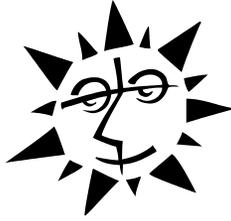


Communication & The Art of Happiness / Well-being — COM 691¹

Arizona St U-Tempe; Stauff 417 – Wed 3:15-6 p.m. – Fall 2011– SLN 84933



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Course Description

In this doctoral communication seminar, we explore communication associated with happiness and well-being. Much of the research emanates from the burgeoning areas of positive organizational scholarship (POS), positive psychology and appreciative inquiry.

“POS represents an expanded perspective that includes instrumental concerns but puts an increased emphasis on ideas of “goodness” and positive human potential. It encompasses attention to *the enablers* (e.g., processes, capabilities, structures, methods), *the motivations* (e.g., unselfishness, altruism, contribution without regard to self), and *the outcomes or effects* (e.g., vitality, meaningfulness, exhilaration, high-quality relationships) associated with positive phenomena. POS is distinguished from traditional organizational studies in that it seeks to understand what represents and approaches the best of the human condition” (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003, p. 4).

Topics include empathy, gratitude, generosity, forgiveness, compassion, encouragement, social support, appreciation, playfulness, affection, virtue and communicative contagion of mood. We will examine how this research intersects with and impacts research in communication and organizational communication in particular.

Students who take this course should understand that positive organizational scholarship and positive psychology are still relatively young disciplines, and positive organizational communication scholarship is still nascent (from what I can tell, only two undergrad—one by Dr. Tom Socha and one my own—and one doctoral level class—by Dr. Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik—similar to this has ever been taught in the communication discipline). We will be encountering new literatures, asking novel questions, and challenging each other to find, co-create and disseminate fresh ideas. My hope is that we will enjoy this adventure together, and that as we encounter the scholarly sides of this work, that we will also learn skills that help us optimize our own happiness and wellbeing.

¹ This course and syllabus were designed by Sarah J. Tracy, with reference to excellent syllabi of related classes designed by Drs. Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Tom Socha, Claudia Ricci, Jane Dutton & Barbara Fredrickson.

Course Readings and Reading Approach

We will approach reading in this class in the following manner:

- We begin by reading some of Martin Seligman’s work – a founder of the positive psychology movement and one of the most frequently cited psychologists in the 20th century (I encourage you to check out his web presence, TED talks, etc.).
- We then engage in intensive scholarly reading covering the field of POS that emphasizes breadth over depth (chapters from the Cameron, et al POS book).
- Simultaneously, we will be reading and practicing skills that will aid in our own personal “happiness projects.” This reading largely comes from Lyumbomirsky—a popular press book based on the science of positive scholarship.
- Halfway through the semester, students will choose several topics to delve into in more detail. We will choose readings that further engage a conversation between POS/positive psychology and specific areas of organizational communication.
- At the end of the semester, students will be focusing on various projects, and we will have less “common” reading.

For planning purposes, I’ve listed the number of pages of required reading each week. Keep in mind that book pages have about 60% of the words of journal article pages—and that much of our reading comes from books.

The following books are required and available at the ASU bookstore

Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. E., & Quinn, R. E. (Eds.) (2003). *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2003). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: The Free Press.

Ehrenreich, B. (2009). *Bright Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York: Penguin.

Note: Some of these are also available in audio book and electronic book form. I have found these formats to be great companions (but not good substitutes) for the hard copy version.



Journal Articles

All of the required journal articles, along with a bunch of supplemental articles and bibliographies, will be available on our Blackboard website. Some library search engines have options to download articles in MP3 format, so if you’d like to have the article “read” to you (as you exercise, commute, garden, travel), you might check that out.

Assignments and Assignment Approach

The assignments in this class are designed with several primary goals in mind:

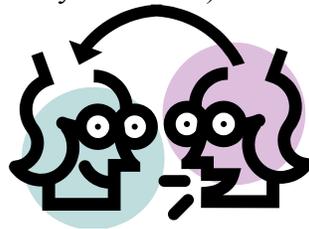
- To create a collaborative and participative atmosphere where we can try out new ideas, share the application of these practices in our own lives and trust and learn from one another.
- To better understand, in broad-brush strokes, the fields of positive organizational scholarship and positive psychology.
- To foster a conversation between the fields of positive organizational scholarship and organizational communication—especially in ways that may helpfully augment, complicate or extend communication scholarship.
- To critically reflect on the skills and practices from these areas so they may usefully implicate our own work and personal lives.
- To leave the course with several key “products” that are well suited for finding “homes” in terms of conference presentations, launching pads for future empirical study, consulting documents and/or publications.

