Analysis Papers	20% (10% Each)
Course Research Project	50%
Proposal (Due Jan. 21)	5%
Theory and Research Design Paper (Jan. 28)	5%
Analysis Paper (Due Feb. 13)	5%
Rough Draft Paper (for peer review) (Feb. 20)	5%
Peer Review of Draft Papers (Feb. 27)	5%
Class Presentation (Mar. 11 & Mar. 13 in class)	5%
Final Paper (Mar. 6)	20%
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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.

Please come to class with a discussion question or comment based on the readings for the day. This can be a request for clarification on something that didn't make sense, a criticism, or some other thoughts that you think would be interesting to discuss. We will take a minute at the start of class to go over some of these comments as a class and discuss them. I will begin by asking for volunteers with questions/comments for the day, and will keep track when you have contributed at the start of class. You will be expected to contribute a question/comment at least 4 times over the term. You should NOT ask a question/comment at the start of class when you are leading that class discussion. Half of this grade (5%) will come the questions/comments at the start of class, and half (5%) will come from your general participation and attendance in class.

Leading Two Class Discussions - Policy proposal or research implications of the reading - 20%

See the handout for more information on these assignments. These should be focused class discussions of about 30-45 minutes in length in which you present a public policy or research implication of the readings for the day. This is NOT intended to be a summary of the reading (everyone should have done the reading in advance of class), or even a critical analysis of the reading. Rather, I want you to build off of the readings to craft either a policy proposal based on the topic covered in the reading OR a suggestion for how we should conduct research as social scientists. Present the proposal and open it up to discussion for the rest of the class. You will select these class sessions on Jan. 9.

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 Jan. 9. For more details, see the handout on this assignment.

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 happiness/life satisfaction. 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 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

Jan. 7: Introduction to Happiness

- Introduction to the Course

Jan. 9: Defining Happiness

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

Jan. 14: 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

Jan. 16: Measurement of Happiness

- Daniel Kahneman, Peter P Wakker, and Rakesh Sarin. Back to Bentham? Explorations of experienced utility. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 112(2):375–406, 1997
- Carol Graham. *The pursuit of happiness: An economy of well-being*. Brookings Institution Press, 2011, Chapter 5, pgs. 106–126.

PART II: Sources of Happiness - Micro-level

Jan. 21: 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
- Bruno S Frey and Alois Stutzer. Mispredicting utility and the political process. In Edward J. McCaffery and Joel Slemrod, editors, *Behavioral public finance*, pages 113–140. Russell Sage Foundation, 2006
- Research Proposal Due!

Jan. 23: Marriage and Family

- 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.
- Kristen Schultz Lee and Hiroshi Ono. Marriage, cohabitation, and happiness: A cross-national analysis of 27 countries. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74(5):953–972, 2012

Jan. 28: 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
- Theory and Research Design Paper Due!

Jan. 30: Relative Income and Happiness

- A.E. Clark, P. Frijters, and M.A. Shields. Relative income, happiness, and utility: An explanation for the Easterlin paradox and other puzzles. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 46(1):95–144, 2008
- W.G. Runciman. *Relative deprivation and social justice: A study of attitudes to social inequality in twentieth-century England*. University of California Press, 1966, chapter 2, pgs. 9–35

Feb. 4: Ethnicity/Identity

- Gundi Knies, Alita Nandi, and Lucinda Platt. Life satisfaction, ethnicity and neighbourhoods: Is there an effect of neighbourhood ethnic composition on life satisfaction? *Social Science Research*, 60:110–124, 2016
- Shiqing Jiang, Ming Lu, and Hiroshi Sato. Identity, inequality, and happiness: Evidence from urban china. *World Development*, 40(6):1190–1200, 2012

Feb. 6: Partisanship and Happiness

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

Part III: Sources of Happiness: Macro-level

Feb. 13: 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!

Feb. 18: Income Inequality

- H. Brockmann, J. Delhey, C. Welzel, and H. Yuan. The China puzzle: Falling happiness in a rising economy. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10(4):387–405, 2009
- 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

Feb. 20: The Welfare State

- Benjamin Radcliff. *The Political Economy of Human Happiness: How Voters' Choices Determine the Quality of Life*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, Chapters 5-7, pgs. 110–176.

- Rough Draft Due IN CLASS!

Feb. 25: Political Institutions

- Ronald Inglehart. Trust, well-being and democracy. In Mark E. Warren, editor, *Democracy and Trust*. Cambridge University Press, 1999
- Markus Freitag and Marc Bühlmann. Crafting trust: The role of political institutions in a comparative perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(12):1537–1566, 2009

Feb. 27: Gross National Happiness?

- Ed Diener. Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American psychologist*, 55(1):34, 2000
- Jeremy S Brooks. Avoiding the limits to growth: Gross National Happiness in Bhutan as a model for sustainable development. *Sustainability*, 5(9):3640–3664, 2013
- Peer Review Due IN CLASS!

Part IV: Happiness as an Independent Variable

Mar. 4: Relative Deprivation and Social Movements

- J.N. Gurney and K.J. Tierney. Relative deprivation and social movements: A critical look at twenty years of theory and research. *Sociological quarterly*, pages 33–47, 1982
- Heather J Smith, Thomas F Pettigrew, Gina M Pippin, and Silvana Bialosiewicz. Relative deprivation: A theoretical and meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(3):203–232, 2012

Mar. 6: Happiness and Political Behavior

- Patrick Flavin and Michael J Keane. Life satisfaction and political participation: Evidence from the United States. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 13(1):63–78, 2012
- George Ward. Subjective well-being and elections. 2018, working paper.
- Final Paper Due!

Mar. 11: Student Presentations

Mar. 13: Student Presentations