

ANTH 506: Anthropology of Happiness and the Good Life

Spring 2023; Tuesday 3-5:50pm, ANSCI 31

Dr. Jeffrey G. Snodgrass

Dept. of Anthropology and Geography, Colorado State University

Jeffrey.Snodgrass@Colostate.edu

Anthropology Main Office/ My mailbox: Clark B219

Office Hours: Tuesday/ Thursday 1-2:15 (Office: Clark B219a or via Zoom)

Research: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jeffrey_Snodgrass

The course draws on anthropological and interdisciplinary perspectives to illuminate the sociocultural and evolutionary basis of human happiness and flourishing. Topics include: anthropological approaches to value, morality, and social norms; economic, environmental, and social determinants of happiness; sources of human resilience, including religion and play; emotions and subjective well-being; biological and health correlates of happiness.

Course learning objectives:

- Describe conceptions of happiness and the good life in diverse cultural contexts.
- Describe, analyze, and understand relationships between emotional and subjective well-being, mental and physical health, and material and economic well-being.
- Analyze and assess how economic, environmental, and social processes impact human happiness.
- Analyze and assess how sources of human resilience (like religion and play) can promote human happiness and flourishing.
- Analyze and assess the utility for interdisciplinary debates of a biocultural and cognitive anthropological approach to human happiness and well-being.
- Evaluate the utility of anthropological approaches to values, morality, and norms for explaining human happiness and flourishing.
- Critically evaluate contemporary medical models of human health and well-being.
- Understand the relationship between culture, evolved human biology, and human happiness and flourishing.
- Apply anthropological and interdisciplinary perspectives on human happiness and the good life to research projects of interest to individual students.
- Create new synthetic explanations for human happiness and flourishing, drawing from anthropological and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Readings: Available at the CSU bookstore, with additional PDF readings found on **Canvas**:

- Martin Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*
- Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo, *Pursuits of Happiness: Well-Being in Anthropological Perspective*
- Roy D'Andrade, *A Study of Personal and Cultural Values: American, Japanese, and Vietnamese*
- Dimitris Xygalatas, *Ritual: How Seemingly Senseless Acts Make Life Worth Living*

Assignments and Grading:

Participation (assessed at course mid-point and end of the course, 5% each): **10%**

In-class presentation / leading of discussion/ write-up of that week's reading (each student will do this twice during the semester, 10% each): **20%**
Papers (x3, 10% each): **30%**
Midterm take-home exam: **20%**
Final take-home exam: **20%**

For participation, I am interested in thoughtful consideration of and engagement with class topics, readings, and the comments of myself and other students—demonstrated in your writing, preparation for weekly classes, and in-class comments.

Further Expectations: The course follows a round-table seminar format with intensive discussions. Class absences can jeopardize a student's grade. The course adheres to the Academic Integrity Policy of the General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code. Any breach of these policies and codes will be taken seriously. For more detail, see <https://tilt.colostate.edu/Integrity/Pledge/WordingOf>. Finally, students should be aware that the contents of this syllabus—including *assignment due dates*—may change. Students are responsible for keeping track of these changes through regular class attendance and communication with the instructor.

TOPICS AND READINGS

Introduction to the Course

Week 1. Introduction to the Anthropology of Happiness and the Good Life (Jan. 17)

Readings:

Beyond the suffering subject: Toward an anthropology of the good (Robbins, pp. 447-462)
Current and future directions in culture and happiness research (Oishi & Gilbert, pp. 54-8)

Part 1. Psychological Foundations: Eudaimonia, Hedonia, & Beyond

Week 2. Psychology's Definitions of Happiness: Eudaimonia & Hedonia (Jan. 24)

Readings:

Flourish, Part 1 (Seligman, pp. 1-97)
Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction (Deci & Ryan, pp. 1-11)
Know thyself (Ryff & Singer, pp. 13-39)
Reconsidering happiness (Kashdan et al., pp. 219-233)
Two traditions of happiness research, not two distinct types of happiness (Biswas-Diener et al., pp. 208-211)

Student presentation 1

Week 3. Psychology's Constructs of Happiness & Well-Being, cont. (Jan. 31)

Readings:

Flourish, Part 2 (Seligman, finish book)
Very happy people (Diener & Seligman, pp. 81-4)
Subjective well-being (Diener, pp. 542-575)
Measuring well-being: A comparison of subjective well-being and PERMA (Goodman et al., pp. 321-332)
PERMA and the building blocks of well-being (Seligman, pp. 333-5)

