

College of Education and Human Development

Department of Psychology

PSY 455: Positive Psychology

Online Asynchronous (Flex) | Credits: 3 | Section: #455-90-9 | Term: Fall 2026 | 8/17/2026 – 12/11/2026

Instructor Information

Instructor	Dr. Abby Halston, Ed.D, NCC, LMFT-S
Brief Intro	Dr. Halston is an Associate Professor and Undergraduate Chair of Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu, where she also serves as Clinical Director of the MSCP Marriage and Family Therapy Emphasis. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist supervisor with extensive experience in behavioral health, positive psychology, and educational psychology.
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Phone	808-739-4641
Office Location	Behavioral Sciences 111A
Virtual Office Hours	Mondays 8am to 10am

Communication

I will respond to Canvas Inbox messages and emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday. If you leave a question in an assignment comment in Canvas, please allow up to 48 hours for a response, as Canvas sends me a notification once per day. For urgent matters, email is best.

School & Department

School	College of Education and Human Development
Location	Behavioral Sciences Building
Phone	(808) 739-4641
Questions?	Contact Dr. Halston or the College of Education and Human Development

Course Description & Materials

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 all central to the field of positive psychology, an area of scientific study 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.

Prerequisites: EN 102 and PSY 101.

Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to the science related to happiness, well-being, flourishing, and the positive aspects of human experience. Students will gain an understanding of what contributes to well-being and how to build the enabling

conditions of a life worth living. Each week will offer students an opportunity to explore concepts — biological, psychological, social, and emotional — along with the research behind those concepts and evidence-based experiential activities that enhance well-being. Students will engage in a detailed analysis and evidence-based positivity change process utilizing validated questionnaires and positive psychology and well-being enhancing interventions.

Course Snapshot

Modality	Online Asynchronous (Flex) — work at your own pace within weekly modules
Time Commitment	This three-credit course requires a minimum of 135 hours of student engagement, including chapter readings (approx. 30 hrs), chapter assessments (approx. 40 hrs), journal article reviews (approx. 20 hrs), the Mindfulness Term Paper (approx. 30 hrs), and final exam preparation (approx. 15 hrs).
Required Materials	Compton, W. & Hoffman, E. (2020). Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Flourishing (3rd ed.). Sage Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-5443-2292-6
Canvas	This course is delivered through Canvas (chaminade.instructure.com). All assignments, quizzes, announcements, course materials, and grades are accessible through Canvas. Log in regularly and check announcements each week.
Technology	Reliable internet access; ability to stream video, play audio (mp3), watch video (mp4), and open PDF files. For technical assistance: helpdesk@chaminade.edu or 808-735-4855.

Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Upon completion of the Psychology program, the student will be able to:

1. Identify key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology.
2. Exhibit the value of adaptation and change through the critical thinking process of interpretation, design, and evaluation of psychological research.
3. Exhibit effective writing and oral communication skills within the context of the field of psychology.
4. Exhibit the value of educating the whole person through the description and explanation of the dynamic nature between one's mind, body, and social influences.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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

1. Verbalize insight into their own strengths and virtues using positive psychology concepts aimed at increasing happiness and overall quality of life. (PLOs 1 and 2)
2. Explain the scientific method and research as it applies to positive psychology, including research on positive psychology principles, strategies, and skills. (PLOs 2, 3, and 4)
3. Recognize the impact of cultural diversity and ethical issues related to positive psychology. (PLOs 2 and 4)

Marianist Values

This class represents one component of your education at Chaminade University of Honolulu. An education in the Marianist Tradition is marked by five principles, and you should take every opportunity possible to reflect upon the role of these characteristics in your 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, and integrity of creation.

5. Educate for adaptation and change.

While all five characteristics are present in this course, we pay particular attention to Educate for Adaptation and Change. This course demonstrates methods for incorporating complex questions of adapting emotions, motivation, well-being, mindfulness, health, and spirituality to rapid social and technological changes — equipping students with flexible, evidence-based tools for flourishing in a dynamic world.

