Sustainable Happiness  
EDUC 4104

Sustainable happiness is happiness that contributes to individual, community, and/or global well-being and does not exploit other people, the environment, or future generations. (O’Brien, 2010).

The mission of the Department of Education at Cape Breton University (CBU) is to prepare educators who are responsible professionals committed to the learning of all students. CBU provides both pre-service and continuing education programs focused on developing teachers, through current research and best practices, to be skillful, reflective practitioners. The CBU Department of Education is dedicated to providing instruction and experience to develop critical, creative, and caring teachers committed to lifelong learning and professional growth.

A core focus for the Education programs at Cape Breton University is Education for Sustainability (EfS) which is inclusive of the three realms of sustainability – environment, society and economy. This focus seeks to address content, context, pedagogy, global issues and local priorities. EfS supports the values of interdependence, empathy, equity, personal responsibility, social justice and holistic perspectives required to participate in society and to live sustainably and well. By integrating EfS principles throughout our education programs, teachers and teacher candidates will engage in learning designed to cultivate: critical thinking, creativity, knowledge, and skills to actively address challenges with sustainable solutions.

Sustainable Happiness: Background

Positive psychology has emerged over the last decade as a new field within psychology. It encompasses work that looks at subjective well-being, happiness, positive emotions and national well-being. This “science of happiness” has ignited interest in many sectors. The majority of the literature in these fields has focused on increasing individual happiness (subjective well-being), and national well-being i.e. investigating how to sustain happiness and the elements of “the good life.” There has been less discussion regarding the possible consequences of these pursuits with respect to sustainability. Therefore, an organization could increase its efficiency and productivity, create a happier work environment and still pay little attention to whether it is practicing corporate social or environmental responsibility.

Sustainable happiness takes happiness discussions to a new level.

“Sustainable Happiness” reflects the literature from both happiness and sustainability. Since happiness and sustainability are relevant to everyone it has broad applications and implications. While Harvard has introduced a tremendously popular course on happiness, Cape Breton University is the first university in the world to introduce a course on sustainable happiness.
EDUC 4104
Sustainable Happiness

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Course Description

This course will consider happiness and subjective well-being from the perspectives of psychology, interpersonal relationships, community, and the natural environment by familiarizing students with the research emerging in those areas. Students will also explore the impact that individual and national pursuits of happiness have on the well-being of people around the world and the natural environment. Opportunities for engaging in sustainable happiness will be addressed. The role of formal, non-formal, and informal education in shaping one’s view of happiness will be discussed.

Course Design

EDUC 4104 is a highly interactive and participatory course. Through lectures, group work, readings and assignments, you will investigate the applications of positive psychology to your own life, society, and the environment. We will practice ‘happiness skills’ and increase happiness literacy as we examine the social messages related to happiness and well-being that influence our values, beliefs, behaviour and life choices. Implications for education will be a central feature of the course.

Course Goals

1) Students will understand the significance of research emerging from the field of positive psychology and happiness studies;
2) Students will understand that individual and collective pursuit of happiness is having local and global impacts;
3) Students will have the ability to identify key social messages related to happiness (happiness literacy);
4) Students will discover opportunities for pursuing sustainable happiness – personally and professionally.

Evaluation

Participation – 10% (See Participation rubric)
Assignments – 40% (Details provided below)
Gratitude Activity – 10% (See Gratitude Activity Rubric – Self-Assessment)
Personal Inquiry Project – 10% (Inquiry Project Rubric)
Sustainable Happiness Project – 20% (Co-Assessment Rubric)
Lesson Plan – 10% (See rubric)

Text: Coursepack (all materials are available electronically on the course Moodle site)

Recommended (optional):


Readings:

The Coursepack is available electronically on our Moodle site. The coursepack includes the following readings:


**Supplementary Resources**

Your Personal Inquiry project will draw upon resources in the supplementary reading (available in Moodle and the online articles listed below) and at least one of the web sites listed below. If you would prefer to search for an article and website that are not listed here, please discuss this with me.

**Online Articles**

There are articles posted as Supplementary Reading on our course site. Additionally, the following articles are available online.


Seligman, M. Positive education.

