

Syllabus, Summer 2026

Course and Instructor Information

This is a 3-credit course taught by Professor Bradley Wright of the Department of Sociology. It is offered online, and it has no prerequisites. It is asynchronous with no scheduled meeting times.

If you have questions about the class, please email me at Bradley.wright@uconn.edu. Emails are usually answered within 24 hours. I rarely check my email between Saturday night and Monday morning. Appointments to talk by phone are available during the afternoons from Monday to Friday. To schedule an appointment, email me with several suggested dates and times that would work for you.

Course Materials

The materials that you need for this class include readings and videos. You can access them on HuskyCT or by internet links.

Course Description

Social well-being encompasses people's sense of well-being about themselves, their relationships with others, and their place in society. It's also a burgeoning area of study in the social sciences. This course explores an overview of the topics studied in this context. It starts with definitions. What, exactly, is well-being and how do people experience it? From there, the course transitions to the distribution of well-being in society. Who has the most of it? How does it vary by social categories? By location, both in our country and in the world? From there the course moves to the heart of the matter. What increases people's sense of well-being? It will review about a dozen different theories and topics in the study of well-being. They include individual-level experiences such as self-control, gratitude, forgiveness, and health. They also include social-level experiences such as altruism, relationships, work, and social media.

Course Objectives

Here are the objectives for this course. By the end of the course, assuming that you've completed it successfully, you should be able to:

- Define the various aspects of well-being in a way that a friend of yours, who hasn't take the course, could understand.
- Describe the distribution of well-being across society such that you can identify which types of people suffer from well-being inequality.
- Make sense of the different theories of well-being. This means that you would be able to summarize them accurately if, by some chance, you found yourself in a situation where you had to do so.

- Analyze these different theories—identifying each one’s strengths and weaknesses from a conceptual point of view.
- Apply the concepts and theories that you’ve learned in this course to the world around you as well as your own life. This involves identifying what you or somebody else could do differently in a situation to improve their sense of well-being and why this change should work.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final course grade will be based on the following factors:

Quizzes and discussion board	30%
Writing assignments	30%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%

Review quizzes. In each module, you will complete review quizzes on the readings as well as information presented in the module. These quizzes count for 15% of your grade.

Midterm exam. It will contain several essay questions. It is administered via ProctorU.

Final exam. It will contain several essay questions. It is administered via ProctorU.

Discussion and participation. Students are expected to participate in discussion boards. For each module you will be required to select one of your written responses to the reading questions to post on the discussion board for this course. You will also be required to post five responses and/or questions to the postings of your classmates. All discussion post activity will require three steps:

- 1) Selecting and then posting the initial required reading response
- 2) Posting five comments to the posts made by other members of this class. The Discussion Board for this course requires you to “post first” before seeing the posts of your peers. This “post first” functionality allows each student to post his/her original thoughts without being influenced by reading what others may have posted before. The Professor will only minimally participate in the discussion boards, as they are meant to be a space for students to interact with one another and engage in thoughtful conversations with fellow classmates.
- 3) Voting on the best post. Above, you read five posts on the discussion board. Go to the link provided to vote for the best of the five posts and give a brief explanation for why you chose it. Note: This voting has to be done by the end of the class day that it’s due to ensure receiving credit for it. Discussion board votes can not be turned in late.

Late policies. The reading quizzes, presentation quizzes, and discussion board posts will be accepted late up until the last day of class. After that, they will not be accepted. Votes for the best discussion board posts will not be accepted late.

The two writing assignments each cover an aspect of well-being. Being a W-class, you will turn drafts of each. The instructor will offer comments on the drafts, and you’ll revise them. Together, the assignments add up to 15 pages.

According to university-wide policies for W courses, you cannot pass this course unless you receive a passing grade for its writing components

Course Schedule

July 13. Orientation

- No readings
- Review course information
- Students introduce themselves on discussion board
- Students schedule three ProctorU times: a practice quiz, midterm, and final

July 14-15. Definition of Social Well-Being

- Module 1
- Readings
 - VanderWeele, Tyler et al.. 2019. "Reimagining Health—Flourishing." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 321(17):1667–8.
 - Kaufman, Scott Barry. 2016. "The Differences between Happiness and Meaning in Life." *Scientific American Blog*, January 30, 2016.
 - Seligman, Martin. The New Era of Positive Psychology. [TED talk](#).
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

