

PSCH 3303: Positive Psychology

[August 25, 2021 – Version 1.1]

I. Basic Course Information

I-A. Course Description

Positive psychology is the scientific study of human mental strengths and character virtues that allow people and communities to thrive. Topics such as optimism, meaning, hope, wisdom, transcendence, and courage are covered. Theoretical concepts including the broaden-and-build theory of emotions, self-efficacy, mindfulness, flow, learned optimism, social capital, and affective forecasting are addressed.

I-B. Student Learning Objectives

The objectives of this course are to:

- Identify and discuss the major topic areas in the recently defined area of research known as positive psychology.
- Encounter and apply positive psychology experientially through completing a series of self-reflective exercises.
- Apply the knowledge learned by successfully completing interactive assignments and by actively participating in the course.

I-C. Meeting Time and Location

This course will meet in Eagle Pass from 6 PM to 8:45 PM on Wednesdays each week of the semester, except holidays.

I-D. Instructor

The instructor for this course is Dr. Wesley Wynne.

Email: wwynne@sulross.edu

Office Hours in Uvalde A105: Thursday 4 PM to 6 PM.

General Student Availability Hours:

Anytime. Since we live and work in many different communities, just email me to convey your concerns or to set up a visit by phone or in person. The most effective method of contact is by email at wwynne@sulross.edu. To protect student privacy, send from your Sul Ross email account. Email etiquette (and common sense) requires that you state your name in every email you send. Also, please specify the course you are referring to and state clearly the precise concern you have.

I-E. Course Materials

Required Texts

- *The How of Happiness*, by Sonja Lyubomirsky. ISBN: 978-0143114956.
- *Beyond Order*, by Jordan B. Peterson. ISBN: 978-0593084649.

Recommended Texts for Reference

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (7th Edition)*, by APA. ISBN: 978-1433832161.
- *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style, (3rd edition)*, by Reinhardt & Eggenschwiler. ISBN: 9780470880784.

By law, this university is required to inform you of the following in accordance with Section 51.9705 of the Texas Education Code: "A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer." In fact, bargains on textbooks are often found on the websites of many Internet booksellers. Major online vendors typically accept major credit cards, checks, and money orders.

🚫 Illegal copies of textbooks are not allowed at any time in class or the testing labs.

II. Assignments

II-A. Homework Exercises (25%)

Brief homework exercises will be assigned. They will be submitted on Blackboard each week.

II-B. Film Character Analysis (15%)

From the perspective of positive psychology, you will write a 3-page analysis based on an examination of the character strengths in the VIA Inventory, as applied to one or more characters in the film *Places in the Heart*. Further instructions will be provided.

II-C. Film Reflection Paper (20%)

A film will be assigned to each of several groups in this class. A five-page reflection paper connecting your film to the material covered in this course will be written. Students will link aspects of the film with their own observations and experiences, as well as to topics that are covered in lecture. Further instructions will be provided.

II-D. Book Reflection Paper (20%)

Beyond Order will be read and discussed during the semester. A ten-page reflection paper over the book will be written. Students will link the topics in the book to their own observations and experiences. Further instructions will be provided.

II-E. Happiness Activities Report (15%)

A series of three happiness activities from *The How of Happiness* will be chosen, completed, and reported on. The due date for the report on the three activities will be determined as the semester progresses.

II-F. Final Exam (5%)

Students will log onto Blackboard and complete a brief assignment reflecting on what they have learned in this course, what they liked most, what they would tell others about the course, and how they think it could be improved in the future.

II-G. Topic and Assignment Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment and Lecture Topics</u>
Aug. 25	Introduction
Sep. 1	Character Strengths and Outcomes
Sep. 8	Living Well
Sep. 15	Pleasure
Sep. 21	<u>Character Analysis Due</u> ; Enhancing Emotional Experiences
Sep. 29	Optimism
Oct. 6	Creativity
Oct. 13	Wisdom and Courage
Oct. 20	Interests, Abilities, and Accomplishments
Oct. 27	Gratitude, Good Will, and Forgiveness
Nov. 3	Mindfulness, Flow, and Spirituality
Nov. 10	Love and Attachment
Nov. 17	Mental Health and Behavior
Nov. 22	<u>Film Reflection Paper Due</u>
Dec. 1	Positive Environments
Nov. 29	<u>Book Reflection Paper Due</u>
Dec. 8	<u>Final Exam</u>

Notice: The schedule of topics above is subject to change for pedagogical reasons at the discretion of the instructor.

