Department of Psychology
PSMT60
VT 2025

COURSE SYLLABUS

Human Development:
Positive Psychological Functioning and Adaptation in Youth, 7,5 credits

MASTER LEVEL COURSE
SPRING 2025

COURSE CONVENORS

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&

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the course is to provide students with theoretical and empirical overview of positive youth development. The course covers two specific topics: a) theories and research on positive functioning and adaptation from both self-based and community-based perspective and b) introduction to specific youth-targeted interventions aimed at positive development at an individual and community (societal) level.

First, we will discuss theoretical conceptualization of positive psychology, optimal development and adaptation with a particular focus on youth. These questions will be discussed from both cognitive and emotional perspective. Can we learn to be optimistic or adopt a positive affective attitude towards our environment? Can we grow from hardship and is adversity necessarily psychologically casting? How can we use psychological research to promote well-being both at the individual and societal level? These are some of the questions that we will learn and discuss in this course. Then, we shall move to learn more about specific interventions aimed at promoting positive functioning and adaptations.

COURSE AIMS

1. Explain and critically analyze theoretical perspectives and the evidence base in positive youth development
2. Explain and critically analyze the design and evaluation of interventions
3. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical aspects of conducting intervention research
4. Demonstrate the skills required to engage in research, specifically academic writing and oral presentation

LANGUAGE

Lectures, course readings, and examination will be in English.

ASSESSMENT

Students have to complete all compulsory assignments (seminar attendance and examination) in the course in order to receive a course grade. In order to pass the course, the student must receive a minimum grade of E on the final examination and complete all mandatory tasks which include seminar attendance.

Questions in the final exam will cover all course topics covered in class and will be derived from the required literature including lecture notes. Exam will be letter graded on a 7-point scale from A to F.

A (Excellent); B (Very good); C (Good); D (Satisfactory); E (Sufficient); Fx (Insufficient); F (Fail)

For more information about the final examination, please refer to the document **"Instructions for the Exam".**

REQUIRED LITERATURE

Throughout this course we will refer to two key textbooks (selected chapters) and several theoretical and empirical articles from various journals in the field of positive psychology.

Snyder, C. R., Lopez, S. J., Edwards, L. M., & Marques, S. C. (2021). *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (3rd Edition). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Fraser, M. W., et al. (2009). *Intervention Research: Developing Social Programs*. Oxford University Press.

We will read selected chapters out of these books which are available for free as an e-book from the Stockholm University Library. For specific chapters, refer to the section on teaching schedule and reading materials.

TEACHING SCHEDULE AND READING MATERIALS

The class will meet fifteen times (see below for specific information on the schedule). In addition to the introductory and review sessions, we will have ten lectures and three seminars in total. Required reading materials for each lecture and seminar is provided below. Students are encouraged to attend all lectures. Seminar attendance is mandatory. For seminars, students are expected to read the materials (articles) beforehand and prepare 1-2 questions per reading. Seminars will be conducted in an interactive format, attendance is mandatory, and students' participation is expected. During seminars, students can also bring in any outstanding questions from previous weeks and/or lecture materials.

Absence from a maximum of two required and scheduled sessions (which include seminars and the introductory session) can be compensated. Compensation is done by submitting a written assignment specified by the teachers in charge of the course.

Seminar Compensation Task

Participation in all three scheduled seminars is mandatory. Absence from a maximum of two (out of three required) sessions can be compensated by writing and submitting a short reflection paper on one of the assigned reading. The short reflection paper should be about 800 words long and should demonstrate that the student has read, understood and reflected on the assigned reading. Use of any AI tools are not allowed to complete this assignment.

SCHEDULE

Topics and Reading Materials

March 25 (Tuesday 10-12): Introduction to the course content and structure

March 28 (Friday 13-15): General theoretical overview on positive psychology and youth development (LECTURE 1)

Tolan, P., Ross, K., Arkin, N., Godine, N., & Clark, E. (2016). Toward an integrated approach to positive development: Implications for intervention. *Applied Developmental Science, 20*, 214-236.

April 1 (Tuesday 14-16): Positive psychology: what is it and why do we need it? (LECTURE 2)

Downey, C. A., & Henderson, R. E. (2021). Speculation, Conceptualization, or Evidence? A History of Positive Psychology**.** In, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (3rd Edition). Edited by C. R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopes, Lisa M. Edwards and Susana C. Marques

Pedrotti, J., T., Edwards, L. S., & Lopez, S. J. (2021). Positive Psychology within a Cultural Context. In, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (3rd Edition). Edited by C. R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopes, Lisa M. Edwards and Susana C. Marques

Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. (2003). Personality, culture and subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. *Annual Review of Psychology, 54*, 403-425.

April 3 (Thursday 13-15): Promoting positive youth development through emotion regulation (SEMINAR 1)

John, O. P., & Gross, J. (2004). Healthy and Unhealthy Emotion Regulation: Personality Processes, Individual Differences and Life Span Development. *Journal of Personality, 72(6),* 1301-1334.