July 16-18. The Distribution of Social Well-Being

- Module 2
- Readings
 - Martela et al. 2020. "The Nordic Exceptionalism." Chapter 7 of the *World Health Report*, published by the World Health Organization.
 - Bell, Susan. 2019. "Happiness Across the Life Span." *USC Dornsife newsletter*, November 25, 2019.
 - Pinker, Stephen. 2018. Is The World Getting Better or Worse? [TED talk](#).
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

July 20 -22. Goals and Habits

- Module 3
- Readings
 - Morisano, D. & Locke, Edwin. A. 2013. "Goal Setting and Academic Achievement." *International Handbook of Student Achievement*
 - Barnett, Michaela. 2019. "Good Habits, Bad Habits: A Conversation with Wendy Wood." *Behavioral Scientist*.
 - Fogg, BJ. Forget Big Change, Start with a Tiny Habit. [TEDx talk](#).
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

July 20. Outline of writing assignment 1 due


July 23. Rough draft of writing assignment 1 due

July 23-25. Growth Mindset & Grit

- Module 4
- Readings
 - Carol Dweck. 2014. The Power of Believing that You Can Improve. [TED talk](#).
 - Duckworth, Angela and L. Eskreis-Winkler. 2013. "True Grit." *The Observer*, 26(4), 1–3.
 - Ericsson et al. 2007. "The Making of an Expert." *Harvard Business Review* July.
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

July 27. Final draft of writing assignment 1 due


July 27-28. Self-Control

- Module 5
- Readings
 - Urist, Jacoba. 2014. "What the Marshmallow Test Really Teaches about Self-Control." *The Atlantic* September 14.
 - Baumeister, Roy. 2012. "Self-Control: The Moral Muscle." *The Psychologist* 25(2): 112-115.
 -  Angela Duckworth, University of Pennsylvania - Self-Control Strategies for School-A...
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation


July 29. Midterm Exam

- Take on ProctorU

July 30-August 1. Gratitude and Forgiveness

- Module 6
- Readings
 - Emmons, Robert. 2010. "Why Gratitude is Good." *Greater Good Magazine*, November 16.
 - Straka, Brenda. 2018. "Thanksgiving and Gratitude: Interview with Professor Sara Algoe." *SPSPotlight*, November.
 -  Desmond Tutu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission | 60 Minutes Archive
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

August 3-5. Information Overload and Social Media

- Module 7
- Readings
 - Schwartz, Barry. 2004. "The Tyranny of Choice." *Scientific American*, April.
 -  Digital Minimalism with Cal Newport
 - Haidt, Jonathan and Tobias Rose-Stockwell. 2019. "The Dark Psychology of Social Networks." *The Atlantic*, December 2019.


- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

August 4. First Draft of Writing Assignment 2 Due


August 6-8. Work & Flow

- Module 8
- Readings
 - Brooks, Arthur. 2021. "The Secret to Happiness at Work." *The Atlantic*, September 2.
 - Wrzesniewski, Amy et al. 1997. "Jobs, Careers, Callings." *Journal of Research in Personality* 31: 21-33.
 - Csikszentmihalyi. 2004. Flow, the Secret to Happiness. [TED Talk](#).
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

August 10-11. Money & Material Goods

- Module 9
- Readings
 - Kahneman, Daniel and Angus Deaton. 2010. High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being. *PNAS* 38: 16489-16493.
 -  Elizabeth Dunn: Happiness and Money
 - Kasser, Tim. 2014. "What Psychology Says About Materialism and the Holidays." *American Psychological Association*, December.
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

August 12-13. Health & Body

- Module 10
- Readings
 - Willroth, Emily C. 2021. "The Happiness-Health Connection." *Psychology Today*, April 13
 - Sullivan, Meg. 1999. "A Sociologist Explores the 'Culture of Fear.'" *USC News*
 -  Neuromarketing: How brands are getting your brain to buy more stuff
- Reading quizzes
- Lecture videos
- Discussion board participation

August 13. Final Draft of Writing Assignment 2 Due

August 14. Final Exam

- Take on ProctorU

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments for a module are due at midnight on the day that it's due. . For example, you need to have the articles read, video watched, and reading quizzes taken for section "The Distribution of Well-Being" by midnight, Saturday, July 19.

You are welcome to—and it's recommended that you do—complete the assignments before the due date.

Here is a grading scale for the course grade.

Grade	Letter Grade	GPA
93-100	A	4.0
90-92	A-	3.7
87-89	B+	3.3
83-86	B	3.0
80-82	B-	2.7
77-79	C+	2.3
73-76	C	2.0
70-72	C-	1.7
67-69	D+	1.3
63-66	D	1.0
60-62	D-	0.7
<60	F	0.0

Student Responsibilities and Resources

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. Review these important [standards, policies and resources](#), which include:

- The Student Code
 - Academic Integrity
 - Resources on Avoiding Cheating and Plagiarism
- Copyrighted Materials
- Netiquette and Communication
- Adding or Dropping a Course
- Academic Calendar
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation, and shall be subject to the sanctions and other remedies described in The Student Code.