☛ Other than any exceptions described herein, all major assignments in this course *must be completed and submitted to pass this course*, regardless of your overall grades on other assignments. Students who do not complete all major written assignments will receive an F as a final grade for this course.

☛ Written assignments must be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise authorized. Assignments that are emailed without prior authorization will not be accepted or considered submitted under any circumstances.

III. Grading

III-A. The Calculation of Grades

Grades for each assignment, and for the course itself, are calculated as follows: A: 90% or above; B: 80%-89%; C: 70%-79%; D: 60%-69%; F: 0%-59%.

On assignments with curved grades, the top score will be converted to a 100. All other grades on the assignment will be expressed as a percentage of the top score. For example, if the top score on an exam is a 20 out of 25 items available, the 20 will be converted to a 100. If you get 15 of the 25 questions correct, your grade will be a 15/20, which is equal to a 75 (in other words, a C).

The times and dates when assignments are due and when evaluations are given will not be altered to fit your schedule. You will be expected to alter your schedule to fit class responsibilities.

In the interest of more thorough coverage of certain topics, the professor may decide to omit some of the assigned material from coverage on any particular exam. You are responsible to learn of any announced omissions.

III-B. The Basis of Final Grades

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. They will not be rounded upwards. It is important for every student to understand that evaluation is not based ultimately on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate. Nor are grades based on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions about what seems to be fair. All grades, including your final course grade, will be based *solely* on your academic work in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

III-C. The Reporting of Final Grades

For non-graduating students, final course grades will be posted on Banner at noon on the Monday after commencement (and for graduating seniors, at noon on the Friday before commencement). Final exam week is a hectic time for students and the faculty alike, so please respect the privacy of all your professors during and after this period. Please do not inquire concerning grades between the start of the final exams period and when grades are reported. If the professor needs information from you during this time, he will be the one to initiate contact.

Unsolicited voicemails and emails from any non-graduating student during the final exams period are liable to be ignored. This policy is based on years of experience: most communications from students during final exams and the grading period are based on anxiety rather than necessity. Please understand that any issues of grading that truly must be resolved may still be resolved *after* final grades are reported. Access to assignment grades and other course content will also be available to you on Blackboard until the week after commencement.

IV. Student Confidentiality

Because of privacy laws, all school-related issues — academic, disciplinary, and personal — must be handled between the university and the student directly. A student's parent, spouse, boyfriend, best friend, case worker, parole officer, et cetera has absolutely no standing to intervene for a student or inquire concerning grades, disciplinary matters, or any other issues. Do not ask such persons to contact university faculty and staff to serve as a liaison, make inquiries, or settle disputes on your behalf.

V. Academic Integrity

V-A. The Honor Code

As members of the academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the honor code, it is the responsibility of each and every student to report obvious cheating or any suspicious behavior that may compromise the integrity of the grading process. The confidentiality and anonymity of students who report such incidents will be respected.

V-B. Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. In this course, all communication among students while taking exams is prohibited.

- Communicating material included on an exam with or in the presence of someone who has not yet taken that exam is also prohibited.
- No student may print, photograph, copy, or in any other way reproduce material from any exam. The consequence of violating this directive will be severe, up to and including dismissal from the course with a grade of F.
- Except in online courses, unless specifically authorized, no student shall take an exam at any computer outside of the designated testing facility.
- Students may not share books, notes, phone calls, texts, or any other form of communication during exams. Do NOT sit next to another student who is taking the same test in the lab unless no other seats are available. No student taking an exam should have open any website other than the Blackboard site. Close all other windows. Failure to follow these instructions may, at a minimum, result in a zero for the exam and might result in an F for the course.
- The possession of any course-related material in an exam room during an exam period in which the material in question is forbidden is *ipso facto* evidence of scholastic dishonesty. In plain language, if you bring material, such as a textbook, into a testing situation where you are not supposed to have that material with you, you are thereby committing a violation, even if you were not referring to the material or intending to use the material to cheat.
- Unless otherwise specified, the possession and use of cell phones, tablet devices, online aids, e-books, and any other electronic device is not permitted during testing and may result in the forfeiture of the test grade and other penalties.
- No electronic device other than the computer on which an exam is being taken may be used by a student while taking an exam.
- No website other than the Blackboard website is to be opened or viewed by a student while taking an exam.
- Plagiarism, as every student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated and will result in a zero for the assignment on academic grounds alone, as well as disciplinary penalties. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, find out online at www.plagiarism.org.