Web Sites


Joint Consortium on School Health - http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/

Learning for a Sustainable Future - http://www.lsf-lst.ca/

Free the Children - http://www.freethechildren.com/getinvolved/educator/


The Barefoot College - http://www.barefootcollege.org/default.asp

Green School – Bali - http://www.greenschool.org/

Sustainable Happiness: http://sustainablehappiness.ca/

Action for Happiness - http://www.actionforhappiness.org/

Positive Psychology Center - http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/

Living Planet Community - http://community.wwf.ca/

Happy Planet Index - http://www.happyplanetindex.org/

UPENN Positive Psychology Center: http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/teachingpp.htm

Learn and Flourish: http://www.learnandflourish.com/

Character Education: http://www.goodcharacter.com/

Journey North: http://www.learner.org/jnorth/

Earthducation: http://lt.umn.edu/earthducation/
### Date and Themes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 11</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to positive psychology and happiness studies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Read for next class:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “Can you make yourself lastingly happier?” by Seligman</td>
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<td>3. “Materialism and its alternatives” by Kasser</td>
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<td><strong>ASSIGNMENT:</strong></td>
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<td>1) Complete “Sustainable Happiness Footprint Chart” and submit by September 18</td>
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| Sept 18  | **Investigating “the good life.” Geography of Hope**                       |
|          | **Read for next class:**                                                    |
|          | 1. “The language of wealth and economics” by Anielski                       |
|          | 2. “Teaching Happiness” by MacConville                                      |
|          | **ASSIGNMENT:**                                                             |
|          | 1) Interview the happiest person you know and submit one-page summary by September 25  
|          | Sustainable Happiness Footprint Chart due today                             |

| Sept 25  | **The Economics of Happiness**                                             |
|          | **Read for next class:**                                                    |
|          | 1. “Happy Planet Index” pp.1-13                                              |
|          | 2. “What is affluenza?” by Hamilton and Denniss                             |
|          | **ASSIGNMENT:** Genuine wealth activity (due October 9)                    |
|          | Happiness Interview Summary due today                                       |

| October 2 (Meet on Moodle) | **Affluenza**                                                               |
|                           | **Read for next class:**                                                    |
|                           | 1. “Sustainability, Happiness and Education” by O’Brien                     |
|                           | 2. “This book is not a tree” by McDonough and Braungart                     |
|                           | **ASSIGNMENT:** Shifting consumption activity (due October 16)              |
|                           | RESPOND TO QUESTIONS IN MOODLE                                              |

| October 9               | **Sustainable Happiness**                                                  |
|                        | **Read for next class:**                                                    |
|                        | 2. The Element by K. Robinson pp. 1-26                                       |
|                        | **ASSIGNMENT:**                                                             |
|                        | Interdependence Map (due October 30)                                       |
|                        | Genuine wealth activity due today                                           |

<p>| October 16             | <strong>Understanding Interdependence</strong>                                           |
|                       | <strong>Read for next class:</strong>                                                    |
|                       | Choose a reading AND a web site from the supplementary resources list. Use these as the basis for your own inquiry into a question that interests you about sustainable happiness, positive psychology or sustainability education. |
|                       | <strong>ASSIGNMENT:</strong> Prepare presentations re. personal inquiry for November 7 and 21 |
|                       | Shifting consumption activity due today                                      |</p>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading and Assignments</th>
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| **October 23 (meet on Moodle)** | Personal Inquiry Project                                             | Read for next class:  
1. Sustainable Happiness and Health Education – Teacher’s Guide” by O’Brien (just browse through it)  
ASSIGNMENT: Develop and Implement sustainable happiness project. Due by November 27. |
| **October 30**     | Education resources re. Happiness and sustainability, Presentations re. personal inquiry | Read for next class:  
1. “Spark” by John Ratey  
2. “Me to We” by Keilburger and Keilburger  
ASSIGNMENT: Continue work on your sustainable happiness project. One-page summary due November 27. Interdependence map due today |
| **November 6**     | Health and Physical Education outcomes, Daily Physical Activity, Presentations re. personal inquiry | Read for next class:  
1. “Schools as a setting for promoting positive mental health” pp 6-40.  
ASSIGNMENT: Continue work on your sustainable happiness project. One-page summary due November 27. |
| **November 13 (meet on Moodle)** |                                                                         | Read for next class:  
1. “Practicing gratitude and positive thinking” by Lyubomirsky  
ASSIGNMENT: RESPOND TO QUESTIONS IN MOODLE  
1) Gratitude Activity due November 20 |
| **November 20**    | Gratitude and Appreciation, Positive psychology in schools, Social and emotional well-being | Read for next class: Coming to our senses by Kabat-Zinn  
ASSIGNMENT: Gratitude activity due today  
Lesson plan related to health outcomes due Dec. 4 |
| **November 27**    | Course Wrap Up, Share sustainable happiness projects, Mindfulness, Compassion and Spiritual Well-Being | No reading assignment for this week  
ASSIGNMENT: Lesson plan related to health outcomes due Dec. 4 |
Evaluation and Assignments

