DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

PSY 430
The Policy Relevance of Subjective Well-being

COURSE OUTLINE WINTER 2023

Instructor:	Dr. Felix Cheung
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Student hour:	Monday 3-4pm / by appointment
	https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/83576522979 [password: 199378]

Class time:	Wednesday 10am-12noon
Location:	BA B026
Zoom link for class:	https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/83576522979 [password: 199378]

Course Overview

The course will explore the emerging role of subjective well-being as a policy indicator. Subjective well-being refers to the cognitive assessment and affective feelings about the quality of one's life. Together we will examine classic and current issues related to subjective well-being research, such as: Do citizens value happiness? How can we measure happiness at the individual and population level? To what extent is population well-being malleable? Does money buy happiness? Does moving to a nicer house make you happier? Is a long and prosperous but dissatisfying life a good life? What are the benefits of population well-being? Is subjective well-being a viable policy goal? We will read and discuss research articles from within and beyond psychology to promote a multidisciplinary understanding of subjective well-being research. The format of the course involves in-class discussion, oral presentations, and a written assignment.

The aim is that by the end of this course, you will have:
1. Developed an understanding of the causes, consequences, measurement, and policy relevance of subjective well-being,
2. Gained an appreciation of the multidisciplinary nature of subjective well-being research,
3. Improved your ability to understand, critique, and extend original research on subjective well-being,
4. Generated new insights on subjective well-being based on empirical data, and
5. Strengthened your scientific communication skills in both oral and written forms.

Course Webpages

Quercus is the main course webpage with course announcements, readings, discussion boards, and other course materials.

Perusall is an online tool that facilitates collaborative reading. Please visit https://app.perusall.com/home to set up a free Perusall account using your name as it appears on Quercus. To access this course on Perusall, please enter the course code CHEUNG-GG43N.

A Unique Learning Opportunity

The timing of this course provides a unique opportunity for you. UofT has gained campus-wide access to the Gallup data, which is one of the highest quality datasets for examining population well-being, and many chapters in the World Happiness Report (WHR) are based on it. The WHR is published annually on March 20th, and the 2023 version will come out during the semester. The course will seek to take advantage of these. You will have the opportunity to develop a final project based on the Gallup data with over 2 million participants across the world, and together, we will read and discuss the 2023 WHR.

Assessment

Class Participation (20 points)
Participation is fundamental to a seminar class. We learn from each other when we complete the weekly readings, offer thoughtful comments and questions, and listen and respond to others' comments respectfully. Contributing regularly to the discussion will help you feel more comfortable as the semester goes on. *I may ask you directly for your thoughts on a reading during class.*

Annotations on Weekly Required Readings (20 points)

There are a total of 20 required readings. Perusall is a collaborative platform where you can annotate while reading. Your annotations can be (but not limited to) questions or comments that bridge across readings, connections to local or global news, thoughtful critiques of the strengths or weaknesses in the paper, ideas for new studies (which will be helpful for your final project), etc. This exercise is meant to help you engage with the course materials and prepare for class participation. The top 3 annotations will be graded for each required article. An exception is made for a Week 7 reading (IJzerman et al., 2020) – this is a shorter paper, and only the top 1 annotation will be graded.

Your annotations will be visible to other students, and you are encouraged to respond and give up-votes to annotations made by other students. Please submit your annotations two full days before class (each Monday at 10:00am) so that the discussion facilitators can have time to prepare for the in-class discussion.

As a point of reference, a typical seminar class asks students to submit a ~600-word response paper per week, so your annotations should be of comparable length (~300 words per reading).

Discussion facilitation (20 points)

You will form groups of 3 to serve as discussion facilitators once during the semester (between Week 3 to Week 9). Facilitators will present the take home messages in the required readings, stimulate discussions, and highlight issues shared in the annotations made by fellow students on Perusall. Facilitators will additionally draw from at least 1 supplementary article in the reading list. Although it is certainly possible to facilitate an

engaging discussion based on the course materials alone, a more effective facilitation can be achieved by i) drawing from additional sources (other scholarly articles, news, policy briefs), ii) presenting new insights based on the Gallup data, and/or iii) using in-class activities or multimedia (such as [respectful] memes and videos). The facilitation should last 60-90 minutes.