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, always with an eye toward God (Ke Akua). This is reflected in the 'Ōlelo No'eau (Hawaiian proverbs) below:

1. Educate for Formation in Faith (Mana): E ola au i ke akua ('Ōlelo No'eau 364) — May I live by God.
2. Provide an 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. Educate in Family Spirit ('Ohana): 'Ike aku, 'ike mai, kōkua aku kōkua mai; pēlā iho lā ka nohana 'ohana ('Ōlelo No'eau 1200) — Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped; such is a family relationship.
4. Educate for Service, Justice and Peace (Aloha): Ka lama kū o ka no'eau ('Ōlelo No'eau 1430) — Education is the standing torch of wisdom.
5. Educate for 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.

Alignment of Course Learning Outcomes

Alignment	CLO 1	CLO 2	CLO 3
Marianist Values	4	4	4
PLOs	1, 2	2, 3, 4	2, 4
Native Hawaiian Values	4	4	4

Assessment and Grading

Assessment Summary

Assessment	Quantity / Value	Points
Milestone One: Welcome — Let's Get Acquainted	1 × ungraded (required)	—
End of Chapter Personal Explorations	12 activities × 6 points each	72
Chapter Quizzes	12 quizzes × 7.5 points each	90
Journal Article Reviews	7 reviews × approx. 3.4 points each	24
Mindfulness Term Paper	1 × 60 points	60
Final Examination	1 × 20 points	20
Total Possible Points		266

Grading Scale

Grade	Range
A	90% and above
B	80–89%
C	70–79%
D	60–69%
F	59% and below

Total possible points = 266 points

Assignment Descriptions

Milestone One: Welcome — Let's Get Acquainted (required)

Complete the introductory milestone during Week 1 to establish your presence in the course and become familiar with course expectations. Completion within the first seven days of the course is required to remain enrolled — see Course Policies below.

End of Chapter Personal Explorations (72 points — 12 × 6 points)

For each of the 12 chapters, complete the end-of-chapter personal exploration activity in a 2–3-page written summary. These activities deepen your engagement with core concepts through personal reflection and behavioral tracking. Be sure to read the activity at the start of each week, as many activities ask you to track your behavior or thoughts throughout the week rather than in a single sitting.

Chapter Quizzes (90 points — 12 × 7.5 points)

Complete a chapter quiz for each of the 12 chapters to assess your comprehension of core concepts. Quizzes are available in Canvas and should be completed after finishing the assigned reading.

Journal Article Reviews (24 points — 7 reviews)

Review seven peer-reviewed journal articles related to the field of positive psychology. Each review should summarize the research theory, sample population, and key findings, and connect the article to course concepts. Reviews develop your ability to read and apply primary research in positive psychology.

Mindfulness Term Paper (60 points)

This course explores positive psychology through theory, research, and practical applications. For this paper, you will delve deeply into the research, theory, and applications of mindfulness for a specific population — children, teens, or adults. Your paper must include:

- A theory section explaining why mindfulness could be an effective intervention for your selected population
- A research section summarizing the existing body of literature
- A case example of how you would apply mindfulness in practice, including specific techniques
- Directions for future research and clinical exploration

Multicultural and diversity issues should be integrated throughout the paper, with specific attention to how your personal values, cultural identity, and beliefs inform your perspective. The paper must use APA formatting with a minimum of five credible scholarly sources.

Final Examination (20 points)

The final examination assesses key concepts from across the course. Study guides and preparation materials will be provided in Canvas. Students must begin the exam early enough to complete it before Canvas closes it at the published deadline.

Participation & Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

Student Participation Expectations

This asynchronous course requires consistent, meaningful engagement with content, peers, and the instructor each week. Logging in without completing activities does not count as participation.

Students are expected to:

- Complete assigned readings and activities within designated timeframes — especially important for Personal Explorations that require week-long behavioral tracking.
- Log in regularly to review module instructions, announcements, deadlines, feedback, and grades.
- Contribute substantively to discussions — post original responses and engage thoughtfully with peers within the required window.
- Demonstrate preparation, reflection, and critical thinking in all written and interactive components.
- Meet established deadlines to support collaborative learning and remain on track with the weekly sequence.

