

<b>Course Title</b>	Understanding Life and Happiness: An interdisciplinary approach
<b>Course Code</b>	CLE9025
<b>Recommended Study Year</b>	Not Specified
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	Sectional Approach (with Service Learning Assessment)
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	3 hours per week
<b>Category in Major Prog.</b>	Core Curriculum Cluster
<b>Core Curriculum Cluster</b>	Values, Cultures and Societies
<b>Prerequisite(s)</b>	N/A
<b>Co-requisite(s)</b>	N/A
<b>Exclusion(s)</b>	N/A
<b>Exemption Requirement(s)</b>	N/A

### **Brief Course Description**

This course applies an interdisciplinary approach to positive living, with a view to equipping students with the practical skills to make the most of their lives. It introduces students to the concepts of mental capital and mental goods, and shows how mental capital is shaped by habits and culture. Examples will be drawn from history as well as current events to show how people can be bogged down unnecessarily by “sunk costs and past glory” and how personal effort can make a huge difference to the “set range of happiness” and even circumstances, both of which are, over the long run, affected by consistent effort and voluntary choices.

### **Aims**

The aim of the course is to prepare students for a more fulfilling, happier life through positive living (“constrained maximization”).

### **Learning Outcomes (LO)**

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

1. discuss the proposition that life is a precious and valuable resource;
2. apply the economic principle of constrained maximization as a form of positive living;
3. articulate the nature of mental capital and its connection to happiness;
4. explain role of culture in the production of mental goods and how this relates to sustainable development.

### **Indicative Contents**

1. Introduction to the Economics of Life and the meaning and strategy of constrained maximization
2. Love and the Economics of Love
3. The Role of Culture in Household Production
4. Mental Capital and Habit Formation, with a Digression to Spiritual Capital
5. Seligman’s Happiness Formula: a proposed amendment

6. Marriage, Mental Capital, and Happiness
7. More on Mental Goods: Achievement versus Vanity
8. Insight, Fortitude, and Engagement
9. “Three Happinesses” and Transcendental Happiness
10. Avoiding Regrets and Coming to Terms with Past Errors
11. Avoiding Worries and Coming to Terms with an Uncertain Future and Negative Emotions
12. The Paradox of Choice: More Choices and More Sophisticated Products Need Not Translate into Greater Happiness
13. Holistic Perspective of Life, Successful Living, and Happiness

### Teaching Method

Lectures and discussions involving student participation.

### Measurement of Learning Outcomes

<b>Assessment Method</b>				
<b>Learning Outcome</b>	Presentation, participation and reflective essay 30% <b>Or</b> Presentation <i>plus</i> Reflective Essay Based on Service Learning <i>plus</i> Assessment by Partner Agency <i>plus</i> Performance in Service Learning and Participation 30%	Mid-Term	Final	Self Assessment
1. Discuss the proposition that life is a scarce and valuable resource	Yes	20%	50%	<b>A Questionnaire will be filled in at the beginning and at the end for self assessment and not for grading. Anonymous return of results to instructor is requested for teacher’s reflections.</b>
2. Applying the economic principle of constrained maximization as a form of positive living	Yes	Yes	Yes	
3. Articulate the nature of mental capital and its connection to	Yes	Yes	Yes	

happiness				
4. Explain the role of culture in the production of mental goods and how this may be related to sustainable development	Probably	Yes	Yes	

Presentation, training and essay: students will share their life experiences and apply the theories learnt in class. Alternatively, students will be asked to conduct training sessions for school children/subjects in NGO agencies.

A mid-term exam: students are required to show their practical knowledge and their understanding of the subjects taught citing real life examples.

A final examination: Students' overall understanding of basic concepts and theories.

### Service Learning Assessment

From time to time this course may adopt the service-learning approach as a component in continuous assessment. Under the guidance of the course instructor and a project officer from the Office of Service-Learning, 2 to 3 students who opt for Service Learning (working as a group) will conduct training/workshop sessions with clients in a social agency/students in participating schools, which the Office of Service Learning will invite for participation, so our students can transfer the knowledge acquired in the course to them. The training sessions will include (1) discussions over "happy" and "unhappy" stories found in real life that have been reported, offering an interactive approach for students to learn about the mental needs of people and how they may or may not be satisfied; (2) creative "drama"/singing/art/dance/group play sessions so subjects can learn about how habit formation can affect happiness. Students will be asked to write a reflective essay. Students are expected to better understand the concepts learned through these training sessions as they interact with subject agencies/school children.

### Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 50% consisting of:

	Service Learning	Others
Presentation	5%	5%
Rating by Partner Agency	5%	
Attendance/participation	10%	10%
Reflective essay/Essay	10%	15%
Mid term	20%	20%

Final examination: 50%

Self-Assessment: Students will be asked to do a test at the University of Pennsylvania website below before and after the course as a self assessment of whether they have benefited from the course (approaches to happiness and life satisfaction):

<http://www.authenticchappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires.aspx>

### Essential Reading

Ho, Lok Sang (2014) *Psychology and Economics of Happiness: Love, Life, and Positive Living*, London: Routledge.

Ho, Lok Sang (2020) *Human Spirituality and Happiness*: 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Available from Amazon.

Seligman, Martin (2002) *Authentic Happiness*, New York: Free Press.