Final Project (30 points)

The final project is meant to be flexible.

As a default assignment, the final project will be an empirical paper, which uses Gallup data to generate novel and interesting insights about subjective well-being. The assignment focuses on quantitative reasoning without expectation that you will apply statistical techniques beyond what you have already learned.

The introduction, method, results, and discussion should not be longer than 15 double-spaced pages (12-point font). The cover page, abstract, tables, figures, and references will not count towards the page limit. You should include at least 10 references.

A 1-page final project proposal (3%) is due on Feb 15th at 10am (Week 6). A draft of the introduction and method of the final project (7%) is due on Mar 8th at 10am (Week 8). The final paper (20%) is due on April 5th (Week 12).

You are welcome to propose your own ideas for the final project. As examples, previous students have proposed to i) create infographics on subjective well-being, ii) create YouTube videos that explain the latest WHR to the general public, and iii) turn this individual assignment into a more ambitious group project.

Final Project Presentation (10 points)

During the last 3 class sessions, you will present an 8-minute summary of your final project. As a general guideline, you should include 8 slides that cover the introduction, method, results, and discussion of your project.

Grading Scheme Overview:

Class Participation: 20 points
Perusall Annotations: 20 points
Discussion Facilitation: 20 points
Final Project: 30 points
Final Project Presentation: 10 points
_____
                                    100 points

Course Policies

Penalties for Lateness
For each 24-hour period after the deadline, you will lose 10% on the assignment.

Any term work that will be handed in **after** the final exam period is subject to a petition for extension of term work. This petition should be filed with the student's College Registrar's Office.

Religious Accommodation
As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes students and faculty from a wide range of backgrounds, cultural traditions, and spiritual beliefs. For my part, I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity (like a test, or in-class assignment) due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice (at least two to three weeks), so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

ChatGPT
ChatGPT is a novel AI chat bot. You are allowed to use it for your final project in this course, and if you use it, you are required to highlight parts of your paper that are i) ==directly copy-and-pasted from ChatGPT (in yellow)== and ii) ==edited based on ChatGPT-generated texts (in blue)==. Please note that this is only for this course, and other instructors may have different views on ChatGPT.

Academic Resources

Accessibility Needs:
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca) at the beginning of the academic year. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your medical situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Writing:
As a student here at the University of Toronto, you are expected to write well. The university provides its students with a number of resources to help them achieve this. For more information on campus writing centres and writing courses, please visit http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/ .

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:
All students, faculty and staff are expected to follow the University's guidelines and policies on academic integrity. For students, this means following the standards of academic honesty when writing assignments, collaborating with fellow students, and writing tests and exams. Ensure that the work you submit for grading represents your own honest efforts. Plagiarism—representing someone else's work as your own or submitting work that you have previously

submitted for marks in another class or program—is a serious offence that can result in sanctions. Speak to me or your TA for advice on anything that you find unclear. To learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at www.writing.utoronto.ca/ . Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai and http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/

Other Resources
Student Life Programs and Services (http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/)
Academic Success Services (http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc)
Counselling and Psychological Services (http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc)

Course readings

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	Jan 11	Introduction to course	
2	Jan 18	What is subjective well-being? How do we measure it?	
3	Jan 25	Consequences of Well-being	
4	Feb 1	Major Population Events and Well-being	
5	Feb 8	Money and Happiness I	
6	Feb 15	Money and Happiness II **(Zoom)**	Final Project Idea
	Feb 22	Reading Week (No class)	
7	Mar 1	Possible Interventions	
8	Mar 8	The Role of Well-being in Policymaking **(Zoom)**	Final Project Update
9	Mar 15	Students' Choice	
10	Mar 22	World Happiness Report 2023 / Presentations	
11	Mar 29	World Happiness Report 2023 / Presentations	
12	Apr 5	World Happiness Report 2023 / Presentations	Final Project

Week 1: Introduction
(January 11)

Week 2: What is subjective well-being? How do we measure it?
(January 18)

* Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. (2015). National Accounts of Subjective Well-Being. *American Psychologist*, *70*(3), 234-242.

