

2023-04-20

# **The Social Psychology of Health and Well-Being**

**Fall 2023, The Swedish Program, Stockholm School of Economics**

**Locations:** See schedule

**Time:** Wednesdays 13:15 – 16:00

**Instructor:** Philip Gustafsson

## **Course description**

Psychological well-being among undergraduate students is a growing research topic among researchers, and for good reason; stress and anxiety about friendship, love, financial security, pandemics and the future of the planet occupy the minds of many.

We will examine research in Social psychology that analyzes current societal conditions in many western societies—conditions that are creating an increase in stress and anxiety among many young people. Relatedly, we will examine psychological coping strategies and address research on happiness, with the goal to promote mental health and general well-being. These aspects will be examined in relation to different gender and ethnic identities, including cultural notions of success and failure (in school, at work, during leisure, and in personal relationships). We will also pay attention to the effects of social media use on one's sense of personal identity. Throughout these endeavors, our comparative lens will emphasize empirical research in Social psychology that concern mental health and well-being among college-aged populations in the U.S. and Sweden, underscoring both differences and similarities in mental-health indicators.

This course can typically be accredited by Psychology Departments as a Social psychology course. As such, we will also attempt to weave in some of the major theories in Social psychology into the course.

Prerequisite: one course in Psychology.

## **Course requirements and examinations**

**In-class quizzes:** At the beginning of each lecture (except the introduction), there will be a short in-class quiz (15 minutes) based on the literature for the lecture. You will be answering 1-2 questions that cover the main content of the literature. Each quiz will be followed by a discussion on the correct answers and the reading more generally. The goal of these quizzes is to help you better and consistently learn the material, with the added benefit of helping you monitor and improve your grade. There will be 10 quizzes in total, but only the 8 best results count towards your final grade! (No supplementary quizzes are provided for missed attendance. If you miss a quiz for any reason, that quiz will need to be one of the two quizzes you drop.)

**Active participation:** This course takes an interactive approach that requires engaged participation from all members of the class. Your presence is essential to the liveliness of the course. Therefore, regular attendance is expected and considered mandatory. One absence is permitted; each subsequent unexcused absence will lower the overall participation grade by one step (A → A-).

Everybody should behave respectfully in the classroom. This includes coming to class on time, giving speakers undivided attention, addressing classmates and the instructor with respect, and refraining from academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, taking credit for the work of others, etc.).

**Student presentation:** In small groups of 2 to 3 students, you will prepare a presentation and lead a discussion on one of the lecture's main topics. In the presentation, you will be expected to present scientific literature that goes beyond the mandatory reading. Here, you are free to choose your own focus of interest (within the lecture's main topic!). The presentation should not exceed 30 minutes and should engage your fellow students. Feel free to include interactive elements, such as small in-class survey's, exercises, role play, etc. More details will be provided later.

**Final paper (2500 – 3500 words):** The final exam is a thorough examination of a phenomenon related to a class topic that you find especially interesting, and is carried out in the form of a literature review. More details on the final paper will be provided during the first lecture. Delayed submissions will lower the grade of the paper one step for each day of delay (1 day delay: A → A-, 2 days delay: A→B).

**Final paper proposal (500 words/1 page):** To make sure you are on the right track, you will submit a final paper proposal that outlines the topic and approach of your final paper. More details will be provided during the first lecture. Delayed submissions will lower the grade of the paper proposal one step for each day of delay (1 day delay: A → A-, 2 days delay:A→B).

### Calculation of the final grade

In-class quizzes (the best 8 of 10 count)	20 %
Active participation	20%
Student presentation (group assignment)	20%
Final paper (10 page)	30%
Final paper proposal (1 page)	10%

## Required readings

We will not follow a textbook during this course. Instead, we will read relevant publications that review topics of our interest and present important studies. The readings are diverse, but they are always related to the theme of the seminar, that is, they address different mental health issues and challenges to well-being that (young) adults may face, as well as concern factors that promote mental health and well-being. Some articles are specifically chosen to address mental health and well-being issues affecting youth in Sweden and the US. The selected materials will be distributed on the web-page for the course.

Note: The articles listed below may be subject to change. **Red = newly updated in this version.**

## Lectures

### 1. Introduction: Decreasing well-being among young Americans and Swedes

Denizet-Lewis, B. (2017). Why are more American teenagers than ever suffering from severe anxiety? *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/magazine/why-are-more-american-teenagers-than-ever-suffering-from-severe-anxiety.html>

Savage, M. (2019). Burnout is rising in the land of work-life balance. *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190719-why-is-burnout-rising-in-the-land-of-work-life-balance>

### 2. The well-being of international students

Hendrickson, B., Rosen, D., & Kelly Aune, R. (2010). An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3), 281-295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.08.001>

Szabo, A., Ward, C., & Jose, P. E. (2015). Uprooting stress, coping, and anxiety: A longitudinal study of international students. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 23(2), 190–208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039771>

### 3. Happiness in Sweden and the USA

Martela, F., Greve, B., Rothstein, B., & Saari, J. (2020). The Nordic exceptionalism: What explains why the Nordic countries are constantly among the happiest in the world? *WorldHappiness Report*, Chapter 7.

