

PSY 455

Positive Psychology

Summer 2026

Online Asynchronous | 3 Credits

Course Number	PSY 455
Course Title	Positive Psychology
Department	Psychology
Term	Summer 2026
Credits	3
Format	Online asynchronous
Canvas	https://chaminade.instructure.com/

Instructor Information

Instructor	Abby Halston, Ed.D., NCC, LMFT
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Office Location	Behavioral Sciences 111A
Office Hours	Mondays, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., and by appointment

Course Description and Overview

University Course Catalog Description

This course provides an in-depth overview of the rapidly growing field of positive psychology. Human resiliency, coping, strengths, resources, and wellness are central to this area of scientific study, which is dedicated to maximizing human potential, well-being, and happiness. The course focuses on the psychological aspects of a fulfilling and flourishing life. Other topics include optimism, self-esteem, empathy, friendship, love, achievement, creativity, spirituality, and humor.

Course Overview

This course introduces the science of happiness, well-being, flourishing, and the positive aspects of human experience. Students will examine the biological, psychological, social, and emotional factors that contribute to well-being, review the research supporting these concepts, and participate in evidence-based experiential

activities designed to enhance well-being. Students will also complete an evidence-based positive-change process using validated questionnaires and positive psychology interventions.

Mission and Values

Marianist Values

An education in the Marianist Tradition is marked by five principles. Students are encouraged to reflect on the role of these characteristics in their education and development:

1. Education for formation in faith
2. Provide an integral, quality education
3. Educate in family spirit
4. Educate for service, justice, and peace
5. Educate for adaptation and change

Native Hawaiian Values

Education is an integral value in both Marianist and Native Hawaiian culture. Both recognize the transformative effect of a well-rounded, value-centered education on society, particularly in seeking justice for the marginalized, forgotten, and oppressed, always with an eye toward God (Ke Akua).

- 1. Formation in Faith (Mana):** E ola au i ke akua (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 364) - May I live by God.
- 2. Integral, Quality Education (Na‘auao):** Lawe i ka ma‘alea a kū‘ono‘ono (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 1957) - Acquire skill and make it deep.
- 3. Family Spirit (‘Ohana):** ‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku kōkua mai; pēlā iho lā ka nohona ‘ohana (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 1200) - Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped; such is a family relationship.
- 4. Service, Justice, and Peace (Aloha):** Ka lama kū o ka no‘eau (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 1430) - Education is the standing torch of wisdom.
- 5. Adaptation and Change (‘Āina):** ‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi (‘Ōlelo No‘eau 203) - All knowledge is not taught in the same school.

Learning Outcomes

Psychology Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. Identify key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology.
2. Demonstrate adaptation and change through critical interpretation, design, and evaluation of psychological research.
3. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication within the field of psychology.
4. Explain the dynamic interaction among mind, body, and social influences as part of educating the whole person.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1.** Articulate insight into personal strengths and virtues using positive psychology concepts intended to increase happiness and overall quality of life. (PLOs 1 and 2)
- 2.** Explain the scientific method and research as applied to positive psychology principles, strategies, and skills. (PLOs 2, 3, and 4)
- 3.** Analyze the influence of cultural diversity and ethical considerations within positive psychology. (PLOs 2 and 4)
- 4.** Apply evidence-based positive psychology strategies to support well-being, resilience, and flourishing in diverse individuals and communities. (PLOs 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Program Linking Statement

This course develops and assesses skills and competencies associated with applied psychology. It also addresses the program learning outcomes related to the scientific method and its application in psychology, as well as cross-cultural psychology.

Articulation of Characteristics and Values

Although all five Marianist characteristics are present in this course, particular attention is given to educating for adaptation and change. The course examines ways to adapt emotions, motivation, well-being, mindfulness, health, and spirituality in response to rapid social and technological change.

Alignment of Learning Outcomes

Alignment	CLO 1	CLO 2	CLO 3	CLO 4
Marianist Value	4	4	4	4
Program Learning Outcomes	1, 2	2, 3, 4	2, 4	1, 2, 3, 4

Course Requirements and Learning Materials

Prerequisites

Prerequisites are EN 102 and PSY 101. Students should have reliable internet access and strong time-management skills. Students experiencing difficulty progressing through the course should contact an advisor at flex@chaminade.edu.

Required Text

Compton, W. C., & Hoffman, E. (2020). *Positive psychology: The science of happiness and flourishing* (3rd ed.). SAGE. ISBN 978-1-5443-2292-6.

Technology Requirements

- Reliable access to a PC or Mac computer and the internet.
- Speakers or headphones for audio and video materials.
- Ability to stream video, play MP3/MP4 files, and read PDF documents.
- Access to Canvas at <https://chaminade.instructure.com/>.