Student presentation 2

Week 4. Other Influential Well-Being Constructs: Flourishing, Broaden-and-Build, & Flow; Culture, Context, & Well-Being (Feb. 7)

Readings:

Well-being constructs

The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing (Keyes, pp. 207-222)

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion (Fredrickson, pp. 1367-1378)

The concept of flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, pp. 89-105)

Culture & context

Gaming well: Links between videogames and flourishing mental health (Jones et al., pp. 1-8)

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the PERMA Model of Well-being (Khaw & Kern, pp. 1-22)

Beyond positive psychology? Toward a contextual view of psychological processes and well-being (McNulty & Fincham, pp. 101-110)

Cross-cultural variations in predictors of life satisfaction: Perspectives from needs and values (Oishi et al., pp. 980-990)

[Recommended: Context-dependent emotion regulation: Suppression and reappraisal at the Burning Man (McRae et al., pp. 346-350)]

Student presentation 3

****Paper 1 due: Friday, Feb. 10, 6pm****

Part 2: Anthropological Foundations: Culture, Society, and the Good Life

Week 5. Anthropological & Ethnographic Perspectives on Happiness & the Good Life (Feb. 14)

Readings:

Pursuits of happiness, Parts 1 & 2 (Mathews & Izquierdo, pp. 1-123)

Cultural constructions of happiness: Theory and empirical evidence (Uchida et al., pp. 223-239)

Ethnographic insights into happiness (Miles-Watson, pp. 125-133)

American Anthropologist Vital Topics Forum: On happiness (Johnston et al., pp. 6-18)

[Recommended: Anthropology of happiness: The state of well-being and the way of Joy (Leontiev, pp. 93-104)]

Student presentation 4

Week 6. Anthropological & Ethnographic Perspectives, cont.; Livelihoods, Wealth, & Happiness (Feb. 21)

Readings:

Pursuits of happiness, Parts 3 & 4 (Mathews & Izquierdo, finish book, including Conclusion)

Hau Books, *Values of Happiness*, Introduction (Walker & Kavedzija, pp. 1-28), Ch. 2, Being careful

what you wish for: The case of happiness in China (Stafford, pp. 59-81)

“My happiest moment is when I have food in stock”: Poor women in northern Ghana talking about their happiness (Bull & Duah-Owusu White, pp. 24-31)

Student presentation 5

Week 7. Mental Disorder, Health, & Happiness: Views from Medical & Cultural Anthropology (Feb. 28)

Readings:

Ukuphumelela: Flourishing and the pursuit of a good life, and good health, in Soweto, South Africa (Willen & Mendenhall, pp. 1-11)
Rethinking flourishing: Critical insights and qualitative perspectives from the U.S. Midwest (Willen et al., pp. 1-13)
Flourishing in critical dialogue (VanderWeele et al., pp. 1-9)
“Languishing” in critical perspective: Roots and routes of a traveling concept in COVID-19 times (Willen, pp. 1-7)
Hau Books, *Values of Happiness*, Ch. 3, The good life in balance: Insights from aging Japan (Kavedzija, pp. 83-108), Ch. 4, Techniques of happiness: Moving toward and away from the good life in a rural Ethiopian community (Freeman, pp. 109-132)

Student presentation 6

****Paper 2 due: Friday, March 3, 6pm****

Interlude: The Pharmacological Self + Mid-Semester Break + Midterm Exam

Week 8. A Critical Anthropological View of Antidepressant Use & Medical Models of Human Happiness & Well-being (March 7)

Readings:

Antidepressant science

Against the stream: Antidepressants are not antidepressants – an alternative approach to drug action and implications for the use of antidepressants (Moncrieff, pp. 42-4)

The serotonin theory of depression: a systematic umbrella review of the evidence (Moncrieff, pp. 1-14)

Comparative efficacy and acceptability of 21 antidepressant drugs for the acute treatment of adults with major depressive disorder: a systematic review and network meta-analysis (Cipriani et al., pp. 1357-1366)

What does the latest meta-analysis really tell us about antidepressants? (Moncrieff, pp. 430-2)

Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) (Hamilton, pp. 1-2)

Pharmacological self

Drugs for life (Dumit, pp. 124-7)

Pharmaceutical citizenship: Antidepressant marketing and the promise of demarginalization in India (Ecks, pp. 239-254)