* 2018 World Happiness Report - Chapter 2: International Migration and World Happiness

Supplementary Articles:
Canadian Happiness Report March 2022

2016 World Happiness Report – Chapter 2: The Distribution of World Happiness (p.29 onwards)
[In addition to looking at averages of well-being, this chapter suggests happiness inequality as a novel measure to capture social inequality.]

Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., Oishi, S., Hall, N., & Donnellan, M. B. (2018). Advances and open questions in the science of subjective well-being. *Collabra: Psychology*, *4*(1):15.
[A comprehensive review on the current state of the subjective well-being literature.]

Hills, T. T., Proto, E., Sgroi, D., & Seresinhe, C. I. (2019). Historical analysis of national subjective wellbeing using millions of digitized books. *Nature human behaviour*, *3*(12), 1271-1275.
[A historical analysis of SWB from 1800s to 2000s using natural language processing.]

Oswald, A. J., & Wu, S. (2010). Objective confirmation of subjective measures of human well-being: Evidence from the USA. *Science*, *327*(5965), 576-579.
[Regional-level subjective well-being closely tracks objective quality-of-life markers.]

VanderWeele, T. J. (2017). On the promotion of human flourishing. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *114*(31), 8148-8156.
[A case for measuring well-being beyond subjective well-being.]

VanderWeele, T. J., Trudel-Fitzgerald, C., Allin, P., Farrelly, C., Fletcher, G., Frederick, D. E., ... & Kubzansky, L. D. (2020). Current recommendations on the selection of measures for well-being. *Preventive Medicine*, *133*, 106004.
[Practical guidelines on the selection of well-being measures.]

Week 3: Consequences of Well-being
(January 25)

* 2019 World Happiness Report - Chapter 3: Happiness and Voting Behaviour

* Ni, M. Y., Yao, X. I., Cheung, F., Wu, J. T., Schooling, C. M., Pang, H., & Leung, G. M. (2020). Determinants of physical, mental and social well-being: a longitudinal environment-wide association study. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *49*(2), 380-389.

Supplementary Articles:
Lucas, R. E. (2014). Life satisfaction of US counties predicts population growth. *Social psychological and personality science*, *5*(4), 383-388.
[An empirical study examining the link between subjective well-being and population growth in the US.]

2013 World Happiness Report – Chapter 4: The Objective Benefits of Subjective Well-being
[A review outlining the individual-level benefits of subjective well-being.]

Week 4: Major Events and Well-being
(February 1)

* Cheung, F., Kube, A., Tay, L., Diener, E., Jackson, J. J., Lucas, R. E., ... & Leung, G. M. (2020). The impact of the Syrian conflict on population well-being. *Nature communications*, *11*(1), 1-10.

* 2021 World Happiness Report - Chapter 2: World Happiness, Trust and Deaths under COVID-19

Supplementary Articles:
Aknin, L., De Neve, J. E., Dunn, E., Fancourt, D., Goldberg, E., Helliwell, J. F., ... & Ben Amor, Y. (2021). Mental health during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic: A review and recommendations for moving forward. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.
[Reviewing how subjective well-being and mental health change during COVID-19]

Deaton, A. (2012). The financial crisis and the well-being of Americans 2011 OEP Hicks Lecture. *Oxford economic papers*, *64*(1), 1-26.
[Testing whether the 2008 Recession impacted subjective well-being]

Deaton, A., & Stone, A. A. (2016). Understanding context effects for a measure of life evaluation: How responses matter. *Oxford Economic Papers*, *68*(4), 861-870.
[A follow-up article focused on the question order effect identified in the Deaton, 2012 paper.]

Luhmann, M., Hofmann, W., Eid, M., & Lucas, R. (2012). Subjective Well-Being and Adaptation to Life Events: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *102*(3), 592-615.
[Reviewing how subjective well-being changes in reaction to individual-level major life events.]

Rehdanz, K., Welsch, H., Narita, D., & Okubo, T. (2015). Well-being effects of a major natural disaster: The case of Fukushima. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *116*, 500-517.
[Limited well-being impact of a major natural and technological disaster.]

Week 5: Money and Happiness I
(February 8)

* Easterlin, R. A. & O'Connor, K. (2020). The Easterlin Paradox. *IZA Discussion Paper*, No. 13923, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3743147

* Sacks, D. W., Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2012). The new stylized facts about income and subjective well-being. *Emotion*, *12*(6), 1181-1187.

