

APPLIED POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY (APOP)

APOP 1000 Introduction to Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is the scientific study of what helps people live full lives. This introductory course focuses on the science of thriving, addressing questions such as what it means to be “happy” and how we can cultivate well-being as individuals, in organizations, and in communities. Explore the foundations of positive psychology, understand the components of well-being, and learn the theory, empirical research, and collective wisdom that supports this conceptual framework. This hands-on course includes experiments and small-group activities designed to help you build your own well-being and participate in an engaged learning community. The instructor recommends that you acquire two texts for this course, either by purchasing them or checking them out of your library: *A Primer in Positive Psychology* by Christopher Peterson and *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being* by Martin E.P. Seligman. For those pursuing a Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology, this course is strongly recommended as a prerequisite for the other three courses.

1 Course Unit

APOP 1200 Human Flourishing: Strengths and Resilience

What does it mean to flourish? What are we like when we are at our best? What helps us bounce back from challenges and adversity? Continuing the exploration of the science of positive psychology, students delve deeply into the study of character strengths as a framework for building positive character and well-being, and explore the concept of resilience, or the ability to overcome challenging situations. In this course, we explore how we can leverage our strengths to more effectively contribute to the greater world and enhance our own well-being. We also study the physical and psychological protective factors that constitute resilience, and how they are cultivated. Students learn about these topics from a scientific and experiential perspective, both as individuals and within our learning community. This course will have required synchronous sessions and the instructor will offer a choice of times. Students will have a more robust learning experience in this course if they first complete Introduction to Positive Psychology.

Also Offered As: LEAD 3500

1 Course Unit

APOP 2000 Positive Psychology at Work

If flourishing is related to our lived daily experience, and approximately 50% of our waking hours are spent working, how do our workplaces contribute to, and diminish, our ability to thrive? Students are exposed to an array of research-informed strategies that have been applied in a variety of disciplines and workplaces, including business, education, health care, and nonprofit organizations. Exploration of case studies and salient research topics such as relationships at work, positive leadership, prosocial behavior, and our sense of meaning and purpose, guide our learning. Students gain an understanding of the variables that contribute to our ability to flourish at work and understand how we both experience and shape our work environments through our individual contributions. This course will have required synchronous sessions and the instructor will offer a choice of times.

Also Offered As: LEAD 3600

1 Course Unit

APOP 2200 Flourishing with Others: Building Thriving Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are key for happiness and well-being. Christopher Peterson, one of the pioneers of positive psychology used to say that the field could be summarized in three words: “Other people matter.” In this course, we will take a deep dive into the research on relationships that work well and foster well-being. We will study positive relationships at different levels, from the closest ones, like families and romantic partnerships, to friendships, relationships between colleagues and in teams at work, to broader communities, and our relationship with nature and our planet. For each of these domains, we will learn practical ways to nurture and improve relationships and to help people flourish through them. This class will combine academic rigor with experiential learning, and it will provide many opportunities for self-reflection, conversation in small teams and applied “experiments” in students’ lives.

1 Course Unit

APOP 2700 Flourishing and Well-Being in Resilient Communities

A deeper understanding of marginalized communities requires not only a consideration of their challenges but also an awareness of their remarkable strengths. How have these strengths enabled marginalized communities to survive—and even in some cases to thrive—despite the odds that are stacked against them? What factors allow these resilient communities to heal and to develop holistic well-being? In this course, you’ll explore research and engage in experiential activities to learn about positive psychology principles and how they can be applied to understand and foster resilience and well-being among communities that have faced structural and systemic barriers to flourishing. We will explore the history of marginalization, the scientific study of protective assets and resources, radical healing, and positive coping. Students will identify communities and populations local to them that do not have access to the same rights and resources as others, discover more about and learn how those communities cope and experience well-being, and integrate their learning through weekly reflective practices, discussions, and assignments. Importantly, students also will explore how to support and enhance well-being in these communities.

1 Course Unit

APOP 2900 Measuring What Moves Us: The Science Behind Human Flourishing

How do scientists study what makes life worth living? In this course, students will explore the scientific foundations of positive psychology, the field that investigates human well-being, resilience, and flourishing. Along the way, we’ll ask big questions about how abstract ideas can be turned into measurable outcomes. As a running theme throughout the course, we’ll use the emotion of awe—that sense of wonder that transforms your perspective on the world—as a lens to think about how we quantify everyday experiences. How do you measure something as mysterious as awe? What role does it play in flourishing? Through engaging readings, interactive discussions, and hands-on analysis of real research studies, students will learn to critically evaluate findings in positive psychology and become savvy consumers of both academic work and popular media claims. You’ll gain tools to understand how studies are designed, and what their results actually mean. Note: This is not a statistics or research methods course. Instead, it’s designed to help you thoughtfully interpret and communicate findings in the growing field of positive psychology. Weekly synchronous recitation sessions required (scheduling varies).

1 Course Unit

APOP 3200 Morality and the Good Life

Morality pervades everyday life. Far from being confined to the ivory tower, we make moral decisions and engage in moral behavior every day, ranging from the ordinary (e.g., whether to volunteer or return a lost wallet) to the extreme (e.g., whether to donate one's kidney to a stranger or fight and die for a cause). Morality is central to our evaluations of ourselves and others, and to the wellbeing of ourselves and the societies in which we live. In this course, you will learn about psychological research on morality. We will cover topics such as (1) How people make moral judgments, (2) How and why people have differing judgments of everything from tax rates to dietary preferences, (3) Psychological factors contributing to moral (e.g., altruistic) behavior, and (4) Intersections between moral psychology and our ideals, aspirations and well-being at the individual and societal level. This course aims to introduce you to the psychology of morality, to enable you to be more aware of and effective in navigating moral challenges in daily life.

1 Course Unit

APOP 3400 Flourishing through Creativity and the Arts

This course in the Applied Positive Psychology series addresses the question, "How do creative endeavors and engagement with the arts contribute to well-being?" The link between well-being, creativity, and the arts is an emerging field. In this course, you will gain an understanding of the major theories and fundamental findings related to creativity, the arts, and flourishing, including the scientific principles that underlie this research. This course will integrate the latest findings from cutting-edge research (including findings from the new field of the Positive Humanities, launched right here at Penn), and discuss implications for practice and application. Finally, you'll be able to examine interventions and techniques that are emerging from the research, and test them to see how well they may apply in your own life.

1 Course Unit