Methods of Assessment:

- Active participation (at least 50% presence) in the lectures
- A brief Seminar paper (max 1000 words) with a reflection and subjective evaluation of the Positive psychology course held at UoM
- A homework on individual and family character strengths and virtues:
  1. Take an online inventory on character strengths and virtues ([http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification](http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification))
  2. Ask your friends and family members about your positive personality traits and character strengths and compare it with your results from VIA Inventory
  3. Make a Family tree of character strengths: Please think about every member of your family in terms of his or her positive traits and character strengths. Write as many of perceived strengths as possible to each name. Can you find any pattern in terms of character strengths in your family? Do you have any strengths that no one else in the family has among their signature strengths? Can you identify the people in your family who have helped you to develop your strengths? How can you use your strengths together in order to make your family relationships better or stronger?
  4. Please write a brief reflection on your own strengths, the strengths perceived by others and patterns in terms of strengths in your family.

Kindly send me both documents (Evaluation of the Positive psychology course and Reflection on your and family strengths) in Word document to my email address (alena.slezackova@phil.muni.cz, Subject: Positive psychology Malta + your name) till November 30, 2014.

I also kindly ask you to participate in the online anonymous Hope Survey (link will be available during November 2014) and help with dissemination of the link among as many Maltese respondents as possible.

Thank you!
I. INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

What is Positive Psychology?
- „a science of the best qualities of life.“ (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)
- „a scientific study of optimal human functioning.“ (Linley & Joseph, 2006)
- „the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.“ (Gable & Haidt, 2005)

What is Not Positive Psychology?
- Ignoring negative aspects of life
- Avoiding challenging life situations
- Positive illusion, self-deception
- “Positive tyranny” (Always keep smiling)

Why Positive Psychology?
Till 1999: Prevailing "problem-focused" approach in psychology
Since 2000: Different approach focusing on positive aspects of life of an individual and society

Not only:
What is wrong with you?
What is your problem?
What is your pain?

But also:
What goes well?
What is your strength?
What makes you happy?

Main Research Areas of Positive Psychology
- Positive individual traits (Character strengths and virtues): Kindness, bravery, humility, sense of humor,…
- Positive emotions and positive thinking: Happiness, joy, gratitude, hope, optimism, forgiveness,…
- Positive institutions: Flourishing families, schools, institutions,…

Aim: Happy, prosperous and flourishing life

Representatives of Positive Psychology
USA: Martin Seligman, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ed Diener, Barbara Fredrickson, Shane Lopez,…

Europe: Antonella Delle Fave (Italy), Hans Henrik Knoop (Denmark), Carmelo Vazquez (Spain), Ingrid Brdar (Croatia), Joar Vitterso (Norway),…
Positive Psychology around the World
- International Positive Psychology Association IPPA (www.ippanetwork.org)
- European Network for Positive Psychology ENPP (www.enpp.eu)
- Czech Positive Psychology Center CPPC (www.pozitivni-psychologie.cz)

Happiness around the World
Research question: Taking all together, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life-as-a-whole these days?
Use a scale 0 (min) to 10 (max).
Compare your personal evaluation with average happiness in your country at http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl (R. Veenhoven)

II. HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

Concepts of Happiness and Well-being
- Ed Diener: Subjective well-being; The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)
- Edward Deci & Richard Ryan: The Self-Determination; The Self-Determination Scale (SDS)
- Carol Ryff: Psychological well-being; Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS)
- Corey Keyes: Flourishing; Mental Health Continuum Scale (MHCS)
- Martin Seligman: Authentic happiness, PERMA; Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), Perma Profiler (PP)

Authentic Happiness (Seligman, 2002)
What makes our life happy?
- Positive emotions - Pleasant life
- Engagement in activities, Flow - Engaged life
- Meaning, purpose - Meaningful life

PERMA model of Well-being (Seligman, 2011)
- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaningfulness
- Accomplishment

Each is measurable, each is teachable!

Well-being
- Hedonic and Eudaimonic perspective on well-being
- Feeling good x Functioning well

What affects our Well-being?
Hedonic Treadmill
A psychological phenomenon that explains why material possessions or reaching major life goals do not make people happier for long periods of time. When people reach a certain goal or attain a new possession, there is often a burst of happiness. But, expectations and material desires often increase with this, thus after a short period of time the person returns to the level of happiness he/she was at before the new attainment.