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) — Instructor Commitments

- Weekly Communication: Weekly announcements and/or module overviews clarifying objectives, key concepts, and assignment expectations.
- Substantive Engagement: Instructor-facilitated discussion engagement — prompting analysis, clarifying misunderstandings, and connecting posts to course concepts.
- Timely Feedback: Clear grading criteria and substantive feedback on all graded work. Email inquiries: within 24 hours (M–F). Weekly graded work: within 5 school days of the due date. Major assessments: within 7 school days of the due date.
- Monitoring & Outreach: Active monitoring of Canvas engagement with proactive outreach and referrals for students who miss deadlines or fall behind.

Course Policies

Late Work	Because of the flexibility of the Flex online course design, all assignments are accepted through the last day of the course — no late penalty applies. That said, staying on top of weekly work is important, especially for activities that ask you to track behavior throughout the week. If you are falling behind or have a concern, reach out to Dr. Halston as early as possible.
Milestone #1	Milestone One must be completed within the first seven days of the course. Failure to complete Milestone One by this deadline will result in disenrollment from the course in accordance with Flex attendance policy. This is a non-negotiable registration requirement — please complete it as soon as the course opens.
Extra Credit	No extra credit is available in this course. Please plan accordingly and reach out early if you are struggling.
Writing Policy	All written assignments in this course use APA formatting. Refer to the APA Publication Manual (current edition) or the Purdue OWL (owl.purdue.edu) for guidance on citations, references, and paper structure.
Incomplete Grade	An Incomplete may be granted only when extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control prevent course completion and the student has completed a substantial portion of the coursework with a passing grade. A written completion plan identifying remaining work and a deadline is required, per University policy.

Syllabus Changes	The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus. Changes will be communicated via Canvas announcements.
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Final Grades

Final grades are submitted to Self-Service (selfservice.chaminade.edu):

Grade	Range
A	90% and above
B	80–89%
C	70–79%
D	60–69%
F	59% and below

Total possible points = 266 points

Weekly Course Schedule

Specific due dates for all assignments are posted in Canvas. The schedule below summarizes weekly topics, readings, and major assignments. Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule. Changes will be communicated through Canvas announcements.

Week	Topic	Required Reading	Assignments Due
1	Introduction to Positive Psychology & Scientific Method	Introduction; Chapter 1: Evolutionary Theory	Milestone One; Discussion 1; Chapter 1 Quiz
2	Happiness, Well-Being & Positive Emotions	Chapter 2	Chapter 2 Quiz; Chapter 2 Personal Exploration
3	Positive Traits: Strengths, Virtues & Character	Chapter 3	Chapter 3 Quiz; Chapter 3 Personal Exploration
4	Relationships, Love & Positive Connections	Chapter 4	Chapter 4 Quiz; Chapter 4 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 1
5	Optimism, Hope & Resilience	Chapter 5	Chapter 5 Quiz; Chapter 5 Personal Exploration
6	Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy & Motivation	Chapter 6	Chapter 6 Quiz; Chapter 6 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 2
7	Creativity, Achievement & Flow	Chapter 7	Chapter 7 Quiz; Chapter 7 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 3
8	Mindfulness, Meditation & Spirituality	Chapter 8	Chapter 8 Quiz; Chapter 8 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 4
9	Health, Well-Being & Lifestyle	Chapter 9	Chapter 9 Quiz; Chapter 9 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 5
10	Cultural Diversity & Ethics in Positive Psychology	Chapter 10	Chapter 10 Quiz; Chapter 10 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 6
11	Empathy, Compassion & Prosocial Behavior	Chapter 11	Chapter 11 Quiz; Chapter 11 Personal Exploration; Journal Article Review 7

12	Humor, Meaning & Integration of Course Concepts	Chapter 12; Review all course materials	Chapter 12 Quiz; Chapter 12 Personal Exploration; Mindfulness Term Paper; Final Examination
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Required textbook: Compton, W. & Hoffman, E. (2020). Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Flourishing (3rd ed.). Sage Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-5443-2292-6

Important Information

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is an essential aspect of all learning, scholarship, and research. It is one of the values regarded most highly by academic communities throughout the world. Violations of the principle of academic honesty are extremely serious and will not be tolerated.

Students are responsible for promoting academic honesty at Chaminade by not participating in any act of dishonesty and by reporting any incidence of academic dishonesty to an instructor or University official. Academic dishonesty may include theft of records or examinations, alteration of grades, plagiarism, and unauthorized and/or undisclosed AI usage, in addition to more obvious dishonesty. See catalog section Student Use of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Work for further information.

