

# Session 5: Putting it all together

L4 Positive psychology  
Steve Draper

13 Feb 2014

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/posl4.html> 1

# OMP (one minute paper)

Don't put your name on it.

Phase 1: Take a piece of paper, and spend a minute writing down the thing you felt was best; the thing you thought was worst; and the thing you would most like changed. Don't put your name on it. Put it to one side.

- What is the best thing about it for you?
- What is the worst thing about it for you?
- What could be improved?

*Phase 2: Take the same piece of paper. Edit and/or add to it. Hand it in (no names, anonymously) at the front before you leave.*

# **Round Robin of the topics**

**One sentence each**

# Interactive fruit machine (12)

<http://www.classtools.net/random-name-picker/>

- 1 Balanced time perspective
- 2 Altruism
- 3 False praise: self-esteem vs. resilience
- 4 Gratitude and Education
- 5 Owning a pet animal
- 6 PosPsy for clinical benefits
- 7 PosPsy for non-clinical benefits
- 8 Writing cures
- 9 PosPsy is only remarketing traditional topics
- 10 Rebalancing good and bad perspectives
- 11 Social not solo exercises
- 12 Strengths vs. developing new abilities
- 13 Volunteering
- 14 Can money buy happiness?
- 15 Can you booze your way to happiness?
- 16 Meaning in Life
- 17 CBM: cognitive bias modification
- 18 Mindfulness
- 19 Educational benefits of mindfulness

# **The wiki coursework: The wider learning objectives**

# Learning objectives for the wiki exercise

- It “covers” the course topics without needing the class time and work by me to do so.
- Produces work of real value to others (peers): self-efficacy
- Requires respectful valuing of peers when you use their work (Aronson's jigsaw effect)
- Maintain peer contact and interaction in level 4
- Experience of collaboration and division of labour (employability)
- Learn by teaching (the teacher always learns more)
- Learning a different kind of writing
- Gain some wiki technology experience

# Coursework issues

For marking purposes only, a copy of the wikis will be taken at midnight next Thursday. (The course may be frozen for a bit.)

The wikis and forums should then remain open until the exams, and you can choose to add to them and continue the collaborative effort of this class. The value of learning by teaching still applies to this.

What do you feel about opening the wikis for reading to the wider world? Want to keep them private to this class, or may I open them for others to use?

# Issues (2)

For marking purposes only, a copy of the wikis will be taken at midnight next Thursday.

## Division of labour within a group.

Before then, please post in your group's forum a clear statement about the division of labour amongst you. If someone dropped out of your group, state this and their name to remind me.

You may either:

- Post a single joint message you have all agreed about this
- Or each post a personal message about your contribution

**Towards exam strategies:**

**Underlying themes in PosPsy**

# **Underlying cross-topic themes**

A] Attributions. Single idea of rebalancing your interpretation of events, rather than remaining stuck with your first impression. Realism, not pessimism or daft optimism.

Acceptance of one's feelings, but not mistaking them for accurate perceptions.

[Learned optimism, gratitude, positive emotions, bad drives out good, mindfulness, ]

B] Satisfaction depends on something other than surface measures. Something to do with meaning.

## B] Well-being

A basic idea is that happiness isn't just pleasure;  
Nor joy (the name of the transient emotional reaction to an  
unexpectedly favourable event)

But involves “meaning” i.e. goals beyond the material and  
personal

However “well-being” seems to emphasise a less conscious  
balance than “happiness”, both in body and mind.

The recent finding that exercise is as effective as the best anti-depressants, seems to show that people generally are not aware of well-being and what supports it.

A cross-topic theme could be: how does each topic in posPsy relate to well-being? Do any fail to relate?

# B (cont.)] Definitions?

How would you define, or (in a critical exam essay) debate, alternative definitions of:

Pleasure

Joy

Happiness

Well-being

Conscious or unconscious?

Positive psychology?

# **Underlying cross-topic themes (cont.)**

A third possible theme [C] is what is common to:

- Flow
- Strengths approach
- Burden of choice
- Simplify your life / time affluence

They are related by ?

1. Reduce choice / thought during action
2. Consider what processes you intrinsically enjoy (not just what effects/products you want)

What might we call this theme?

# Cross-topic themes list

- A. Attributions
- B. Happiness? well-being .... meaning.
- C. (previous slide issue: ...)
- D. Religion and cultural practices
- E. Self-help
- F. Types of awareness or consciousness: (and promoting preferred ones)
- G. Focus on and favour the processes you most enjoy
- H. Evidence: strong / weak / non-existent
- I. (Re-)Interpreting meanings (e.g. of events)
- J. Rebranding. Which part of non-Positive-psych might topic X be part of?
- K. Solo vs. social perspectives.

