Positive Psychology of Work and Career  
Educational Psychology 5072/6072

Instructor: Ingrid Boveda, M.Ed.  
Doctoral Student, Counseling Psychology

Office Hours: By Appointment (e-mail me on Canvas)

Optional Text:  

Additionally, I will borrow heavily from other texts. All readings will be made available online, either on Canvas or on Course Reserve in the Library. You DO NOT need to purchase this text, but are welcome to do so.

*This syllabus is subject to change. All students will be notified of any changes via e-mail on Canvas.

Course Description:
This course is designed to explore Positive Psychology in the workplace. It will focus on the application of positive subjective experiences and traits in organizations to improve workplace effectiveness and quality of life. This course looks at historical trends as well as emerging changes in employees and the workplace. Directions for future research and implications for practice will be emphasized. This course delves into understanding and articulating the behaviors, thoughts and emotions of individuals within the context of work relationships, organizational, teams and community settings. Positive organizational psychology takes a strengths-based approach to work relationships, leadership and individual purpose in the workplace. In applying positive psychology to work settings, the goal is to improve organizational performance as well as individual performance, well-being, and fulfillment.

Course Objectives:
It is my hope that by successfully completing this course students will:

1- Be able to summarize and identify applications of the theories, concepts, models and research in the field of positive organizational psychology.
2- Personally reflect and deepen awareness of leadership skills, work attitudes, and analytical skills in relationship to the field.
3- Demonstrate ability to be effective leaders and team members within business organizations, educational environments, and/or community settings.
4- Demonstrate characteristics consistent with positive psychology and effective organizational psychology principles in their interactions in the class.

Course Topics:
1- The changing world of work: Understand the world of work, upcoming trends that will affect work, workers and management, and know how to manage today’s multi-generational and diverse work force.
2- Positive organizational leadership: Explore and develop the elements of Authentic Leadership Development and Positive Organizational Scholarship. Understand the role of positive emotions in the workplace and strength-based organizational development. Be able to recognize and use personal leadership strengths within your cultural/societal framework.
3- Positive work environments for individuals and organizations: Become familiar with the research related to employee engagement- what causes individuals to join an organization and why they stay or leave. Understand the concept of work as meaning, the impact of employee well-being on the organization, and the impact of feelings about work on the individual’s well-being. Be able to
implement the person-centered approach to engagement and facilitate higher levels of employee engagement.

4- Enabling a positive work life: Understand the benefits of coaching, mindfulness, and strengths development in the workplace. Engage in steps towards achieving work and home life balance. Identify personal character strengths and understand their relationship with work satisfaction.

Course Expectations:

Mutual Respect

I will show you respect by providing clear directions and guidelines, by effectively communicating class material while “listening” to your thoughts, ideas, and feedback in an open manner, by addressing your questions and concerns (and researching an answer when one is not available), and by assigning bias-free grades. In order to ensure the same level of respect is reciprocated, I expect you to engage with the material in an open and bias-free manner, and participate in class discussions and activities. In order to be prepared, you need to complete readings from your text and assigned readings posted on Canvas by the day they are listed. Given that this is an online course, there is some flexibility around reading assignments, but please do not fall behind. I expect that all assignments will be turned in on time and that you will catch up on material if absent. Further, I expect that you will challenge yourself to be an active participant in class discussion, which will be different for each student. Lastly, I expect that you will demonstrate respect for diversity of all class members in all of it’s forms (e.g. values, beliefs, lifestyles, religious practices, identities, etc.).

Plagiarism

It is my expectation that you will act ethically and in an honest manner, which includes submitting only original work and adhering to the College’s statement on academic honesty outlined in the Academic Catalogue or Student Handbook.

Accommodations:
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to the college’s programs, services, and activities to people with disabilities as defined by the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you will need accommodations in this class, please let me know as soon as possible. Reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information for this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to CDS.

Assessment of Learning:

Discussion Posts & Responses (12.5 points each; 100 points total for undergraduates; 80 points for graduate students)

Students will be asked to complete reflection papers based on the reading assignments that respond to a discussion post prompt. These should be approximately one page single-spaced, and should include positive reactions, criticisms, and applications to the student’s field of study. Students will also be required to post a response to at least two other student’s post. These responses should be thoughtful and applicable. In other words, a simple “I agree” does not suffice. Your discussion is worth 10 points, and your responses to other students are 2.5 points. Discussion post responses are due at the end date of the module (which are every Wednesday). The response to another student’s post is due 2 days after the end of the module (every Friday).

Article Summaries Graduate Students Only (10 points each; 50 points total)

Graduate students will produce five research article summaries throughout the semester. Each article summary will be no longer than two pages double spaced and will describe the rationale, methods, findings, and implications (most important: how does this article help you in your respective programs and beyond, and how does it support/refute what’s been read and discussed in the course) of an empirical research article of the student’s choosing. Replication or paraphrasing of the article abstract is not acceptable. Articles should be from a peer-reviewed journal or “scholarly” book chapter (including chapters not covered that are in the Oxford text). Make sure the article or book chapter is “current” in the field (email me if you’re not sure). Students will be expected to use information from their article summaries to inform their discussion posts and responses when appropriate.
Positive Work Environment Model and Paper (50 points; 40 points for graduate students)

To apply the information from the course readings, students will create their own graphic model of how to create a positive work environment. Students should incorporate concepts addressed in the readings as well as any additional factors pertinent to their specific field and current or future workplace. This assignment also includes a 3-5 paper (double-spaced) to explain the model. It is expected that the student include at least one outside source (something not assigned in class) in their model and write-up. More information will be provided on Canvas.

Utah Futures (25 points each; 50 points total; 40 points for graduate students)

Various self-exploration activities will be required throughout the course. These will include skills, values, and work importance inventories to help increase self-awareness related to work environment. Two short papers will be required in response to activities.

Interest Profiler Assignment (25 points)

Using Utah Futures, students will take the Interest Profiler Inventory and submit a 2-3 page paper discussing results in light of the reading about Holland’s Theory. Students must apply their results to what it means for what kinds of careers would be a good fit for you. More information will be provided on Canvas.

Interview (50 points)

Students will come up with 5-8 questions about the application of principles discussed in the readings and will interview someone who is currently working in an organization (preferably related to their field of study). In a 3-5 page paper, students will comment on the real-life application of positive organizational psychology principles in the setting of the interviewee. This should include any discrepancy between the theories, research and interviewee’s account of how their organization actually operates, as well as what the barriers are to achieving a positive work environment. Please make sure to ask the person you interview what makes a good leader. The paper should include specific behavioral characteristics, rather than vague personality traits. More information will be provided on Canvas.

Final Paper (75 points; 65 points for graduate students)

The final paper will serve as the final exam. It will incorporate personal reflection, research, and readings. Topic to be announced.

Total: 350 points (both undergraduate and graduate students)

Grading Scale:

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