Questions of academic dishonesty are first reviewed by the instructor, who must make a report with recommendations to the Director of the Academic College. Punishment may include an "F" grade for the work in question, an "F" grade for the course, academic notice, or dismissal from the University.

AI (Artificial Intelligence) Statement

Chaminade University recognizes the increasing role of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in academic and professional environments. AI encompasses, but is not limited to, generative AI platforms, automated writing or content generation software, coding assistants, and similar tools. Students must ensure all submitted work genuinely reflects their knowledge and effort. Using AI to produce or significantly complete graded assignments, exams, or other academic tasks — defined as use that substitutes for or substantially replaces a student's own analysis, reasoning, or written expression — without explicit instructor approval is considered academic misconduct and will be handled according to the University's Academic Honesty Policy.

If an instructor has reasonable grounds to question whether submitted work genuinely reflects a student's own knowledge, authorship, or mastery of course material, the instructor may require additional or alternative evidence. A student's refusal or inability to provide such evidence may be considered in evaluating whether the work meets course requirements. See the catalog section Student Use of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Work for further information.

Title IX and Nondiscrimination

Chaminade University of Honolulu is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes the dignity of all people, inclusivity, and mutual respect, and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. As a member of the University faculty, I am required to immediately report any incident of sex discrimination or gender-based violence to the campus Title IX Coordinator.

Contact information and reporting options: chaminade.edu/titleix/nondiscrimination/. File a report via the Campus Incident Report Form at cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ChaminadeUniv&layout_id=0.

Nondiscrimination Policy and Notice of Nondiscrimination

The university is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender identity and expression, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, disability, genetic information, marital status, breastfeeding, arrest and court record (except as permissible under State law), sexual orientation, or status as a covered veteran. Inquiries about Title IX or general Civil Rights concerns may be referred to the University's Title IX Coordinator or the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. The University's Nondiscrimination Policy and Grievance Procedures can be found at: chaminade.edu/compliance/title-ix-nondiscrimination-policies-procedures/.

Student with Disabilities Statement

Kōkua 'Ike Accessibility Services recognizes disability as a valued aspect of diversity and ensures equal access to the educational environment in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (as amended), and the principles of the Association on Higher Education and Disability.

Students seeking support must meet with the Accessibility Services Coordinator as early as possible. Appointments are available through Stellic at chaminade.stellic.com and may be held virtually or in person. Drop-in appointments are also welcome. Learn more at chaminade.edu/ada-accommodations. Students are responsible for notifying Kōkua 'Ike via email at ada@chaminade.edu each semester if changes or notifications are needed.

Assessment of Student Work

Chaminade University may use student work anonymously to assess achievement of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes as part of ongoing quality improvement efforts.

Campus Resources & Support Services

The following resources are available to all Chaminade students. Reach out early — these services exist to support your success.

Resource	Description	Contact / Website
Accessibility Services (Kōkua 'Ike)	Accommodations under Section 504 and ADA. Contact early — appointments via Stellic, virtual or in person.	ada@chaminade.edu chaminade.edu/ada-accommodations
Tutoring & Academic Coaching (Kōkua 'Ike)	Individualized support in English, writing, and social sciences; goal-setting and study strategies.	tutoring@chaminade.edu 808-739-8305 chaminade.edu/tutoring-academic-coaching-services
Career Services	Job search coaching, resume reviews, interview coaching, and career resources.	chaminade.edu/career-services
Basic Needs Resources	Support for food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs.	chaminade.edu/basic-needs/
Title IX / Nondiscrimination	Reporting and support for sex discrimination and gender-based violence.	chaminade.edu/titleix/resources-and-support/
Sullivan Family Library	Tools to efficiently identify and access literature about research topics of your choosing.	Lyneee Teruya, Librarian lyneee.teruya@chaminade.edu 808-739-4680

The Purdue OWL	Online resource for writing, structuring papers, and citing research using APA formatting.	owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
Chaminade IT Help Desk	Technical assistance for Canvas and course technology.	helpdesk@chaminade.edu 808-735-4855