Using an illegal copy of textbook materials constitutes academic dishonesty. If a student is found to be using illegally copied textbook material during an open-book exam, the penalty will be failure of the exam. In addition, the student will have the choice of immediately surrendering the illegal copy to SRSU faculty/staff or receiving a failing grade for the course.

The penalty for serious academic dishonesty is severe: a student who turns in a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the entire course. A plagiarized paper will be given a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the student

may face the additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your work.

VI. Student Classroom Behavior

VI-A. Student Behavior in Traditional and Teleconference Courses

Please, do not just attend. Participate actively when you have something to add to the class discussion. However, before addressing the class or the professor during a class discussion, ask yourself: Will my comments have value to other students in this course? Are my comments relevant to the material being discussed? Remarks such as “I can’t find the assignment I turned in on Blackboard” or “I got a bad grade on the test. Can you tell me what I need to do to improve it?” are two examples of things *not* always appropriate to bring up during class in some circumstances. They should be discussed privately with the professor.

Please remember to follow all the conventional classroom rules, such as: Show up to class on time. Do not leave class early. (If you must leave early or show up late in special circumstances, notify the professor *in person* ahead of time.) And absolutely do not get up and leave the classroom during lecture to go get food, take calls or for other trivial reasons.

Please remember that Sul Ross has a policy on appropriate campus attire. The policy refers to “the responsibility to dress in a manner which will not detract from the academic atmosphere of the library, classrooms, and other facilities.” Students whose attire detracts from the academic atmosphere of the classroom to an extent that becomes disruptive will be notified of the problem by the professor and thereafter expected to dress more appropriately.

Misuse of cell phones, especially text messaging, has become a problem with some people. Turn your cell phone OFF before entering the classroom or testing lab. Do NOT merely set the phone to vibrate—buzzing is just as disruptive as ringing. Do NOT set it to silent and leave it in view—any incoming calls or texts messages will distract you and possibly others around you. If you feel you absolutely must leave your phone on to take an important call or wait for an important text message (doctor report, et cetera), please sit near the door and let the instructor know ahead of time of the situation.

Also, the use of laptop computers in the classroom is not allowed. Studies have shown that laptops in class are frequently disruptive to other students and can even be counter-productive to the learning process of the students who bring them. Students who use laptops in class or misuse other devices such as cell phones and tablets will be counted absent and may also be instructed to physically leave the classroom.

☛ *Disruptions caused by tardiness, cell phone use, talking, and other disruptive behaviors may result in a student’s expulsion from the classroom and, for repeat offenders, permanent dismissal from the course. Refusal to leave the class when instructed to do so will result in a minimum ten-point deduction from a student’s final course grade in addition to the other disciplinary consequences.*

Attendance will sometimes be taken, usually but not always at the beginning of class. Students who are not present for roll call will be counted absent. Sul Ross policy allows that students may be automatically dropped with an F from courses if they have excessive absences, defined as nine hours of absence from a course (this translates to 3 absences from an evening course, 6 absences from a daytime course,

and 3 absences from a summer course). The professor will enforce this policy when a pattern of negligent behavior is observed. Students who without authorization arrive late or leave class early for any reason without approval may be counted absent for the entire session.

In the computer labs when people are testing and in all courses taught by teleconference, it is essential that all students behave so as to minimize noise and disruption, including whispering.

VI-B. Student Behavior in Web-Based Courses

Even though web courses do not involve such responsibilities as showing up on time and being quiet in class, there are other responsibilities that pertain. One of those is checking email regularly. All students have a Sul Ross email account and instructors or fellow online students may send notices to that email address. For this reason, it is important to check your Sul Ross email account on a regular basis – preferably daily, but at least three times a week.

Class participation will be recorded in online classes. Students who miss an exam will be counted as inactive (e.g. absent) for the week. After more than three weeks of inactivity in a long semester or more than one week of inactivity in a summer session or an 8-week compressed course, a student may be dropped with an F.

In the computer labs when people are testing, it is essential that all students behave so as to minimize noise and disruption, including whispering.

