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Faculty of Arts
Department of Psychology
<http://psychology.concordia.ab.ca>

Positive Psychology: The Science of Well-being
PSY 335A
Fall 2025

Course description: This course will provide students with a foundation in the science of well-being, while engaging students in practical applications of the science to their own lives. This course will trace the evolution of positive psychology demonstrating a paradigm shift from a focus on psychopathology to a focus on human strengths and the achievement of happiness. This course will also cover topics that include: Seligman's model of PERMA (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments), optimism, spirituality, mindfulness, creativity and the role of culture in developing well-being.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Prerequisites: | PSY 104 & 105 [C- minimum grade required in both] and 2 nd year standing |
| Co-requisites: | Academic Integrity Training 100 |
| Credit Restrictions: | None |
| Hours: | (0 – 0 – 0 - 3): 39 Instruction hours. |
| Credit value: | 3.0 |
| Delivery: | Face-to-Face Delivery |



Instructor:

Holli-Anne Passmore, Ph.D.

Office: AW 236

Phone: 1-780-479-9359

Email: Holli-Anne.Passmore@concordia.ab.ca

Office Hours: Tues & Thurs: 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Just drop in! If those hours don't work for you, talk to me before/after class or send me a email and we will figure something out. I'm here to help – talk with me!

Emailing me: I regularly get over 100 emails a day. Student emails are a priority for me but please, help me help you:

- put the course number in the subject line and some indication of what it's about
- email me from your @student.concordia.ab.ca email address.
- I usually respond to emails within 24 hours, on rare occasions it may take me 2 days to respond. This does not include weekends. I don't necessarily check my email before 9:00am and after 6:00pm on any day.
- If I haven't responded to an email after a day or two, please just resend it to bump it to the of the Inbox.
- When asking a question about course material via e-mail, please also describe your attempt to resolve the question. For example, instead of e-mailing: "I don't understand concept X", please instead e-mail something like: "I'm confused by concept X. I think it means A, B, or C but I am confused about how A leads to B and C."

Lecture/seminar/lab times: Room: B119 Tuesdays & Thursdays; 12:35 – 13:50 (12:35pm-1:50pm).

Required resources:

1. Moodle (CCMS) access. Students should check their course Moodle sites on a daily basis.
2. **Required Textbook:** No required textbook. Assigned readings will be posted on Moodle.

Course Objectives: Understand what Positive Psychology actually is and why it is known as “the Science of Well-being”. Become familiar with dominant and emerging theories in positive psychology. Be able to identify how course material plays out in the world around you. Apply learnings and course concepts to your own life to enhance your well-being and the well-being of those around you. Enhance your writing skills, and your critical and creative thinking ability through class participation and assignments.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Define and explain what Positive Psychology is and why it is known as the science of well-being.
- Demonstrate understanding of dominant and emerging theories in positive psychology.
- Differentiate between scientific and non-scientific interventions.
- Identify how course material plays out in the world around you.
- Apply theoretical and research findings and course concepts to your own life to enhance your well-being and the well-being of those around you.

To Make the Most of This Course: You will get more out of class (and enjoy the course more) if you are an active learner. **Ask questions before, during, and after class!** This class is about more than rote learning. It’s also about exploring new ideas! About applying these concepts to your everyday life—now and in the future.

This class is not, however, a “self-help” course. Yes of course we will engage in Positive Psychology Interventions and activities. Experiencing these are important! At the same time, this is done **within a context of science**.

How I Teach This Course:

READ THIS SECTION!! THIS WILL REALLY HELP YOU NAVIGATE THIS COURSE!

Note that this course is essentially entirely lecture based. While suggested readings are noted for each lecture, these are meant as supplemental information to lectures. Honestly, it’s going to be easier for you if you just come to class and take notes.

A handout version of slides will be posted before each class; full slides will be posted after class. However; videos shown in class are not generally posted nor are links to them. Also note that slides are meant to tweak your memory and highlight lecture points. **You will not be able to simply study off the slides and gain all the information presented in the lecture.**

So ...

Plan to attend classes. This is important for getting all the information presented, as well as for in-class activities, discussions, and participation marks. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the content covered and it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. I understand that sometimes “life” happens.

So ...

If you are sick or absolutely need to miss a class, you can give me a heads up and we can work together to ensure you are up to speed with content. You should also check with the other members of your WellBeing Buddies Group. It is your responsibility to catch up on any missed material from lectures.

Students in class will be randomly assigned to a WellBeing Buddies Group. Part of the purpose of the WellBeing Buddies Groups is to ensure that every single student has at least a couple of fellow classmates they can turn to for class notes if they absolutely have to miss a class, and for help when studying.

