What is Happiness

PHIL 301
Summer 2020

Class time:

Name of Faculty: Matthew Meyer
Contact details: MEYERMP@uwec.edu

Course Description

This course explores the question “what is happiness?” from a variety of disciplinary and multicultural viewpoints. In it we use great thinkers from positive psychology (Jon Haidt), philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Nietzsche, Epicurus, to name a few), moral psychology (Valerie Tiberius’ book *The Reflective Life*), and religious “philosophies” (Buddha, Lao Tzu, St. Augustine), to look at the question of happiness from a variety of lenses including but not limited to: fostering virtue, overcoming adversity, living a life we can endorse upon reflection, and determining the place of friendship, money, and spirituality in the happy life. We will also have a unit on the British philosophers’ views on happiness (Mill, Hume, Russell), as well as comparison of how social welfare programs in in the UK lead to a higher average reported happiness than in the US.

Credit Hour Policy Statement

This class meets the federal credit hour policy of:
A federal requirement of 15 in-class hours plus an expected 30 hours of out-of-class work per credit hour is expected. For a 3-credit course, a requirement of 45 in-class hours plus an expected 90 hours of out-of-class work is expected.

General Education Objective

This course meets the General Education requirements for:-
None

Learning Objectives

Listed below are the Learning Objectives for the course:

1. Identify and examine your own beliefs about happiness and any underlying assumptions you hold.
2. Identify and explain the difference between psychological, philosophical, and religious approaches to living well and happiness. There will be particular emphasis on British philosophers.
3. Integrate theories on happiness into your own reflections.
4. Use philosophical thinking as a tool to address obstacles and adversity in your life.
5. Evaluate the impact social structures, values, and individual choices can have on general and individual happiness, especially by comparing British society to the United States.
6. Explain how default emotional reactions and behavior can lead to unhappiness and identify areas where you can change these default reactions.

Assessment and Grading Criteria

20% Participation
30% Three Content Quizzes
30% Three Short Papers
20% Final Project (Paper or Presentations)