VII. Policy Concerning Problems with Blackboard during Exams and While Submitting Assignments

VII-A. Blackboard Exams

Blackboard is seldom to blame for problems students experience during exams. When genuine problems occur with Blackboard technology, the problem affects multiple people at the same time. Yet some students will report that Blackboard has “frozen up” or will not let them proceed with a test. So far I have identified the following reasons for this problem:

- Students will not use the Firefox browser when taking a quiz. If you do not use Firefox, you will have problems.
- Students try to go back and change the answers to test items that they have already answered. You cannot do this. Trying to do so by hitting the back button on your browser, or by other methods, will cause you to forfeit a test grade.
- Students misinterpret the following statement that appears at the start of each quiz: “This Test can be saved and resumed later.” Yes, if later means in five minutes. But you will have only twenty-five minutes from the time you log on to the time you log out. Taking longer than that will result in a zero for the quiz.
- Students try to cheat by first previewing a quiz, then logging out and claiming that they were frozen out of the quiz. They do this in the hope of getting the chance to then retake the quiz and earning a higher score. That will not happen.
- Students misuse the mouse by repeatedly clicking on a browser button to move to the next test item, or hold down the mouse button for an extended period of time. These behaviors might cause you to forfeit a test grade.

Tests will not be reset for individual students in the great majority of circumstances. Therefore, please avoid the behaviors listed above in order to successfully use Blackboard for taking tests.

VII-B. Submitting Assignments

If you have a problem that prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, contact me immediately once you decide that you cannot resolve the problem and complete/submit the assignment as instructed. Waiting until after the deadline to contact me will result in forfeiture of the grade for the assignment.

VIII. Statement on Intellectual Tolerance and Academic Freedom

Psychology is a field of inquiry that touches upon many controversial issues, including sexuality, evolution, gender, race, ethnicity, individual differences, parenting, divorce, crime and public policy, drug use, religion, and multicultural issues, among others. Professors and students often have strong opinions and make forceful arguments concerning these phenomena. It is often educationally productive to address and debate these matters in the context of classroom instruction and course assignments. Social taboos discouraging open discussion are inappropriate in this context and must be laid aside in the interest of intellectual inquiry.

Your grade will not be influenced in any way by expressing points of view that are in disagreement with the professor's. If time permits, students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments whenever relevant to the subject material. The professor is free to do likewise.

Students who experience excessive anxiety or discomfort during the discussion of a sensitive topic (e.g., domestic abuse) should not hesitate to leave the classroom for a time if necessary and should never feel embarrassed for doing so. This can be an adaptive response to an emotionally difficult situation.

In contrast, other individuals are offended in principle by the mere exposure to concepts, opinions, and arguments with which they disagree. The response of such persons is sometimes to try and shut down discussion or to become hostile or vindictive toward others. Such persons are not encouraged to take psychology courses at Rio Grande College until they have resolved the personal issues preventing them from engaging in serious intellectual discourse.

IX. Teaching Philosophy

A college degree signifies accomplishment; it will increase a person's prestige and can help its holder acquire a job. However, once the job is taken, success depends on what has been learned—a college degree by itself is merely a sheet of paper. If a student takes full advantage of the opportunity of education, the sheet of paper signifies skills and knowledge that will improve one's value as a worker and as a member of the community. If not, the student might find himself or herself with a sheet of paper only, without additional skills, useful knowledge, or value to employers. RGC psychology courses are designed to provide students with knowledge and skills that will help them in their careers, in their relationships, and in their capacity to be responsible members of a community.

The early 20th Century American writer Albert Jay Nock had this to say about his college experience:

We were made to understand that the burden of education was on us and no one else, least of all our instructors; they were not there to help us carry it or to praise our efforts, but to see that we shouldered it in proper style and got on with it.

I believe that through encouragement and deserved praise, college professors can and should ease the burden of education for their students. Yet students who enroll at SRSU-Rio Grande College must remember they are expected to perform upper-division college-level work. No course in the psychology curriculum is remedial. As Albert Jay Nock understood, a professor's responsibility is to lead students to knowledge; it is, however, each student's responsibility to learn.

Almost no students who major in psychology at RGC express an interest in pursuing a career in academic psychology. Yet the typical American psychology undergraduate curriculum and textbook are seemingly designed around this notion. I believe that while exposure to research methods and technical esoterica does have a rightful place in the degree program, RGC students are much better served by an phenomenological educational orientation that places real-life applications of psychological theories and findings higher than the focus on technical training. Therefore, I strongly encourage students to relate and apply what is taught in my psychology classes to their own emotional lives, family lives, workplaces, and communities.

X. Contacting Technical Support

Most technical problems that students experience using Blackboard can be avoided by using *Firefox* or *Chrome* as your web browser rather than *Internet Explorer*. Firefox may be downloaded for free at www.mozilla.org. Chrome can be found at www.google.com/chrome/index.html.

If you have a problem with technical issues such as downloading a file or taking an exam, contact an Office of Information Technology (OIT) staffer for assistance or call 432-837-8888.