Attendance and Participation (up to 50 pts)

Students should complete assigned readings before class so they can participate in an enthusiastic and informed manner. I will make notes about participation earned after every course session. Assignments are explained in class, and many activities/mini-assignments are completed during class. Being in class is integral to fulfilling and getting credit for these activities.

You can earn points toward participation through attendance and focused attention for the full class period, thoughtful and appropriate verbal participation (more does not always = better), listening alertly and taking notes, concentrating on course material rather than distractions, and providing enthusiastic and supportive interaction with other class members (which fosters collective focus on the course material).

If you must miss a single class, you can participate by reading an auxiliary article related to the topic and providing the class with an overview (verbally or written).



Fostering a Conversation between POS and Communication – Four Related Assignments

The primary goal for the four following assignments is to foster a conversation between POS and communication scholarship. To do so, you will choose to focus on a topic or set of topics we read about in the first half of class, and make a case about how these literatures may apply to a specific topic or set of topics in communication (likely, but not necessarily, organizational communication). I encourage you to envision specific communication scholars with whom you could discuss how POS research relates. To facilitate doing so, I have appended at the end of this syllabus the Table of Contents and author list for the forthcoming Handbook for Organizational Communication.

Book Review (up to 50 pts)

Each of you will choose a book related to positive organizational scholarship or happiness/wellbeing and write a review for a communication oriented audience. I will provide websites and bibliographies on Blackboard to provide ideas. I recommend choosing a book published in the last two years. You are welcome to incorporate the review of this book in your discussion leading and literature synthesis (both explained below) as appropriate.

For this assignment,

- For class 3, list and provide a brief (paragraph) abstract of three or more books you would potentially like to read and review (5 pts).
- For class 6, write a 1250-1500 word review (~ 5 double-spaced pps) (45 pts).
- Please upload both to Blackboard Discussion Board before the class periods in which they are due. Bring an electronic or hard copy with you to class.

The goal of a scholarly book review is not to summarize. Rather, the review should situate the merit of the book from a communication disciplinary viewpoint. In doing so, critically evaluate the book's purpose, thesis, primary arguments, methods and analysis—pointing out both strong points and shortcomings. The majority of the essay will be an evaluation of the book's merit and commentary on the book's contribution to understanding important issues related to POS, happiness and communication. In short, the review explains how this book impacts the way readers (especially communication scholars) should theorize or pursue research related to POS and happiness.

Take care in your writing style—especially your opening—so that the review immediately gains the attention of readers (and potential editors). Along the way, make reference to specific portions of the book to illustrate your points. The challenge, of course, is to provide examples in a limited space. You will need to find creative methods for communicating in a concise format.



Mini Synthesis Paper: Writing your own, and reflecting upon others (up to 25 pts)

This 1000-1250 word paper (~4 pages) is *due the Monday before Class 8*.

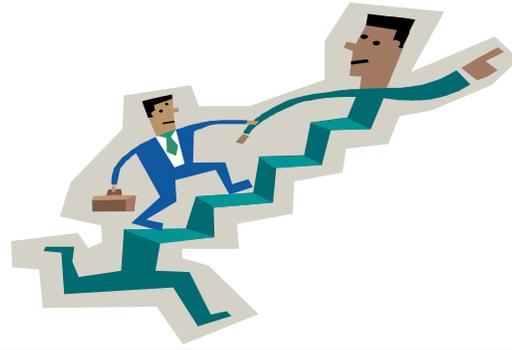
To prepare for writing this paper, you will read the book reviews submitted by your peers and review all the notes you have taken on concepts and topics read about in the first half the class. In the paper, you are asked to make a case about key focal areas in which a conversation between POS and communication could fruitfully extend, complicate or augment an area of communication research that you are experienced or interested in.

This paper is due two days before class and published for all course members. You will be asked to read and reflect upon other students' mini papers before class 8. Please come to class with notations about overlaps in interest and ideas on areas that seem most promising for us to focus on for the discussion leading. During class 8 students will decide which topics they would like to pursue (individually? together or in small groups) for the discussion leading.

Discussion Leading / Presenting on Key Focal Area (up to 50 pts)

The second third of class will be focused on discussion leading and presenting on key focal areas of POS/happiness applied to organizational communication. All of the activities listed for this assignment are ALSO part and parcel for final semester synthesis papers (see below). During the weeks of discussion leading, there is less class-wide required reading, providing time to focus on the activities below.