### Recommended/Supplementary Readings

Russell, Bertrand (1930) *The Conquest of Happiness*, London: George Allen and Unwin.  
(Available as free ebook: <https://archive.org/details/TheConquestOfHappiness>)

Sandel, Michael (2012) *What Money Can't Buy*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Schwartz, Barry. (2004) *The Paradox of Choice - Why More Is Less*, New York: Harper Collins.

E. F. Schumacher (1973) *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Harper Perennial; 2nd edition (September 27, 1989).

Seligman, Martin (2002) *Authentic Happiness*, New York: Free Press.

Templeton, John Marks, 2008. *Worldwide Laws Of Life: 200 Eternal Spiritual Principles*, London: Templeton Foundation Press.

Thaler, R.H. and Sunstein, C.R. 2009. *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*. 2d edition. New York: Penguin Books.

### Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.
- (5) Students are required to fill in a mid-term survey and the end of course CTLE survey.

**Term Paper (15% for non service learning students; 10% for service students)**

	<b>Excellent A 80%+</b>	<b>Good B to A- 65%-79%</b>	<b>Fair C+ to B- 55%-64%</b>	<b>Pass D to C- 50%-59%</b>	<b>Failure F Below 50%</b>
Organization (20%)	Logical structure with an introduction, body, and conclusions, plus well cited references where appropriate. Good flow and able to capture reader's attention.	Logical structure with an introduction, body, and conclusions, plus well cited references where appropriate.	Logical structure. With hiccups in the flow and some missing components. Still able to bring out the main points.	Logical structure. With hiccups in the flow and some missing components. Readers barely able to see the main points.	Not able to present logically and not able to bring out the main points.
Language (20%)	Excellent use of language with almost flawless English.	Very good use of language with only some minor flows in usage.	Highly readable, but flaws in language and usage are frequent.	Able to communicate but mistakes are frequent.	Lots of mistakes to the extent of obstructing communication.
Understanding of key concepts (60%)	Demonstrates full understanding and can apply the concepts in a lively fashion.	Demonstrates good understanding and can apply the concepts appropriately.	Some slips in understanding, but able to grasp the central ideas of key concepts.	Demonstrates some understanding of key concepts	Missing the central idea of key concepts and not able to apply them.

**Examinations (Mid Term and Final Exam) (20 marks plus 50 marks: focus on substance only; no split between content and language)**

	<b>Excellent A 80%+</b>	<b>Good B to A- 65%-79%</b>	<b>Fair C+ to B- 55%-64%</b>	<b>Pass D to C- 50%-59%</b>	<b>Failure F Below 50%</b>
Understanding the difference between hedonistic and eudaimonic wellbeing	Excellent understanding of the nature of human needs and the hierarchy of needs	Very good understanding of the nature of human needs and the hierarchy of needs	Fair understanding of the nature of human needs and the hierarchy of needs	Some understanding of the nature of human needs and the hierarchy of needs	Little understanding of the nature of human needs and the hierarchy of needs
Understanding the role of culture in the formation of mental capital	Excellent understanding of the interaction between household production and culture	Very good understanding of the interaction between household production and culture	Fair understanding of the interaction between household production and culture	Some understanding of the interaction between household production and culture	Little understanding of the interaction between household production and culture
Dealing with life's challenges	Excellent understanding the different dimensions of life's challenges	Very good understanding the different dimensions of life's challenges	Fair understanding the different dimensions of life's challenges	Some understanding the different dimensions of life's challenges	Little understanding the different dimensions of life's challenges
Life as a scarce resource and making choices in life	Fully able to appreciate life's constraints and opportunities	Good appreciation of life's constraints and opportunities	Fair appreciation of life's constraints and opportunities	Some appreciation of life's constraints and opportunities	Not able to appreciate life's constraints and opportunities
Comparative Advantage and family life	Excellent understanding of how to work together	Good understanding of how to work together	Fair understanding of how to work together	Some understanding of how to work together	Little understanding of how to work together

	to enhance family life	to enhance family life	to enhance family life	to enhance family life	to enhance family life
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**Rubrics for Attendance and Participation (Total: 10 %)**

	<b>Excellent A 80%+</b>	<b>Good B to A- 65%-79%</b>	<b>Fair C+ to B- 55%-64%</b>	<b>Pass D to C- 50%-59%</b>	<b>Failure F Below 50%</b>
Quality of Comments (2 marks)	Shows full engagement in the discussions & thoughtful response	Shows full engagement in the discussions	Mostly engaged in the discussions	Barely engaged in the discussions	Passive attendance with little engagement
Quantity of Comments (2 marks)	8 + in the course	6 +	5 +	3+	2 or less
Attendance (6 marks)	Full attendance or fully justified absence	95% of attendance or better	90% of attendance or better	80% of attendance or better	Less than 80% attendance

**Rubrics for Presentation (Total: 5 %)**

	<b>Excellent A</b>	<b>Good B to A- 65%-79%</b>	<b>Fair C+ to B- 55%-64%</b>	<b>Pass D to C- 50%-59%</b>	<b>Failure F Below 50%</b>
Effectiveness of Presentation: (2 marks)	Good flow and clear and engaging communication 1.75	Effective communication, But less engaging 1.5	Reading from prepared text, little errors 1.25	Reading from prepared text, some errors 1	Errors frequent, unclear presentation < 1
Substance of Presentation: (3 marks)	Thought provoking and authentic presentation 2.4+	Authentic presentation showing good understanding 2+	Showing understanding at cognitive level 1.8+	Showing some minor misunderstanding of key concepts 1.5+	Little demonstration of application of concepts < 1.5