Neuronarratives of Affliction: Antidepressants, Neuropolitics and the “Entrepreneur of Oneself” (Martinez-Hernaez, pp. 230-248)

[Recommended: The datafication of health (Ruckenstein & Schull, pp. 261-278)]

Week 9: **Spring Recess, No Class Meeting (March 11-19)**

Week 10: Meet to discuss and review for midterm (March 21)

****Midterm take-home exam due: Sat., March 25, 6pm****

Part 3. Cognitive/ Psychological Anthropological Approaches to Happiness & Well-Being

Week 11. Anthropology of Values & Virtues (March 28)

Readings:

A Study of Personal and Cultural Values (D'Andrade, entire book—it's a short book)

Student presentation 7

Week 12. Norms as Values in Action: A Cultural Consensus/ Consonance/ Dissonance Approach to Well-Being (April 4)

Readings:

Cultural consensus and consonance: Advancing a cognitive theory of culture (Dressler, pp. 383-398)

Cultural consonance: Linking culture, the individual and health (Dressler, pp. 390-3)

Cultural consonance in leisure, leisure satisfaction, life satisfaction, and self-rated health in urban Taiwan (Chick et al., pp. 402-423)

Cultural consonance, body image, and disordered eating among young South Korean men (Monocello and Dressler, pp. 1-11)

"Find that balance:" The impact of cultural consonance and dissonance on mental health among Utah and Mormon women (Dengah et al., pp. 439-458)

Indian 'gaming zones' as oppositional subculture: A norm incongruity 'cultural dissonance' approach to internet gaming pleasure and distress (Snodgrass et al., pp. 1-27, with commentaries included)

[Recommended: Cultural consonance and mental wellness in the *World of Warcraft*: Online games as cognitive technologies of 'absorption-immersion' (Snodgrass et al., pp. 11-23)]

Student presentation 8

Week 13. Social Connection & Disconnection: Psychosocial, Biocultural, and Evolutionary Approaches to Loneliness, the Stress Response, & Well-Being (April 11)

Readings:

Loneliness matters: A theoretical and empirical review of consequences and mechanisms (Hawkley & Cacioppo, pp. 218-27)

The conserved transcriptional response to adversity (Cole, pp. 31-7)

Fredrickson, Psychological Well-Being and the Human Conserved Transcriptional Response to Adversity (Fredrickson et al., pp. 1-17)

Positive mental well-being and immune transcriptional profiles in highly involved videogame players (Snodgrass et al., pp. 1-9)

Internet gaming, embodied distress, and psychosocial well-being: A syndemic-syndaimonic continuum (Snodgrass et al., pp. 1-9)

Social connection and gene regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic: Divergent patterns for online and in-person interaction (Snodgrass et al., pp. 1-8)

[Recommended: The neuroendocrinology of social isolation (Cacioppo et al., pp. 733-67)]

Student presentation 9

****Paper 3 due: Friday, April 14, 6pm****

Part 4: Integrative (Behavioral Science) Approaches to Ritual, Religion, & Well-Being

Week 14. Ritual and Religion as Sources of Psychosocial Resilience (April 18)

Readings:

Ritual (Xygalatas, entire book—it's written for a popular audience, so relatively smooth sailing)

Student presentation 10

Week 15. Ritual, Religion, & Well-being, cont. (April 25)

Readings:

Hau Books, *Values of Happiness*, Ch. 1, Ambivalent happiness and virtuous suffering (Throop, pp. 29-57)

How does mindfulness training affect health? A mindfulness stress buffering account (Creswell & Lindsay, pp. 401-407)

Spirit mediumship and mental health: Therapeutic self-transformation among dang-kis in Singapore (Lee & Kirmayer, pp. 1-31)

The mental health costs of human displacement: A natural experiment involving indigenous Indian conservation refugees (Snodgrass et al., pp. 25-33)

Festive fighting and forgiving: Ritual and resilience among indigenous Indian "conservation refugees" (Snodgrass, pp. 173-190)

Religious ritual is good medicine for indigenous Indian conservation refugees: Implications for global mental health (Snodgrass et al., pp. 257-84, with commentaries)

Week 16. Conclusions; Final discussion; Review for final exam (May 2)

Readings:

Hau Books, *Values of Happiness*, Ch. 10, Joy within tranquility: Amazonian Uruarina styles of happiness (Walker, pp. 267-291); Afterword: On happiness, values, and time: The long and the short of it (Robbins, pp. 293-315)

****Final take-home exam due: Wed., May 10, 6pm****