For technical assistance, contact the Chaminade IT Help Desk at helpdesk@chaminade.edu or 808-735-4855.

Tutoring and Writing Support

Kōkua 'Ike: Center for Student Learning provides free one-on-one tutoring and writing assistance. For information, contact tutoring@chaminade.edu or 808-739-8305.

Assessment and Grading

Assessment Summary

Assessment	Quantity / Value	Points
End-of-Chapter Personal Explorations	12 activities × 6 points	72
Chapter Quizzes	12 quizzes × 7.5 points	90
Journal Article Reviews	7 reviews	24
Mindfulness Term Paper	Final paper	60
Total Possible Points	As listed in original syllabus	266

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Assignment Descriptions

End-of-Chapter Personal Explorations

Students will complete an end-of-chapter activity that supports deeper exploration of core concepts in a 2-3 page summary. Because several activities require tracking behaviors or thoughts throughout the week, students should review each activity at the beginning of the week.

Chapter Quizzes

Students will complete one quiz for each assigned chapter to demonstrate comprehension of key concepts.

Journal Article Reviews

Students will review seven journal articles related to positive psychology to strengthen their understanding of theory, sample populations, research methods, and findings in the field.

Mindfulness Term Paper

Students will examine the theory, research, and application of mindfulness for one selected population: children, adolescents, or adults. The paper must include: (1) a theory section explaining why mindfulness may be effective for the selected population; (2) a research section summarizing the literature; (3) a case example showing how mindfulness practices and techniques could be applied; and (4) directions for future research and clinical exploration. Multicultural and diversity considerations should be integrated throughout, including reflection on how personal values, cultural identity, and beliefs influence the student's perspective.

Course Policies

Instructor Communication

Email the instructor directly at abby.halston@chaminade.edu. The expected response time is 24-48 hours.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to remain active in Canvas and complete all required assignments and examinations by the final day of the course. Students should notify the instructor promptly when illness or other extenuating circumstances interfere with participation. Students who stop participating without officially withdrawing may receive a failing grade or be withdrawn at the instructor's discretion.

Grades of Incomplete

A student in good standing may petition the instructor for an Incomplete only when extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control prevent completion of course requirements. The completion, evaluation, and reporting of the final grade are generally due within 30 days after the end of the term, unless an approved exception applies.

Writing and APA Style

Written assignments must use APA style. Any assignment using outside research must include appropriate in-text citations and a reference list. Students must cite direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of others' work.

Academic Conduct

Students are expected to follow the standards of academic honesty and conduct described in the Chaminade University Student Handbook. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, theft or alteration of records, may result in academic and disciplinary consequences.

Disability Access

Students who need accommodations should contact Kōkua 'Ike: Center for Student Learning as early as possible. For information, contact ada@chaminade.edu or 808-739-8305.

Title IX Compliance

Chaminade University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Faculty members are required to report disclosures of sexual misconduct, physical abuse, or psychological abuse to the Title IX Coordinator. Students may seek support through appropriate campus resources.

Credit Hour Policy

Each Chaminade University credit hour represents 45 hours of student engagement. Accordingly, this three-credit course requires a minimum of 135 hours of engagement. These hours may include online instruction and interaction, extensive reading, research, quizzes or examinations, written assignments, and preparation of papers or other assessments.

Course Activity	Estimated Hours
Chapter reading	30
Chapter assessments	40
Journal article research	20
Final research paper	30
Final examination	15
Total	135

Student Resources

Resource	Support Provided
Sullivan Family Library	Research support and access to scholarly literature.
Kōkua 'Ike	Tutoring, writing support, and disability accommodations.
Purdue OWL	Writing, paper organization, and APA-style guidance.
Chaminade IT Help Desk	Canvas and technology support: helpdesk@chaminade.edu 808-735-4855.

Appendix: Scientific Method Definitions

The methods of science are tools used to obtain knowledge about phenomena. The scientific method is a set of assumptions and rules for collecting and evaluating data. These explicit rules support a standard, systematic method of investigation designed to reduce bias. Central to the scientific method is the collection of data, which allows investigators to test ideas empirically.

Science is a mode of controlled inquiry used to develop an objective, effective, and credible way of knowing. Scientific inquiry seeks to advance knowledge, make discoveries, establish relationships among events, develop theories, and support predictions.

A theory is a broad body of interconnected propositions about how some portion of the world operates. A hypothesis is a more specific proposition that may be derived from a theory or from an initial research question. Research may support or fail to support a hypothesis; it does not directly prove a theory.

Scientific research has four general goals: to describe behavior, predict behavior, determine causes of behavior, and understand or explain behavior. Replication and the accumulation of evidence strengthen confidence in research findings.