XI. Special Accommodations

Our institution complies with state and federal laws concerning people with disabilities. If a student needs accessibility services, it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request. This may be done by contacting 830-279-3003. The address is 2623 Garner Field Road, Uvalde, Texas 78801.

XII. Distance Education

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. [If the course requires students to take proctored exams or to purchase additional software or equipment, those requirements are described herein above.] The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross

are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

XIII. Program Learning Objectives and Skills

XIV-A. Student Learning Objectives for the Psychology Program

This course is an element of the RGC psychology program. It is expected that the graduating student in this program will demonstrate the capacity to:

- Recognize the central concepts in the department's main areas of focus: abnormal psychology; social & personality psychology, and developmental psychology.
- Recognize and apply basic psychological research methods.
- Communicate effectively in written assignments and oral presentations concerning psychological subject matter.

XIV-B. Marketable Skills for the Psychology Program

1. Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences. (speaking effectively)
2. Students will demonstrate empathic or active listening and conversational skills, and/or write clearly about their affective stance, respectfully attuned to the needs of their audiences. (describing feelings)
3. Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources. (identifying resources)
4. Students will demonstrate ability to examine the underlying issues of scientific problems, attending to the pertinent details and creating action plans, recognizing ambiguity and complexity as essential components. (Analyzing)

XIV. Miscellaneous

On some written assignments, students may be asked to use a pseudonym to insure anonymity in a discussion or for blind grading. The pseudonym should be known only to you unless and until the professor needs it. To protect your confidentiality, share it with no one.

In web-based courses, due to the difficulty of coordinating schedules and meeting times, it will not be possible for students to review their performance on weekly assignments unless they are willing to visit the professor's office in Uvalde. Otherwise, to improve their performance and to prepare for the final exam, students should review the course materials. If any student is concerned about the accuracy of a test item or a grade, the student may arrange an office appointment with me at the end of the semester; the student will be provided with an opportunity to review their performance on all assignments at that time.

This syllabus was written as accurately as possible at the time of its publication. It is possible, however, that errors or unforeseen circumstances will necessitate further changes in the best interest of the class. If further changes are made, they will be implemented in a way to minimize any inconvenience or difficulty for all parties affected.

Appendix 1: Assessment Rubrics for Assignments in Psychology

RUBRIC FOR VISUAL AND ORAL PRESENTATIONS					
DIMENSION OF ANALYSIS	Formative 1	Developing 2	Satisfactory 3	Competent 4	Exemplary 5
Topic and Focus follow the instructions provided for the assignment.					
Structure is logical in its organization & fully developed, with a distinct introduction & conclusion.					
Audio-Visual Aids are effectively utilized and appropriate for professional presentations.					
Verbal Communication is clear, fluent, well-paced, properly intoned, and not over-reliant on notes or slides.					
Non-verbal Communication clarifies and enhances the message with appropriate eye contact, gestures, and posture.					
Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation meet levels expected for formal professional presentations.					
Documentation fully conforms to accepted professional standards.					

RUBRIC FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING					
DIMENSION OF ANALYSIS	Formative 1	Developing 2	Satisfactory 3	Competent 4	Exemplary 5
Psychological Analysis of the subject matter is relevant, accurate, and thoroughly utilizes assigned sources.					
Reasoning & Evidence are well-organized, objective, and fully developed.					
Clarity of Expression is appropriate for professional-level communication.					
Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation meet levels expected for formal professional writing.					
Documentation fully conforms to accepted professional standards.					

Appendix 2: General Guidelines for Written Assignments in Psychology

Follow these specifications, unless you are instructed otherwise:

1. Double space everything.
2. Use the standard 12-point Times New Roman font. It looks like this and is very easy to read when printed out and double-spaced.
3. Use one-inch margins all around on every page.
4. Number all your pages in the upper right-hand corner.
5. Always include a cover page. The cover page should be centered and should include (listed on separate lines): your paper's title; your name; the school's name, the name of your course; the name of your professor, and the due date for the assignment.
6. Create a title that is original and descriptive, not something bland and thoughtless like "Psychology Reflection Paper."
7. Do not include an abstract in your paper.
8. Include a references page; all your references should be formatted correctly in APA style (not in MLA style or some other style).
9. Grammar-check and spell-check your paper before submitting it.
10. Keep both hard-copy and electronic-copy back-ups of your paper.
11. Remember that your cover page and your references page do not count toward the overall page count of the paper. For example, a five-page reflection paper should have a title page, five *full* pages of text, and a references page.
12. Do not plagiarize at all. Plagiarizing (copying someone else's work and passing it off without credit as your own) will not be tolerated. You will fail for it.