

Arts and Sciences Summer 2020
Happiness in Western Thought, Art, and Culture (CLCV14019 Sec 94)
University of Chicago

This course will explore “happiness” as a set of ideas, artifacts, and problems in the cultures of Europe and the Americas. We will study works ranging from ancient Greek and Roman philosophy to modern short stories, lyric poems, and films, by authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Seneca, Kant, Mill, Keats, Shelley, and Dickinson. As we do so, we will examine the different definitions and understandings of happiness put forward by these texts. “Happiness” is defined sometimes as a set of qualities of a human life that make it worth living and worthy of praise, and sometimes as a set of thoughts and feelings that give a sense of satisfaction and meaning. Sometimes happiness is defined in terms of an individual’s experience, and sometimes it is seen as something achieved in community. Finally, we will ask if it makes sense to speak of specifically “Western” notions of happiness, and how a different cultural or historical perspective can affect our understanding of the texts we will study and the views of happiness they exemplify.

Schedule of Meetings and Readings
Monday July 13 – Friday July 31 (Central Time)

Course logistics:

The *synchronous* portion of this course consists of two hour-long sessions, A and B. These will be held on Zoom, Monday through Friday 8:00-9:00PM (Session A) and 9:00-10:00PM (Session B). Note that for students on Beijing time, course meetings will be Tuesday through Saturday 9:00-10:00AM (Session A) and 10:00-11:10AM (Session B).

The *asynchronous* portions of the course will be different for the two sessions. For Session A, your asynchronous assignment for each day is to add a 75-100 word post to a discussion board, answering some questions about the day’s assigned reading. Discussion posts will generally be due by 10:59AM Central time (=11:59PM Beijing time) before the next synchronous class meeting.

For Session B, your asynchronous assignments consist in a series of “quests” that you will complete in teams. At the end of our first Tuesday meeting you will be assigned to a team of 4-5 students, and the first series of quests will be released on Canvas. New weekly quests will be released every Monday 10PM Central Time (=Tuesday 11AM Beijing time). Quests will be based on readings and concepts from the course, and you will have to work with everyone on your team to complete them for points. Your team is tasked with completing a minimum of five quests each week. You can submit completed quests through Canvas as you complete them, but the official due date for weekly quests will be Sunday 10:59AM Central Time (=11:59PM Beijing Time).

All assignments will be posted in modules on the canvas course page.

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Week One (July 13 – 17)

SESSION A (8:00-9:00PM)
Central (Chicago) Time

SESSION B (9:00-10:00PM)
Central (Chicago) Time

Tuesday July 14

I n t r o d u c t i o n s a n d l o g i s t i c s

Writing Workshop

- Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener”
- What is an argument?
- Claim, evidence, and reason

Wednesday July 15

- Plato, “Allegory of the Cave” from *The Republic*
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*: Poem, Chs. 1 & 2 (pp. 3-11)
- Richard Brian Davis, *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy: Curiouser and Curiouser*, Introduction
- Marah Gubar, “The Victorian Child”

Thursday July 16

- Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, Chs. 3 & 4 (pp. 12-20)
- Mark Cieslik, “Not Smiling but Frowning: Sociology and the ‘Problem of Happiness’.”

Friday July 17

- Epictetus / Marcus Aurelius, selections
- Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, Chs. 5 & 6 (pp. 21-32)
- [Virtual Field trip: Chicago Riverwalk](#)
- Film discussion: Richard Linklater, *Waking Life* (2001)

Week Two (July 20 – 24)

SESSION A (8:00-9:00PM)

SESSION B (9:00-10:00pm)

Monday July 20

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origins of Equality,” First Part
- Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, Chs. 7-9 (pp. 33-50)
- Elijah Milgram, “Virtue for Procrastinators”
- Davis Ch.2, “Jam Yesterday, Jam Tomorrow, but Never Jam Today”
- Jennifer M. Kosmas, “The Roots of Procrastination: A Sociological Inquiry into Why I Wait Until Tomorrow.”

Tuesday July 21

Writing Workshop

- Rousseau, “Discourse on Inequality” Second Part
- Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, Chs. 10-12 (pp. 52-66)
- Introductions
- Analysis of texts

Wednesday July 22

- Jens Eder, “Ways of Being Close to Characters”
- Film discussion: David Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999)

[Virtual Field Trip: Team Presentations](#)

Thursday July 23

- Kant, *Groundwork*, First Section
- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Poem, Chs. 1 & 2 (pp. 6-18)
- Davis Ch. 9, “Alice, Perception, and Reality: Jell-O Mistaken for Stones.”
- Davis Ch. 5, “Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast.”
- Charles Horton Cooley, “The Looking-Glass Self.”

Friday July 24

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chs. 1-2
- Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chs. 3 & 4 (pp. 19-33)
- Davis Ch. 10, “How Deep Does the Rabbit Hole Go?”
- Jefferson Airplane, *White Rabbit*
- [Psychedelic Interpretations](#)

Week Three (July 27 – 31)

SESSION A (8:00-9:00PM)

SESSION B (9:00-10:00PM)

Monday July 27

- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 3
- Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chs. 5 & 6 (pp. 34-48)
- Film discussion: *Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland* (1951)

Tuesday July 28

- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 4
- Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chs. 7 & 8 (pp. 49-65)
- Davis Ch. 4, "You're Nothing but a Pack of Cards!": Alice Doesn't Have a Social Contract."
- Stephen G. Salkever, "Rousseau & the Concept of Happiness."

Wednesday July 29

- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 5
- Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chs. 9-12 (pp. 66-80)
- Davis Ch. 8, "Is There Such a Thing as a Language?"
- Song Hwee Lim, "How to be Queer in Taiwan: Translation, Appropriation, and the Construction of a Queer Identity in Taiwan."

Thursday July 30

- Film discussion: Tim Burton, *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)
- Davis Ch. 1, "Unruly Alice: A Feminist View of Some Adventures in Wonderland."
- Sara Ahmed, "Killing Joy: Feminism and the Promise of Happiness."

Friday July 31

Photography Presentations

Closing Ceremonies