Social Comparison
The theory that explains how individuals evaluate their own opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others in order to reduce uncertainty in these domains, and learn how to define the self (Festinger, 1954).

What Determines our Happiness? (Lyubomirsky, 2007)
- Goals and values
- Relationships
- Communication
- Activities
- Emotions
- Thinking
- Attention

Exercise: Focus on Positive Aspects of Life.
Please complete the following sentences:

1. I'm happy that I have...
2. I'm happy that I know …
3. I'm happy that I can ....
4. I'm happy that I do ... 
5. I'm happy that I am ...

How to Increase Well-being? Effective Interventions of Positive Psychology in Practice
1. Three Good Things/Blessings: Each evening, write down three good things that happened and why you think they happened.

2. Gratitude Journal/Letter: Write down five things you are grateful for each day. Think of someone to whom you are very grateful, but who you have never properly thanked. Compose a letter to them describing your gratitude.

3. Savouring: Once a day, take a time to mindfully enjoy something that you usually hurry through (like eating a meal, taking a bath, walking to class). What you did, how you did it differently, and how it felt compared to when you rush through it?

4. Using Your Strengths: Identify and use your character strengths more in your daily life.

5. Active/Constructive Responding: react in a visibly positive and enthusiastic way to good news from someone else. At least once a day, respond actively and constructively to someone you know.

6. Biography: Imagine that you are very old and lived a fruitful and satisfying life. What message
would you like to pass to young generation? Write a brief essay summarizing what you find the most important in your life.

Happiness Matters (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008)
Happy people:
• Function better
• Have better relationships
• Do better job
• Earn more money
• Are healthier
• Live longer

III. POWER OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Broaden & Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 2009)

Positive emotions build durable personal resources:
• Physical resources
• Social resources
• Intellectual resources
• Psychological resources

Ten Positive Emotions:
Joy, Gratitude, Hope, Serenity, Interest, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, Awe, Love

Importance of Positivity (Fredrickson, 2009, 2012)
• Evolutionary effect of positivity
• Tipping point of positivity
• Positivity and resilience
• Undoing effect of positive emotions
• Genuine positivity and health

Positivity Ratio 3:1
Suggested ratio of positive to negative emotions based on calculations of Fredrickson & Losada (2005), which distinguishes "flourishing" people from "languishing" people. The exact 3:1 ratio was recently questioned by number of academics (Brown et al., 2013), however, B. Fredrickson argues that there is solid evidence for the benefits of a high positivity/negativity ratio is solid.


Explore and Boost Your Positive Emotions:
Make a list of ten positive emotions. Pick one emotion from your list and then note down things that tend to generate this emotions for you:
• Think back to the last time you felt this emotion…
• What was it that you were doing?
• Where were you?
• What was happening around you?
• What other things could make you feel this way?
• What could you do to bring more of this into your life today or this week?
Repeat this for each of the other emotions in turn.
Being more conscious of these emotions will help you to spot opportunities for to experience them.

IV. POSITIVE THINKING

Concepts of Positive Thinking
• A. Ellis: Rational emotive behavior therapy
• M. Seligman: Learned optimism
• R. Snyder: Hopeful thinking
• E. Diener & R. Biswas-Diener: AIM of positive thinking

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Ellis, 2004)
A: Activating event or Adversity
B: Beliefs about Event or Adversity
C: Consequences: The emotional consequences of our beliefs
D: Disputations to challenge irrational beliefs
E: Effective new beliefs replace the irrational ones

Learned optimism (Seligman, 1998)
Optimistic and Pessimistic explanatory style:
• Bad events are considered by Optimists as: Temporary, Isolated and Beyond their control
• Bad events are considered by Pessimists as: Permanent, Far reaching, and Due to their own effort
• Good events are considered by Optimists as: Permanent, Far reaching, and Due to their own effort
• Good events are considered by Pessimists as: Temporary, Isolated, and Beyond their control
Explanatory style can be changed to a certain extend (Seligman, 1998)
“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.” (H. S. Truman)