Connolly, F., & Johansson Sevä, I., (2018). Social status and life satisfaction in context: A comparison between Sweden and the USA. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 8(2), 110-134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v8i2.710>

### 4. Gender and well-being

Rosenfield, S., Vertefuille, J., & McAlpine, D. D. (2000). Gender stratification and mental health: An exploration of dimensions of the self. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 208-

223. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695869>

Diamond, L. M., & Alley, J. (2022). Rethinking minority stress: A social safety perspective on the health effects of stigma in sexually-diverse and gender-diverse populations. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 138, 104720. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2022.104720>

## 5. Race/ethnicity and well-being

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2019). *Being Black in the EU. Second European Union minorities and discrimination survey – Summary*. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/being-black-eu-summary>

Bor, J., Venkataramani, A. S., Williams, D. R., & Tsai, R. C. (2018). Police killings and their spillover effects on the mental health of black Americans: A population-based, quasi-experimental study. *Lancet*, 392, 302–310. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31130-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31130-9).

Williams, D. R., Lawrence, J. A., Davis, B. A., & Vu, C. (2019). Understanding how discrimination can affect health. *Health services research*, 54, 1374-1388.

## 6. Individual challenges to well-being: Perfectionism

Levine, S. L., Milyavskaya, M., & Zuroff, D. C. (2020). Perfectionism in the transition to university: Comparing diathesis-stress and downward spiral models of depressive symptoms. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 8(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702619865966>

Ferrari M, Yap K, Scott N, Einstein DA, Ciarrochi J (2018) Self-compassion moderates the perfectionism and depression link in both adolescence and adulthood. *PLoS ONE* 13(2), e0192022. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0192022>

## 7. Remote working and well-being of employees

TBA

TBA

## 8. Global challenges to well-being: Climate change

Taylor, M., & Murray, J. (2020). ‘Overwhelming and terrifying’: The rise of climate anxiety. Experts concerned young people’s mental health particularly hit by reality of the climate crisis. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/10/overwhelming-and-terrifying-impact-of-climate-crisis-on-mental-health>

Doherty, T. J., & Clayton, S. (2011). The psychological impacts of global climate change. *American Psychologist*, 66(4), 265–276. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023141>

Krekel, C., & MacKerron, G. (2020). How environmental quality affects our happiness. *World*

*Happiness Report*, Chapter 5.

**9. Excursion: Nordiska museet “The Arctic – while the ice is melting”**

**10. Cure or curse? Social media and well-being**

Verduyn, P., Ybarra, O., Résibois, M., Jonides, J., & Kross, E. (2017). Do social network sites enhance or undermine subjective well-being? A critical review. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 11(1), 274–302. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12033>

Ho, Y.-C., & Timmermans, E. (2020). Tinder blue, mental flu? Exploring the associations between Tinder use and well-being. *Information Communication and Society*, Online first, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1764606>

**11. Promoting well-being: Friendship & Community**

Deci, E. L., La Guardia, J. G., Moller, A. C., Scheiner, M. J., & Ryan, R. M. (2006). On the benefits of giving as well as receiving autonomy support: Mutuality in close friendships. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 32(3), 313-327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205282148>

Dunn, E. W., Gilbert, D. T., & Wilson, T. D. (2011). If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21(2), 115-125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.02.002>

Helliwell, J. F., Huang, H., Wang, S., & Norton, M. (2020). Social environments for world happiness. *World Happiness Report*, Chapter 2.

**12. Promoting well-being: Healthy behaviors**

Chekroud, S. R., Gueorguieva, R., Zheutlin, A. B., Paulus, M., Krumholz, H. M., Krystal, J. H., & Chekroud, A. M. (2018). Association between physical exercise and mental health in 1,2 million individuals in the USA between 2011 and 2015: A cross-sectional study. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 5(9), 739-746. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(18\)30227-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30227-X)

Carrus, G., Scopelliti, M., Laforteza, R., Colangelo, G., Ferrini, F., Salbitano, F., ... & Sanesi, G. (2015). Go greener, feel better? The positive effects of biodiversity on the well-being of individuals visiting urban and peri-urban green areas. *Landscape and urban planning*, 134, 221-228.