Participation – 10%

Your active participation in the class discussions is essential. Each week you will complete assigned readings and I will post discussion questions during the “Moodle weeks.” In addition to your own response to these questions, I would like you to respond to at least **TWO** other posts that your classmates have made. You will find a participation rubric in the Moodle Course Menu in a section called “Rubrics.”

Weekly Assignments – 40%

As you can see, this is a large proportion of your mark. Most weeks, there will be a short activity assignment to give you some practice with the concepts that we are exploring. For example, your first activity involves an interview. You will interview someone whom you believe is a “very happy” person. I’ll provide you with some questions to ask as you gather their story. You will then submit a one-page summary of their story and any insights that you gained from hearing it. As a group, we’ll look at similarities and differences across these stories.

Personal Inquiry Project – 10% (October 30th or November 6th)

You will investigate some aspect of sustainable happiness, sustainability education or positive psychology that intrigues you. Articles and websites have been provided to make this search easily accessible. Select at least one article and one web site. You may find it helpful to consider a question that has arisen for you as a result of the course readings or activities. E.g. How could positive psychology help with classroom management? How can adventure education making sustainability interesting to high school students? How do we teach hope and optimism about the environment given the serious environmental challenges we face?

Write a 1-2 page summary (double spaced) that summarizes your question, the article(s) you read and the web site(s) you explored. Prepare a 5 minute presentation to share with the class. Sign up to present for either October 30th or November 6th.

Gratitude Activity – 10% (November 20th)

Happiness research consistently supports the value of expressing gratitude and appreciation. This activity will assist you to explore the benefits of gratitude.

Choose **ONE** of the gratitude activities listed below.

**Gratitude Letter** – Write a gratitude letter to someone who has been especially kind to you and has not been properly thanked and then deliver it to him or her in person, or send it to them. Read it to them if you’d like. Submit a one-page summary of your experience.

**Gratitude Journal** – Count up 5 things that you are grateful for per day for 5 days. Write these up and include a one-page summary of your experience during the week. You may want to record
your experience daily rather than trying to recall your experience at the end of the week. Submit a one-page summary of your experience and the activity.

**Appreciation** – Every day for 5 days, make a point of thanking people whom you normally take for granted. Submit a one-page summary of your experience and the activity.

**Artistic Expression** – Create a song or work of art that expresses appreciation. Submit the song or work of art (or a picture if it).

**Sustainable Happiness Project – 20% Due November 27th**

This project is an opportunity for you to put your learning into practice. Once we are further into the course, it will make more sense to you what this may involve. You will be developing a plan that enhances sustainable happiness for you, someone else (or many people) and/or the natural environment. Then you will implement your plan and report on the results. See the Rubric in the Rubrics folder in Moodle.

**Lesson Plan – 10% (by December 4)**

You will develop one lesson plan that could be used to promote sustainable happiness. It will be linked to the NS health education outcomes for P-9. You may select the grade level that interests you. See the Rubric in Moodle.

**Description of Weekly Assignments – 40%**

1) **Sustainable Happiness Footprint Chart** – See chart posted in Moodle (8 points) *(Due Sept. 18th)*

2) **Interview the Happiest Person You Know** (8 points) *(Due Sep. 25)*

Think about the people in your life and consider who is the happiest person you know. That doesn’t necessarily mean the most jovial, effervescent person. It may be someone who is quietly happy, someone who is content with their life, someone who is enormously generous, someone who spreads joy. The person you interview could be any age! Submit a one-page summary.

Here are some questions you may wish to pose:

a) My impression of you is that you are a very happy person. Please tell me what contributes most to your happiness?

b) What lessons have you learned from overcoming obstacles in your life?

c) Do you have any advice to share about living a happy life?