Psychology of Hope (Snyder, 2000)
Hope is the sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes.
It is the sum of the mental willpower and waypower that you have for your goals.
• Goal (appropriate, meaningful)
• Agency (goal-directed energy)
• Pathways (planning to meet the goal)
Making Hope Happen (Lopez, 2013)
Hope is what makes us believe that the future will be better than the present and that we have the power to make it so.
Our relationship with the future determines how well we live today.
Hopeful thoughts and behavior propel everyone toward well-being and success

AIM of Positive Thinking  (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008)
- Attention (see: http://viscog.beckman.illinois.edu/flashmovie/15.php)
- Interpretation: How do you interpret the circumstances and events in your life?
- Memory: What kind of memories (past successes or failures) do you usually recall?

A link between Thinking and Character

“Watch your thoughts for they become words.
Watch your words for they become actions.
Watch your actions for they become habits.
Watch your habits for they become your character.
And watch your character for it becomes your destiny.”
(M. Thatcher)

V. CHARACTER STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES

Positive Personality Traits and Characteristics

Exercise:
- Which positive characteristic can you identify in your personality?
- Which of your characteristics help you to achieve your goals?
- In what situations are they usually manifested?
- What do your parents/teachers/ friends appreciate in you?
- How would you describe “a good character”?
- Who is a paragon of a virtue for you?
- Which qualities does he or she possess?

What Is a Virtue?
“Any psychological process that consistently enables a person to think and act so as to yield benefits to himself or herself and society.” (McCullough & Snyder, 2000).

Morally good characteristics that everyone can either possess or learn. Virtues also dictate as to how the individual ought to behave. Virtues can be learnt or acquired by everybody.

Are virtues national, supranational, or universal? (Oudenhoven et al., 2014)
Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

1999: N. Myerson & M. Seligman: Design of an Intervention program for U.S. youth
2004: C. Peterson & M. Seligman: VIA Classification of Good character

Six Virtues as a Core of Good Character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)
Wisdom
Courage
Humanity
Justice
Temperance
Transcendence

24 Character Strengths (http://www.viacharacter.org)

I. Wisdom
1. Curiosity, interest in the world
2. Love of learning
3. Judgment, critical thinking, open-mindedness
4. Originality, creativity
5. Perspective

II. Courage
6. Bravery
7. Vitality, zest, enthusiasm
8. Persistence, diligence
9. Integrity, genuineness, authenticity

III. Humanity
10. Kindness and generosity
11. Love, loving and allow yourself to be loved
12. Social intelligence, emotional intelligence

IV. Justice
13. Citizenship, teamwork, loyalty
14. Fairness and equity
15. Leadership

V. Temperance
16. Self-regulation
17. Prudence
18. Humility, modesty
19. Forgiveness, mercy

VI. Transcendence
20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence
21. Gratitude
22. Hope, optimism
23. Spirituality, sense of purpose, faith, religiousness
24. Humor, playfulness
Peterson and Seligman (2004) believe that using your signature strengths (which are the top 5 of the 24 listed) as frequently as you can brings you gratification and authentic happiness.

**How to identify your strengths:**
- What are you doing when you are at your best?
- What do you find easy and what are you naturally good at?
- When do you feel at your most alive?
- What makes you say „this is the real me“?
- What sort of skill do you pick up rapidly and effortlessly?
- What do you do just for the love of it?
- What naturally attracts your attention?
- What puts you “in the zone“ where you are completely absorbed and lose track of time?
- What were you good at as a child? How does it show up in your life now?

**Measures of the Character Strengths**

VIA Inventory of Strengths: [http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification](http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification)


**Character Strengths and Mindfulness (Niemiec, 2014)**

Mindfulness offers “the how” for realisation and practice of character strengths.

**Exercise:**
- Write a list of your strengths.
- Ask you friends and family members what they think your strengths are.
- Compare the findings.
- Focus on strengths in other people and family members and communicate your observations with them.
- Use your strengths in various situations and look for new opportunities in which you can apply them.

“We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character - this is the goal of true education.” (M.L.King)
REFERENCES:


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