You may do this assignment on your own or in groups of up to three people (people working in groups will just have longer / more in-depth projects).



Each individual (whether working alone or in a group) is responsible for the following:

- Identify 15+ sources associated with the application, including sources associated with both the POS and communication scholarship.
 - Read a third of these sources in detail (for now), skim the rest.
 - Feel free to include book review books as appropriate.
- Assign ~25 pages of reading for the entire group and accompany with 2-3 discussion questions.
 - Ensure readings and discussion questions are available to class participants *at least a week in advance* (if you are in touch with the course assistant earlier, the assistant may be able to help with this).
 - The readings can include journal articles, books excerpts or websites.
- Write and distribute a 2-3 page outline summarizing information learned through researching this focal area. Make available via Blackboard Discussion Board 24 hours in advance or bring hard copies to class with Blackboard version uploaded soon after.
 - Append your 2-3 discussion questions
 - Append an APA reference list with the full citation of the 15+ sources, each with a sentence summarizing or otherwise explaining its relevance to the application.
 - Append a very brief (e.g., paragraph) description of any media, activities or creative examples used in presentation (if used).
 - Please include your name, date and page numbers.
- During class, provide an overview of the information in a lively, organized manner.
 - Presentations / discussion leading should last ~45 minutes per student.
 - Incorporate a dialogue based upon discussion questions and other student's insights, questions and comments.
 - Incorporate a review of your "book review" book, if appropriate.
 - Integrate media, activities or other creative examples, if appropriate.

Final Synthesis / Application Paper (up to 125 pts)

Students will write a synthesis paper that fosters a conversation between the POS / happiness and communication literatures. For the final paper, you should more closely analyze and make sense of all the resources collected for the discussion leading and book review assignments, and collect additional resources (as necessary) to make your case.

These are scholarly papers that may certainly serve as a launching pad for future empirical study. However, they should also stand as papers on their own (e.g., check out the comprehensive critical literature reviews in *Communication Yearbook*).

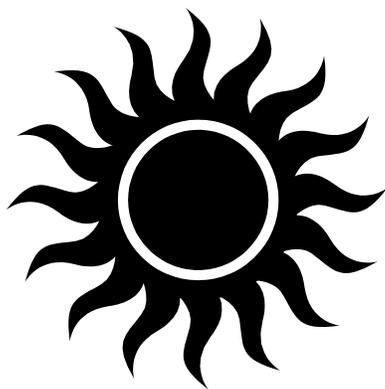
They should be about 10-12 pages in length per student and include ~20 scholarly references (not included in page length). You may individually or co-author the paper (co-authored papers should be respectively longer in length and include more references).

One thought is to propose an ICA panel which would feature these papers (and responses to these papers from key organizational communication scholars from throughout the nation). ICA submission deadline is Nov. 1, by which time we will have done discussion leading and should be able to create abstracts and brainstorm respondents—if desired.

Happiness Project – Two Related Assignments

Over the semester, you will essentially engage in your own “Happiness Project” engaging activities associated with happiness, including:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| a. Gratitude | i. Therapeutic Writing |
| b. Optimism | j. Forgiveness |
| c. Avoiding social comparison | k. Finding Flow |
| d. Acts of kindness | l. Savoring |
| e. Nurturing relationships | m. Committing to goals |
| f. Giving affection | n. Practicing spirituality |
| g. Coping strategies that curb negativity | o. Caring for body / exercise |
| h. Tracking mood contagion (e.g., thru monitoring complaints) | p. Focusing on strengths |



There are two primary assignments related to our engagement of happiness project activities, one that is individual and the other (if desired) which is collaborative. They are described on the next page.

Reflection & Activity Journal (100 pts)

A primary part of this class is journaling in response to discussion questions, readings and activities associated with these topics. Each journal entry is related to a reading and/or a course activity—so reading and completing the activity *first* is integral for writing a meaningful journal response. The journal entry prompts are located in the schedule of classes, below.

Students will journal through the Blackboard journaling function (to be demonstrated and explained in the first class period). Please follow these directions for submission:

1. Draft response in a separate word-processing program (e.g. Microsoft Word) and save a copy for yourself as back-up.
2. *Copy and paste* response into Blackboard. *Do not attach* as a separate document.
3. Title entries for the class session in which they are due: E.g. “Class 3 – Person-Activity Fit” or “Class 7 – Transgression Reflection & Goals.”
4. You should have access to your response in class, so either print it out or have it available on a lap-top or hand-held device.