Supplementary Articles:
Jebb, A. T., Tay, L., Diener, E., & Oishi, S. (2018). Happiness, income satiation and turning points around the world. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *2*(1), 33-38.
[Individual-level research on money and happiness.]

Karapetoff, W. (1903). On life-satisfaction. *American Journal of Sociology*, *8*(5), 681-686.
[It is not economic growth per se – happiness is driven by the change in growth.]

Nakazato, N., Schimmack, U., & Oishi, S. (2011). Effect of changes in living conditions on well-being: A prospective top–down bottom–up model. *Social Indicators Research*, *100*(1), 115-135.
[Does moving to a nicer house improve well-being?]

Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2008). Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 2008(1), 1-87.
[A long but detailed paper against the Easterlin Paradox.]

Week 6: Money and Happiness II
(February 15)

* Cheung, F. (2018). Income redistribution predicts greater life satisfaction across individual, national, and cultural characteristics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *115*(5), 867-882.

* Starmans, C., Sheskin, M., & Bloom, P. (2017). Why people prefer unequal societies. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *1*(4), 0082.

Supplementary articles:

Schneider, S. M. (2016). Income inequality and subjective wellbeing: Trends, challenges, and research directions. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *17*(4), 1719-1739.
[A review on the mixed empirical findings on income inequality and subjective well-being.]

Ludwig, J., Duncan, G. J., Gennetian, L. A., Katz, L. F., Kessler, R. C., Kling, J. R., & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). Neighborhood effects on the long-term well-being of low-income adults. *Science*, *337*(6101), 1505-1510.
[An intervention study examining the impact of neighborhood poverty on well-being.]

Week 7: Possible Interventions
(March 1)

* IJzerman, H., Lewis, N. A., Przybylski, A. K., Weinstein, N., DeBruine, L., Ritchie, S. J., ... & Anvari, F. (2020). Use caution when applying behavioural science to policy. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *4*(11), 1092-1094.

* White, C. A., Uttl, B., & Holder, M. D. (2019). Meta-analyses of positive psychology interventions: The effects are much smaller than previously reported. *PloS one*, *14*(5), e0216588.

* 2019 Global Happiness and Well-being Policy Report – Chapter 6: Well-Being Interventions to Improve Societies

Supplementary articles:

[These are cases studies of well-being in specific countries, with suggestions on potential interventions.]

2020 World Happiness Report – Chapter 7: The Nordic Exceptionalism: What Explains Why the Nordic Countries Are Constantly Among the Happiest in the World

2018 World Happiness Report – Chapter 6: Happiness in Latin America Has Social Foundations

2016 Canadian Index of Well-being Report: How are Canadians really doing?

Week 8: The Role of Well-being in Policymaking
(March 8)

* 2019 Global Happiness and Well-being Policy Report – Chapter 8: Adopting a Well-Being Approach in Central Government: Policy Mechanisms and Practical Tools

* 2013 World Happiness Report – Chapter 6: Using Well-being as a Guide to Policy

Supplementary articles:
Veenhoven, R. (2004). Happy life years: A measure of gross national happiness. In K. Ura & K. Galay (Eds.), Gross national happiness and development (pp. 287–318). Thimphu, Bhutan: The Centre for Bhutan Studies.
[An interesting proposal for a new measure to track societal progress.]

Blanchflower, D. G., & Oswald, A. J. (2004). Well-being over time in Britain and the USA. *Journal of Public Economics*, *88*(7-8), 1359-1386.
[An early demonstration of using well-being data to value non-monetary outcomes.]

2021 World Happiness Report – Chapter 8: Living Long and Living Well:
The WELLBY Approach

Week 9: Students' Choice
(March 15)

2 readings TBD – The class will vote on a topic for further discussion.

Week 10: World Happiness Report 2023 / Student Presentations
(March 22)

World Happiness Report is published every year on March 20th.

* WHR 2023 Chapter 2

Week 11: World Happiness Report 2023 / Student Presentations
(March 29)

* 1 Chapter from WHR 2023

Week 12: World Happiness Report 2023 / Student Presentations
(April 5)

* 1 Chapter from WHR 2023