

**ADVANCED THEORIES OF COUNSELING: POSITIVE COUNSELING THEORY & PRACTICE (15:297:637)**  
**Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education, Department of Educational Psychology**  
**ONLINE – Spring 2014**

**Instructor:** Dr. Colleen Georges, LPC

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**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Course Texts & Resources:**

Peterson, C. (2006). A primer in positive psychology. New York: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, C. & Seligman M. E. P. (Eds.) (2004). Character strengths and virtues. A handbook of classification. Oxford: Oxford University Press, & Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

**eCollege:** <https://ecollege.rutgers.edu/students.jsp>

**Course Description:**

The field of psychology was born out of a desire to study the human condition, both our challenges and triumphs. However, traditional psychological research and practice has focused largely on diagnosing and treating human's limitations, with less attention paid to our strengths. Positive Counseling Theory & Practice will provide an in-depth discussion of Positive Psychology, a field that helps practitioners transition from trying to undo the worst things in life to trying to build the best things in life. In this course we will cover the theory and research of Positive Psychology, as well as how to conduct positive assessment, diagnosis, and counseling interventions. The course incorporates activities intended to engage and instruct counselors in using character strengths such as optimism, gratitude, forgiveness, generosity, and others to promote enhanced well-being and happiness in family, school, work, and community settings.

**Course Objectives:**

- Understand the underlying theory and concepts of positive psychology;
- Understand and use positive psychology principles and interventions in your own life and with your clients/students; &
- Understand the role of positive relationships and enabling institutions in increasing happiness and well-being.

**Course Structure:**

The course will be delivered fully online through the eCollege course management system. Accessing the course on eCollege requires the internet and a supported web browser (Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari). There will be a blend of activities using eCollege such as watching posted video clips and participating in threaded discussions. It is extremely important that you complete the assignments by the due dates.

**Technical Assistance** – People in this course will be using different types of computers and software, and you may experience technical problems from time to time. If you are having technology problems, such as linking to email, accessing eCollege, problems downloading and viewing documents, password problems, or other tech problems, you must first contact the HELP Desk at 1-877-778-8437. The Help Desk staff is trained to address many different types of technology problems. If it turns out that there is a problem that I must correct, The Help Desk staff will contact me.

**Course Expectations:**

**Readings & Threaded Discussions/Participation:** Students are expected to read assigned material in order to fruitfully participate in threaded discussions with classmates each week. Your active participation will contribute to the learning process for all involved. The more each of us gives, the richer the experiences will be for all of us. Assessments and additional readings may be assigned throughout the course.

**Expectations of Professionalism / Student Rights and Responsibilities:**

1. To ask for clarification at any time.
2. Have access to all required textbooks and assigned articles.
3. Have access to and utilize the internet.
4. Frequently check your email for course announcements.
5. Actively participate in weekly threaded discussion questions.
6. Students have the right to express opinions in a respectful and timely manner.
7. Students with known physical/mental limitations must contact Disability Services and the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that accommodations can be arranged.

## COURSE READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, & ACTIVITIES

Date	Readings	Activities & Assignments
Week of 1/21	Peterson, Ch 1: What is Positive Psychology Peterson, Ch 2: Learning About Positive Psychology	<b>SERIOUS INTRODUCTION Due</b>
Week of 1/27	Peterson, Ch 3: Pleasure & Positive Experiences Peterson, Ch 7: Values	<b>LEGACY EXERCISE Due</b>
Week of 2/3	Peterson, Ch 4: Happiness	
Week of 2/10	Peterson, Ch 5: Positive Thinking	<b>RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS EXERCISE Due</b>
Week of 2/17	Peterson, Ch 8: Interests, Abilities, & Accomplishments Peterson, Ch 10: Wellness	
Week of 2/24	Peterson, Ch 6: Character Strengths Peterson & Seligman, Ch 1: Intro to a Manual of the Sanities	<b>OPTIMISM/THE OPENED DOOR Due</b>
Week of 3/3	Peterson & Seligman – (1) Intro to <i>Strengths of Wisdom &amp; Knowledge</i> : p. 95-107; (2) Ch 4: Creativity, Deliberate Interventions p. 120-122; (3) Ch 5: Curiosity, Deliberate Interventions p. 140; (4) Ch 6: Open-Mindedness, Deliberate Interventions p. 157-158; (5) Ch 7: Love of Learning, Deliberate Interventions p. 173-178; and (6) Ch 8: Perspective, Deliberate Interventions p. 194-195	
Week of 3/3	Peterson & Seligman – (1) Intro to <i>Strengths of Transcendence</i> : p. 519-535; (2) Ch 23: Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence, Deliberate Interventions p. 550-551; (3) Ch 24: Gratitude, Deliberate Interventions p. 566-567; (4) Ch 25: Hope, Deliberate Interventions p. 580-581; (5) Ch 26: Humor, Deliberate Interventions p. 596-597; and (6) Ch 27: Spirituality, Deliberate Interventions p. 618-619	<b>GRATITUDE/THREE GOOD THINGS Due</b>
Week of 3/10	Peterson & Seligman – (1) Intro to <i>Strengths of Justice</i> : p. 357-368; (2) Ch 16: Citizenship, Deliberate Interventions p. 385-387; (3) Ch 17: Fairness, Deliberate Interventions p. 410-411; and (4) Ch 18: Leadership, Deliberate Interventions p. 424-426	
Week of 3/17	<b>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS</b>	
Week of 3/24	Peterson & Seligman – (1) Intro to <i>Strengths of Temperance</i> : p. 431-444; (2) Ch 19: Forgiveness & Mercy, Deliberate Interventions p. 457-458; (3) Ch 20: Humility & Modesty, Deliberate Interventions p. 472-474; (4) Ch 21: Prudence, Deliberate Interventions p. 496; and (5) Ch 22: Self-Regulation, Deliberate Interventions p. 513-514	<b>FORGIVENESS Due</b>
Week of 3/31	Peterson & Seligman – (1) Intro to <i>Strengths of Courage</i> : p. 199-212; (2) Ch 9: Bravery, Deliberate Interventions p. 224-227; (3) Ch 10: Persistence, Deliberate Interventions p. 245; (4) Ch 11: Integrity, Deliberate Interventions p. 268-269; and (5) Ch 12: Vitality, Deliberate Interventions p. 287-288	
Week of 4/14	Peterson & Seligman – (1) Intro to <i>Strengths of Humanity</i> : p. 293-302; (2) Ch 13: Love, Deliberate Interventions p. 321-322; (3) Ch 14: Kindness, Deliberate Interventions p. 333; and (4) Ch 15: Social Intelligence, Deliberate Interventions p. 351	<b>GRATITUDE LETTER Due</b>
Week of 4/21	Peterson, Chapter 10: Positive Interpersonal Relationships Peterson, Chapter 11: Enabling Institutions	
Week of 4/28	Peterson, Chapter 12: The Future of Positive Psychology	<b>CHANGING A HABIT Due</b>

## REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS (500 POINTS TOTAL)

**\*\* Papers must be delivered in eCollege Dropbox, in Microsoft Word, with 1 inch margins on all sides, Times New Roman 12-point font, and double-spaced \*\***

**Each of the assignments labeled "exercises" are brief and simple, yet typically very impactful.**

1. **SERIOUS INTRODUCTION EXERCISE (1-2 short paragraphs) (20 points) – Due 1/23:** In the Threaded Discussion on eCollege, you will introduce yourself to your classmates, telling them your field of study, why you're taking this course, and using the "Serious Introduction" model discussed in Peterson (2006), p. 25-28, describe an event that shows your character "at your best." Post one brief response to each of your class member's Serious Introductions.
2. **LEGACY EXERCISE (3-4 short paragraphs) (20 points) – Due 1/30:** Write your own Legacy as described on p. 22-23 of Peterson (2006).
3. **RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS EXERCISE (20 points) – Due 2/13:** Sheet with description on eCollege in Docsharing.
4. **OPTIMISM/THE OPENED DOOR EXERCISE (20 points) – Due 2/24:** Sheet with description on eCollege in Docsharing.
5. **GRATITUDE/THREE GOOD THINGS EXERCISE (20 points) – Due 3/3:** Sheet with description on eCollege in Docsharing.
6. **FORGIVENESS EXERCISE (20 points) – Due 3/24:** Sheet with description on eCollege in Docsharing.
7. **GRATITUDE LETTER (60 points) – Due 4/14:** Think of someone who has done something important for you, yet who has not been properly thanked. Reflect on the benefits you received from this person and write him/her a letter expressing your gratitude for all he/she did for you. This **letter should be no more than two pages, double-spaced**. Arrange to deliver the letter to him/her personally. You will arrange this visit in advance, not telling the person exactly why you are coming, but making sure it is just a one-on-one visit. You can either read your letter aloud to them or ask them to read it while you are present. Then spend some time with him/her talking about what you wrote. You will write a **one- to two-page paper describing the experience** including the person's reaction to your letter and how you felt about the person's reaction. You will turn your letter and paper into dropbox.
8. **CHANGING A HABIT/BEHAVIOR (6-8 pages) (60 points) – Due 4/28:** You will decide on a habit or characteristic in yourself that you want to improve/change. You will devise an action plan to outline what you will specifically do to change your behavior, utilizing positive psychology strategies learned in class, including leveraging your strengths. You will discuss the results using the template below:
  - a. *Introduction:* What did you decide to change in your behavior and why did you decide to change it? What variables facilitated and challenged this change? Give specific examples.
  - b. *Methods:* Describe the procedure(s) you used to change yourself. What strategies did you use? What personal strengths did you use? How did you measure change? Who did you use as your support system and how did this support system facilitate change?
  - c. *Results:* What happened? Even though your self-report data may suggest the intervention was effective, you must also provide corroborating evidence from other sources. Reports from your support systems: friends/family/coworkers (i.e. you have seemed so much happier these days), objective health indicators (i.e. fewer pessimistic/catastrophizing thoughts, fewer feelings of anger towards others, finding a greater number of things to be thankful for each day, etc.), and behavioral measures (i.e. since starting XYX strategy, I have been happier at work and even say "hello" to my boss every morning), are all appropriate.
  - d. *Discussion:* Are your results consistent with prior research? What have you learned about self-change using positive psychology? How did setting goals help you in this process of change? You might talk about strengths and challenges in implementing your intervention, or you might explain why some techniques seemed to be more effective than others. What would you do differently if you had the chance to do it again? Why?

**THREADED DISCUSSIONS/PARTICIPATION (20 points each week for a TOTAL of 260 points): Starting the second week**, our class will hold threaded discussions on eCollege, with two questions posted per week in response to textbook material, videos watched, and/or exercises engaged in. You can consider these the online equivalent of comments and responses you might have during a classroom discussion. **You will post a 150-200 word response to each of the two weekly questions, as well as a reply to at least one classmate's response per question (totaling at least two replies of 50-100 words each)**. In your responses/replies, utilize a combination of course material and real-life experience. Please note that both quantity and quality are important considerations when it comes to participation. For example, a message which says simply, "I agree," does not constitute a substantial reply because it does not add anything of substance to the discussion. You must add something of substance to the discussion—this would consist of new ideas, your perspectives, pointed follow-up questions, etc. **All responses/replies are due by midnight Thursday each week.**