April 7 (Tuesday 13-15): Positive emotions and well-being (LECTURE 3)

Naragon-Gainey, K., & Watson, D. (2021). Positive Affectivity: The Disposition to Experience Pleasurable Emotional States. In, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (3rd Edition). Edited by C. R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopes, Lisa M. Edwards and Susana C. Marques

Fredrickson, B. L. (2000). Cultivating Positive Emotions to Optimize Health and Well-Being. *Prevention and Treatment, 3*, 1-25.

April 11 (Thursday 13-15): Positive emotions and well-being (SEMINAR 2)

Tugade, M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2007). Regulation of positive emotions: emotion regulation strategies that promote resilience. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 8*, 311-333.

Cohn, M. A. et al. (2009). Happiness Unpacked: Positive Emotions Increase Life Satisfaction by Building Resilience. *Emotion, 9*(3), 361-368.

April 25 (Friday 13-15): Self-control and positive youth development (LECTURE 4)

Thompson, S. C. (2021). The role of personal control in adaptive functioning: In, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (3rd Edition). Edited by C. R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopes, Lisa M. Edwards and Susana C. Marques

April 25 (Friday 15-17): Self-control and positive youth development (SEMINAR 3)

Galla, B. M. & Duckworth, A. L. (2015). More than resisting temptation: beneficial habits mediate the relationship between self-control and positive life outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 109(3),* 508-525.

Romer, D. et al. (2010). Can adolescents learn self-control? Delay of gratification in the development of control over risk-taking. *Prevention Science, 11*, 319-330.

April 28 (Monday 13-15): Character strengths and positive youth development (LECTURE 5)

Park, N. (2004). Character strengths and positive youth development. *Annals, AAPSS*, 591.

Gillham, J. et al. (2011). Character strengths predict subjective well-being during adolescence. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 6(*1), 31-44.

Wagner, L., Gander, F., Proyer, R.T. *et al.* (2020). Character Strengths and PERMA: Investigating the Relationships of Character Strengths with a Multidimensional Framework of Well-Being. *Applied Research Quality Life 15*, 307–328.

April 29 (Tuesday 13-15): Building resilience (LECTURE 6)

Masten, A. S. (2018): Resilience theory and research on children and families: past, present and promise. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 10,* 12-31.

Tedeschi, R. G. & Lawrence G. C. (2004). Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence, *Psychological Inquiry, 15(1),* 1-18.

May 2 (Friday 13-15): Development of interventions: process and challenges (LECTURE 7)

Fraser, M. W., et al. (2009). *Intervention Research: Developing Social Programs*. Oxford University Press.
Chapter 1: What is intervention research?
Chapter 2: Steps in intervention research

May 8 (Thursday 13-15): Examples of positive youth development interventions (LECTURE 8)

Eninger, L., Ferrer-Wreder, L., Eichas, K., Olsson, T. M., Ginner Hau, H., Westling Allodi, M., Smedler, A-C., Sedem, M., Clausen Gull, I., & Herkner, B. (2021). A cluster randomized trial of Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS©) with Swedish preschool children. *Frontiers in Psychology, Developmental Psychology, 12*, article: 695288. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.695288

Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development, 88(4),* 1156-1171. doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1111/cdev.12864

May 14 (Wednesday 13-15): Creating positive social communities: intergroup dialogue and contact interventions (LECTURE 9)

DeTurk, S. (2006) The Power of Dialogue: Consequences of Intergroup Dialogue and their Implications for Agency and Alliance Building, *Communication Quarterly, 54(1*), 33-51.

Crisp, R. J., & Turner, R. N. (2009). Can imagined interactions produce positive perceptions? Reducing prejudice through simulated social contact. *American Psychologist, 64*(4), 231–240.

Cocco, V. M., Bisagno, E., Di Bernardo, G. A., Cadamuro, A., Riboldi, S. D., Crapolicchio, E., ... & Vezzali, L. (2021). Comparing story reading and video watching as two distinct forms of vicarious contact: An experimental intervention among elementary school children. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *60*(1), 74-94.

May 15 (Thursday 13-15): Creating positive social communities: moral exemplar intervention (LECTURE 10)

Reed, A. II, & Aquino, K. F. (2003). Moral identity and the expanding circle of moral regard toward out-groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(6), 1270–1286.

Čehajić-Clancy, S., & Bilewicz, M. (2021). Moral exemplar intervention: A new paradigm for conflict resolution and intergroup reconciliation. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 30(4),* 335-342.

Čehajić-Clancy, S., & Olsson, A. (2023). Threaten and Affirm: The role of ingroup moral exemplars for promoting prosocial intergroup behaviour through affirming moral identity. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations.*

May 16 (Friday 13-15): Review

May 20 (**Tuesday 8-12**): Final exam

June 18 (**Wednesday 8-12**): Re-examination