# Revision and exam approaches

Exam questions will mostly be or assume:

"Take 2 or more topics in positive psychology and discuss the issue in the question, illustrating both sides of it (i.e. for and against any claim) with examples from those topics".

Topics: mindfulness, Good drives out bad, volunteering, ....

Questions:

- 1) any "theme" makes a good question
- 2) General questions: what is best/worst supported empirically?; what illuminates something general about the human mind?  
Some of this year's wiki topics are general questions e.g. writing cures.

# **Revision approaches**

See my web document "A note on exams and this course"

Basically: pick a few basic topics that contrast with each other.

Practise!

# **Example exam questions**

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 1.**

To what extent is positive psychology just a translation / relabelling of ancient religious and cultural practices?

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 1.**

To what extent is positive psychology just a translation / relabelling of ancient religious and cultural practices?

Theme: religion and cultural practices

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 2.**

One idea is to "be in the moment", aware of your actions and the present reality of the external world. Another idea is about reflecting upon or "working through" past events and feelings. What does Positive Psychology have to say about each of these apparently opposed ideas, and is there a contradiction here?

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 2.**

One idea is to "be in the moment", aware of your actions and the present reality of the external world. Another idea is about reflecting upon or "working through" past events and feelings. What does Positive Psychology have to say about each of these apparently opposed ideas, and is there a contradiction here?

Theme: consciousness and reinterpreting the meaning of events

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 3.**

Pick two or more specific topics in positive psychology. In what ways do they qualify as belonging to positive psychology, and in what ways might they be seen as belonging to other areas in psychology?

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 3.**

Pick two or more specific topics in positive psychology. In what ways do they qualify as belonging to positive psychology, and in what ways might they be seen as belonging to other areas in psychology?

Theme: Rebranding

Other wording: Evaluate the following claim: "Positive psychology adds nothing new".

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 4.**

Discuss critically the best and worst established areas of PosPsy  
that you know of, in terms of empirical results

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 4.**

Discuss critically the best and worst established areas of PosPsy  
that you know of, in terms of empirical results

Theme: Evidence strength

But perhaps better: exercise, mindfulness: interventions  
that are not part of standard clinical repertoire (drugs, surgery, ...)

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 5.**

What have clinical approaches got to learn from positive psychology?

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 5.**

What have clinical approaches got to learn from positive psychology?

Theme: Simple CR of pospsy clinical results

But perhaps better: exercise, mindfulness: interventions that are not part of standard clinical repertoire (drugs, surgery, ...)

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 6.**

Should Positive psychology be about rebalancing, or about pushing towards the more "positive"? Is there never any merit in reminding ourselves of those who don't have enough to eat, did not grow up in a loving family? Why is this not recommended and practised? Should we push ourselves and others always towards more positive emotions, more exercise, etc. without limit? Should this be warned against?

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 7.**

Discuss whether there are any validated self-help exercises in positive psychology, and how strong the evidence of benefits is. Mention at least one example where the evidence is relatively strong, and at least one where it is absent or weak.

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 7.**

Discuss whether there are any validated self-help exercises in positive psychology, and how strong the evidence of benefits is. Mention at least one example where the evidence is relatively strong, and at least one where it is absent or weak.

Theme: Self-help

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 8.**

How much of PosPsy is related to the single idea of rebalancing your interpretation of events, rather than remaining stuck with your first impression?

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 8.**

How much of PosPsy is related to the single idea of rebalancing your interpretation of events, rather than remaining stuck with your first impression?

Theme: Re-interpretation

# **Exam questions; answer sketches 9.**

What is the most impressive finding so far in PosPsy (and why might a sceptic be forced to agree with you)?

# Exam questions; answer sketches 9.

What is the most impressive finding so far in PosPsy (and why might a sceptic be forced to agree with you)?

*Theme: -- (possibly evidence strength; but novelty or something else might count)*

# **Course evaluation**

## **Part 2**

# OMP

Don't put your name on it.

*Phase 1: Take a piece of paper, and spend a minute writing down the thing you felt was best; the thing you thought was worst; and the thing you would most like changed. Don't put your name on it. Put it to one side.*

- What is the best thing about it for you?
- What is the worst thing about it for you?
- What could be improved?

Phase 2: Take the same piece of paper. Edit and/or add to it. Hand it in (no names, anonymously) at the front before you leave.

# A few other questions

Take A second sheet of paper.

Don't put your name on it.

1. Do you think you will find other groups' wikis useful to you?
2. Was the wiki creation exercise good in itself?
3. Was your group collaboration good for you, or would it have been better for you doing it alone?

# A place to stop

For the slides, handout etc. see:

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/posl4.html>