For any act of plagiarism or other academic misconduct, such as cheating on quizzes or tests, the student will receive no credit for that assignment. (For example, if the student cheats on one in-class quiz, they will receive zero points for their semester quiz grade.) The student will also receive an "F" for the class as a whole, no matter how well they did on other assignments or tests. They will also be referred to the university administration for disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities

Students needing special accommodations should work with the University's [Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\)](#). You may contact CSD by calling (860) 486-2020 or by emailing csd@uconn.edu. If your request for accommodation is approved, CSD will send an accommodation letter directly to your instructor(s) so that special arrangements can be made. (Note: Student requests for accommodation must be filed each semester.)

Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility using two sets of standards: the WCAG 2.0 standards issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued in the United States federal government." (Retrieved March 24, 2013 from [Blackboard's website](#))

Software and Technical Requirements (with Accessibility and Privacy Information)

The software/technical requirements for this course include:

- HuskyCT/Blackboard (HuskyCT/ Blackboard Accessibility Statement, HuskyCT/ Blackboard Privacy Policy)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (Adobe Reader Accessibility Statement, Adobe Reader Privacy Policy)
- Microsoft Office (free to UConn students through uconn.onthehub.com) (Microsoft Accessibility Statement, Microsoft Privacy Statement)
- Dedicated access to high-speed internet with a minimum speed of 1.5 Mbps (4 Mbps or higher is recommended).

Here are the technological requirements for online proctoring:

- [ProctorU Technical Specifications \(See "Requirements"\)](#)
- [ProctorU System Test \(See "Test your equipment" under System Requirements\)](#)

NOTE: This course has NOT been designed for use with mobile devices

Required technical skills include:

- Use electronic mail with attachments
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats
- Copy and paste text, graphics or hyperlinks
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously
- Open and access PDF files
- Watching YouTube and other videos online
- Connecting to WebEx, a virtual meeting program and web cam
- Ability to view Mediasite videos. Complete the browser check and test your audio and video connection.

Explore the [Computer Technology Competencies](#) page for more information

Exam Proctoring

IMPORTANT: This course requires students to use the online service ProctorU for the real time proctoring and recording exam sessions. In order to use ProctorU, you must meet certain technical, software, location, and identity verification requirements.

It is critical that you review these requirements and fully test the computer on which you will take your exam prior to the official start of classes and no later than the second day of the course. Please complete the following:

- Review the [Welcome to ProctorU page](#).
- Review the [ProctorU FAQ's](#)
- Sign-up for your exam time slot at least 1 week in advance of the exam's scheduled time. If you choose to sign-up later, you risk not finding an available appointment and you may be charged a late fee (within 72 hours prior to the exam start you WILL be charged a late fee, even if you can find an appointment). The University of Connecticut will not pay for student late fees incurred as a result of your failure to meet this deadline.
- Use either Chrome or Firefox as your browser. You will be prompted to download a browser extension.
- Prepare your workspace before taking a test (clear and quiet area, no unpermitted resources, good lighting and not back-lit), and be prepared to show the area to the proctor. Plan ahead and choose a room or location that is appropriate for a monitored testing situation.
- Know the technical requirements.
 - Chromebooks and tablets are not supported devices.
 - The computer must have a working webcam and microphone.
 - You should take priority over your network during an exam. Other high-bandwidth
- [ProctorU Privacy Policy](#)
- [ProctorU Accessibility](#) and [Compliance](#) Information

Technical Help

[Technical and Academic Help](#) provides a guide to technical and academic assistance.

This course is completely facilitated online using the learning management platform, [HuskyCT](#). If you have difficulty accessing HuskyCT, you have access to the in person/live person support options available during regular business hours through the [Help Center](#). You also have [24x7 Course Support](#) including access to live chat, phone, and support documents.

Evaluation of the Course

Students will be provided an opportunity to evaluate instruction in this course using the University's standard procedures, which are administered by the [Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness](#) (OIRE).

Additional informal formative surveys may also be administered within the course as an optional

evaluation tool.

Note: The information in this syllabus is subject to change. Please consult HuskyCT for the latest version.

Here are additional policies, resources, and opportunities as on the Provost's website. Please be aware of them: <https://provost.uconn.edu/faculty-and-staff-resources/syllabi-references/>