BIRKBECK, University of London

Module/Occurrence Code: FFPS127H4BCB

Subject Area: Psychology

Module Title: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Award Designation: Applied Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education)
Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education)

Level/credits: Level 4, 15 credits

Class Venue: Central London

First Meeting: Tuesday 25th April 2017, 6:30pm – 8.30pm

No of Meetings: 11 meetings

Class Dates: 25/04/17 - 04/07/17

Please note that the details above are provisional and subject to change prior to the class start date. Enrolled students will be notified of any changes by e-mail.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
No formal qualifications are required. However, all modules are taught at university level and students should be able to read, write and speak English fluently. Students new to psychology will benefit from undertaking some preparatory reading as detailed below.

AIM
To introduce the basic concepts and theories within positive psychology, and to critically review its evidence base.

OBJECTIVES
This module introduces basic models and concepts of positive psychology, including:
- History of the study of positive human experience.
- Humanistic psychology and its current status in psychology
- The study of happiness; definitions, correlates and measurement
- Core concepts in positive psychology: Flow, Hope, Optimism, Gratitude
- Positive perspectives on the Self: self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Applications of positive psychology for eg: mental health and counselling; business and organisations.
- Methods and research in positive psychology
- Discuss applications within the students’ own lives.
- Support and develop students' study skills.
- Support students to take part in the assessment process.
- Build students’ confidence in presenting their own ideas and in critical thinking.
LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course you will be able to:

On successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of basic concepts and models of positive psychology
- Give a critical account of the evidence and research base for positive psychology
- Demonstrate an awareness of the range of applications of positive psychology
- Demonstrate critical and independent thinking about the material covered.
- Demonstrate an appropriate awareness of cultural considerations in the evaluation of theory and research.
- Successfully plan and write essays or other assignments which have been set to support their learning on this course.
- Identify the ethical issues when conducting psychological research (with particular consideration of harm).
- Think critically about the subjects covered.
- Present your own ideas about issues addressed on the course.

CONTENT
In this course we will explore the following areas and issues in the light of the models and research findings of positive psychology:

- What are the roots of positive psychology? Philosophical and historical origins of the study of positive human experience
- Humanistic psychology and its current status in psychology. The contributions of Maslow, Rogers and Rollo May
- The study of happiness; how can happiness be defined? How can it be measured? What does it correlate with? Can we identify the ‘causes’ of happiness?
- Flow: the study of ‘optimal experience’. Flow is the name given to an exact match between our capacities and the demands of the current situation. The causes and consequences of Flow.
- Hope & Optimism: positive thinking and the power of expectations. How powerful is positive thinking? How realistic is it to be optimistic?
- Wisdom: how has wisdom been studied? Does wisdom differ from intelligence? What are the characteristics of the ‘wise’ person?
- The positive personality; what are the character strengths and how can ‘virtue’ and virtuous living contribute to the good life?
- Positive perspectives on the Self: the nature and causes of self-esteem; self-efficacy and beliefs in the self. How important is self esteem to effective living?
- Applications of positive psychology for eg: mental health and counselling; business and organisations.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS
A range of teaching methods may be used e.g. lectures on the area being studied - students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss points throughout. There may also be small group exercises with feedback to the large group to provide an opportunity for clarification of ideas and discussion. Other methods may include: videos, experiments, student presentations, discussion of published articles, etc.
Credit points are used to summarise and describe the amount of learning taking place for a given module. For a 15 credit point module this equates to 150 hours most of which is comprised of independent learning. Normally 22 hours would be delivered in the classroom but it may sometimes be necessary to cover a small part of the learning by other means such as directed independent learning.

As such students should also expect to build on their learning in class by undertaking guided independent study including appropriate reading and research. Further details can be found in the appropriate Course Handbook as detailed below.

**METHODS OF ASSESSMENT**
The assessment process gives students important opportunities to learn, to check their learning and to discuss their progress with the tutor. Consequently, students will be expected to prepare two pieces of coursework for assessment. These may take a variety of forms such as essays, case studies, reports and possibly class presentations. They will be 1,500 words in length (or the equivalent). You are encouraged to discuss with your tutor the particular topics and the type of assignment you would like to focus on in your assessments. It may be possible to accommodate your personal interests within the syllabus.

Regulations regarding assessment are detailed in the appropriate Course Handbook, which will be circulated electronically prior to the course start date. Students are strongly advised to read the Course Handbook prior to commencing their studies.

The module is part of the Applied Psychology and Psychology Certificates of Higher Education. If the module is completed successfully, 15 credit points will be awarded, which may be transferred to some degree courses.

**READING**

**Preparatory reading**
Students are not required to read prior to the course, but any of the following will be found a useful preparation:

*Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth*
by Ed Diener, Robert Biswas-Diener
Blackwell 2008

*Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom to the Test of Modern Science*
by Jonathan Haidt
Arrow Books 2007

*Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realise Your Potential for Lasting Fulfilment*
by Martin E.P. Seligman
N Brealey 2003

*Flow: The Classic Work on How to Achieve Happiness*
by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Rider 2002

*Positive psychology: the science of happiness and human strengths*
by Carr, Alan, Dr.

*A primer in positive psychology*
By Peterson, Christopher

The course lecturer may also recommend other books for use during the course.
**General reading**

If this is the first course you have taken in psychology it may be useful to read a chapter from an introductory text that outlines the main schools of thought within psychology and the main approaches to research methods. You will find one or two introductory chapters on the main schools of thought and research methods in most general introductions to psychology e.g. Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2009) *Atkinson and Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology (15th ed.)*, Wadsworth

Introductory books of this type cover similar material. It is the detail in each that will vary. Have a look and see which one you find easy to read, interesting and useful.

Please note: Psychology books are frequently revised and updated. Any recent edition would be suitable to use.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

The My Birkbeck website ([http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/)) is your gateway to accessing all student support services at Birkbeck.

You may find the following links particularly useful:-

- Obtaining your library/ID card: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards)
- Accessing IT Services: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username)
- Study skills support: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills)

You can visit the My Birkbeck helpdesk on the ground floor of the main Birkbeck building on Malet Street (entry via Torrington Square). For details of opening hours visit: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/)

You can also call the helpdesk on 020 7631 6316.

**LIBRARY AND STUDY SKILLS RESOURCES**

Once you have your ID card, you may use the Birkbeck library and associated resources. You may find the following web links helpful:

- For information on how best to access the resources available for psychology students through Birkbeck College Library, students may wish to work through the tutorial available at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/)
- For specific guidance for psychologists and psychology students on getting the best out the internet go to: [http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/](http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/) and search for ‘Psychology’
- For specific guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in your course work go to [https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/](https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/) and press the ‘play’ button.

**COURSE EVALUATION**
During the course students will be asked to complete an evaluation form which gives the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of their learning.

**WHAT CAN I DO NEXT**

It is important you are clear which award the module you are enrolled on counts towards. Our website provides an overview of each Certificate award so you can decide which best suits your needs: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2014/certificates/subject/psychology/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2014/certificates/subject/psychology/)

Information is available on core and option modules for each Certificate. Your choice of subsequent modules you take should be informed by this information. Modules can be taken in any order although it is recommended that certain core modules are taken first. Not all core modules have to be taken in the same year. If you need further advice you can contact the department by telephone on 0203 073 8044 or by e-mail: psychologycert@bbk.ac.uk

Revised July 2014