Students should complete at least 10 of the 12 journal entries for up to 100 points. All students are required to complete the “Reflected Best Self Exercise” and “Job Crafting Exercise” during weeks 10 and 11 (to be described in more detail in class). Journal entries are to be ~500 word each (fyi, this syllabus page has 360 words). Points awarded depend on the entry’s thoughtful reflection on course and reading material, specific response to the journal query, being on time, and clearly evidencing your daily happiness activities and behaviors. Students are welcome and encouraged to complete all twelve journal entries as a way to earn bonus points.

Journals will be checked weekly for completeness, and you will receive global feedback via Blackboard a couple times throughout the semester. If you would like specific and immediate feedback on a certain response, feel free to be in touch.

We will decide as a class midway through the semester the extent to which and/or how we might share these journal responses with each other for use in our

collaborative happiness project paper(s) (see below). You as a student will have control over which parts you decide to share with other class members.

Culminating Collaborative Project (100 pts)

A culminating project of the course is a (collaborative) paper or project related to our own practice of one or more happiness activities, and how these activities are informed by and inform research related to positive organizational scholarship/communication.

In the last third of the semester, we will devise a plan for how this project will proceed, and much of the final class periods will be devoted to its workshopping. Depending on student interests and proclivities, project(s) may take the form of a collaborative autoethnography, a workshop, a performance, or a training document.

No matter which direction happiness project(s) proceed, authors will provide a presentation in the final exam course period and turn in a written record of the project (a paper, a rationale and detailed explanation of the workshop, a performance script, or a rationale and training document). The written portion should evidence reference to relevant scholarship, but is not expected to be especially heavy with citation.



Grading: Letter grades are figured as to the following guidelines.

Outstanding – above expectations	Good – above average	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Failing
A+ 485 – 500 pts	B+ 435 – 449 pts	C+ 385 – 399 pts		
A 465 – 484 pts	B 415 – 434 pts	C 350 – 384 pts	D 300–349 pts	E below 300 pts
A- 450 – 464 pts	B- 400 – 414 pts			XE - academic dishonesty

Class Policies and Procedures

Norms of Civility: Let's create an oasis of civility in this class by: arriving on time and staying for the entire class period, keeping an alert and enthusiastic presence, paying attention to course material rather than other distractions, listening supportively and attentively—speaking one at a time and helping others stay focused. When we speak about sensitive, personal or painful issues, I hope we can ensure a safe classroom environment by respecting each others' confidences.

To help create this environment, students should not: arrive late, leave early, sleep, use a phone or lap-top for non-course activities, eat odiferous or noisy food, or carry on side conversations. Many of us are irresistibly drawn to our hand-held devices. If this is the case for you, make it invisible—put it away and turn off the buzzer, beeper and vibrator.

Academic Integrity: Assignments with integrity are written at the graduate level, with clear and appropriate organization, full sentence structure, grammar and spelling. When referring to material from the text, class notes, or any other source (including Internet webpages), using quotation marks and appropriate citation is ethically and stylistically required.

Students are warned against cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment or exam, large or small. Plagiarizing includes copying from other students, past coursework, the Internet, the text, or other published sources without proper citation. It also includes excessive “help” or “editing” on assignments from others (if in doubt, ask me). Students found to be in violation of academic integrity guidelines will face disciplinary action which may include being suspended or expelled from the College or University, given an XE on the transcript, referred to Student Judicial Affairs and/or having his/her name kept on file. Student assignments are routinely checked against plagiarism-detection websites and files of past student papers, so do your own work and cite all sources.

While it is appropriate that several graduate school papers overlap in conceptual focus, your course assignments should be original work devised for this class. If you plan on using material prepared for a different course, please consult with me regarding appropriateness.

A note on collaborative work: Students working together on projects earn the same grade (unless they agree otherwise and together provide a note to the instructor explaining their respective work). As such, students are encouraged to choose their collaborators with this in mind.

Unique Academic Needs:

Students with unique academic needs who desire special accommodations should document their needs with ASU's disability resource center (<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/lab/>) and contact me in the first couple sessions to discuss options.

Absences, Due Dates, Late or Incomplete Work:

Assignments will be marked down up to 10% each day and will not be accepted more than two weeks past their due date (and none will be accepted after December 9th). In-class work (e.g., exams, presentations and class activities) will receive credit only on the day they are due. **All coursework must be completed in order to pass the class.**

Incompletes are available to students who: 1) have finished more than half the coursework, 2) experience serious illness or personal emergency, 3) negotiate the incomplete before 12/6.