3) **Genuine Wealth** (6 points) *(Due October 9th)*

1. List at least 10 ways in which you are “genuinely” wealthy.
2. Select three items from your list in #1 and answer these questions:

   a) Do you tend to take these for granted?

   b) Do you express appreciation for this wealth (to yourself, to others, through creative expression, through prayer, or other means)? If so, describe how you do this.

   c) How does your life sustain this genuine wealth? Is there more you could do to sustain it? If so, how?

   d) Is this the kind of wealth that you may want to increase? If so, how might you go about doing that?

3. How do you contribute to genuine wealth collectively? For example, consider how you contribute to genuine wealth where you work, go to school, in your community, household, country or globally.

4. Consider what more you might do to contribute to genuine wealth collectively – i.e. in one of the areas mention in #3. Consider how you might do this as a teacher.

4) **Shifting Consumption (8 points) (Due October 16**\(^{th}\)**)

   This week, choose one of the following:

   a) Reduce your consumption of non-renewable resources
   b) Make one day a “Buy Nothing” Day ([http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd](http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd))
   c) Take the Balle NS 10% Shift Challenge ([http://www.ballens.ca/](http://www.ballens.ca/))
   d) Shift your consumption of non-renewable resources toward renewable resources
   e) Take a “Techno Fast” and turn off your electronic devices for awhile.

   Submit a half-page summary of the activity you selected and explain why you chose this.

5) **Interdependence Map (this will be initiated in class and continued on your own) (10 points) (Due October 30th)**

   **Late Assignment Policy** – You each have two “Get Off the Hook” vouchers which permits you to submit any written assignment late (no more than 2 days late) with each voucher. You may use only two vouchers during the course. Other assignments are expected to be on time unless you have discussed this with me. One point is taken away for each day late. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that any assignments submitted electronically, or otherwise, have been received by the instructor.
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<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable happiness footprint chart</td>
<td>September 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Happiness Interview</td>
<td>September 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond to Moodle Questions</td>
<td>Week of October 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genuine Wealth Activity</td>
<td>October 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shifting Consumption Activity</td>
<td>October 16</td>
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<td>Interdependence Map</td>
<td>October 30</td>
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<td>Personal Inquiry presentations</td>
<td>Choose October 30 or November 6</td>
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<td>Gratitude Activity</td>
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<td>Lesson Plan</td>
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STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs should contact the Jennifer Keeping AccessAbility Centre on campus. Arrangements for accommodations will be made in collaboration with the Centre.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are asked to review the section on ‘plagiarism’ found in the ‘current student’ section of Cape Breton University’s web site. Any assignment that is found to not meet these principles of academic integrity will receive a mark of zero.

A NOTE ON WRITING QUALITY

B.Ed candidates, as post baccalaureate students, are expected to demonstrate a high standard of writing. Students who find writing difficult should consult the Writing Centre on campus for additional instruction and writing support.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The B.Ed. program is an intense and demanding program of professional preparation in which teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate high levels of both academic and professional integrity. Such integrity is demonstrated in part by commitment to and attendance at all classes, workshops, tutorials, and practicum activities. Students are expected to come to class prepared to actively engage through discussion and participation.

Because the course is experiential in focus, and because assignments will draw from in-class activities and discussion, failure to attend regularly and/or on time will have an adverse effect on your learning and course grade. Students are expected to stay for the full duration of the class unless there are legitimate circumstances that dictate otherwise.

Except in the case of illness, religious observance, or for a compassionate reason, attendance at class is expected. Please notify the instructor by e-mail if you must miss a class for one of these reasons. Consistent with University
policy on evaluated tasks acceptable documentation may be required if assignments/evaluated tasks are missed due to absence. Students are responsible for any missed materials and when acceptable documentation is received a mutually acceptable alternate arrangement for evaluation will be made. Penalties may be incurred unless alternate arrangements are made prior to the student’s absence.

Please be respectful of the instructional space with regard to cell phones, music players, notebook computers or any other device that may be distracting for you, your colleagues or me. You are preparing to take your place in a professional community of teachers and are expected to demonstrate sensitivity for and adherence to the norms of respectful, polite and professional conduct

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Please review CBU’s inclement weather policy by going to http://www.cbu.ca/pdfs/3-1-Weather.pdf. Note that information on campus closures may be accessed by calling 539-5300 and selecting “9”. If one of our classes is cancelled due to bad weather and we have an assignment due that day, the assignment should still be submitted to me using Moodle.