Lecture Topics, Assignment & Exam Schedule (see Moodle for most recent):

(See also next page for Assignments & Assignment Schedule)

| Week | Topic | Day | Date | Class # |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1a 1b | Introduction / History / setting up WellBeingBuddies Groups What is "Positive" | Tuesday Thursday | Sept. 2 Sept. 4 | Class 01 Class 02 |
| 2a 2b | Character Strengths Theories: Broaden-and-Build | Tuesday Thursday | Sept. 9 Sept. 11 | Class 03 Class 04 |
| 3a 3b | Theories: Self-Determination Theory, Hedonia, Eudaimonia Meaning in Life | Tuesday Thursday | Sept. 16 Sept. 18 | Class 05 Class 06 |
| 4a 4b | Review for Exam 1 Exam 1 | Tuesday Thursday | Sept. 23 Sept. 25 | Class 07 Class 08 |
| 5a 5b | No Class - National Truth & Reconciliation Day Wellbeing from a Global Perspective / Cultural Perspectives | Tuesday Thursday | Sept. 30 Oct. 2 | --- Class 09 |
| 6a 6b | Positive Psychology Interventions & Prioritizing Gratitude | Tuesday Thursday | Oct. 7 Oct. 9 | Class 10 Class 11 |
| 7a 7b | Hope Materialism & Money | Tuesday Thursday | Oct. 14 Oct. 16 | Class 12 Class 13 |
| 8a 8b | Zest and Play TBA | Tuesday Thursday | Oct. 21 Oct. 23 | Class 14 Class 15 |
| 9a 9b | Review for Exam 2 Exam 2 | Tuesday Thursday | Oct. 28 Oct. 30 | Class 16 Class 17 |
| 10a 10b | Self-Control Nature and Wellbeing | Tuesday Thursday | Nov. 4 Nov. 6 | Class 18 Class 19 |
| READING WEEK - GET OUTSIDE - PLAY - READ! | | | | |
| 12a 12b | TBA Positive Education | Tuesday Thursday | Nov. 18 Nov. 20 | Class 20 Class 21 |
| 13a 13b | Positive Social Psychology Being, having, loving, doing: A new theory of well-being | Tuesday Thursday | Nov. 25 Nov. 27 | Class 22 Class 23 |
| 14a 14b | Critiques & Future Directions in Positive Psychology Review for Exam 3 (Final) | Tuesday Thursday | Dec. 2 Dec. 4 | Class 24 Class 25 |

NOTE: Dates for Review classes and Exams will not change. Lecture topics dates may change. Changes will be posted on Moodle.

Colour codes:

- review for exam class | exam

*RD Reflection due. | *PD Paper due. | *ED Engagement Plan due.

See next page and check details on Moodle!

Evaluation (all exams, reflections assignments) and Due Dates

| Opportunity for Course Marks Dates | Focus | % Towards Course Grade |
|---|--|--|
| Exam 1: Thurs Sept 25 | Classes 1 to 7 inclusive | 20% |
| Exam 2: Thurs Oct 30 | Classes 9 to to 16 inclusive | 20% |
| Exam 3 / Final: TBA: Check Online Services | Classes 18 to 25 inclusive (plus a few broad review question) | 22% |
| Concept Integration Paper Due: Thurs Nov 25 But if you hand it in on Tues Nov 20 you will receive a 1% BONUS mark to your paper grade | An academic formal paper on how a fictional book or movie (of your choice) exemplifies specific course content. An overview of the research in Positive Psychology is incorporated into this paper. | 30% |
| Reflections on Course and Experiential Assignments Due: Tues Sept 16 Due: Thurs Oct 2 Due: Thurs Oct 16 Due: Tues Nov 4 Due: Thurs Nov 20 Due: Thurs Dec | Details for each reflection will be provided Reflection 1: Character Strengths Reflection 2: Meaning in Life Reflection 3: Wellbeing Intervention Reflection 4: Playing Reflection 5: Quote (from name card) Reflection 6: Overall | (6% total) 1% 1% 1% 1% 1% 1% |
| Engagement Plan – Part 1 Tuesday, September 16 | This Engagement Plan is to be handed in on paper at the start of class. | 1% |
| Engagement Plan – Part 2 Thursday, December 4 | This Engagement Plan review is to be handed in on paper at the start of class. | 1% |

Check the details and grading criteria for the Reflections, Paper, Engagement Plan, and Exams posted on Moodle.

See Concordia's [Extended Description of Grade Levels](#) (Section 9.3.2 of the Calendar) for further information on grading.



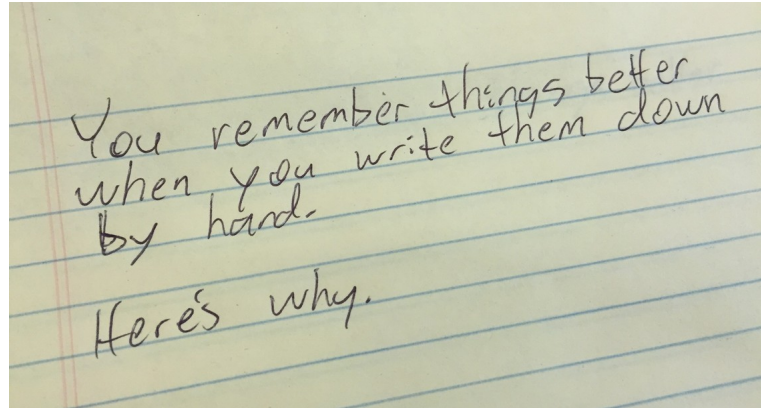
*I'm here to help you –
so just ask if you have questions!*



Class policies – please note!

Laptops and Tablets Only For Notetaking : Laptop / tablet use is **permitted ONLY** for taking class notes.

Classes may not be audio or video recorded, except with permission, which will only be granted for special circumstances. These policies are based on research evidencing that **when students use laptop/cell phones in class (particularly for purposes other than note taking) – not only does the individual student learn less and earn lower grades, so do the students sitting around them!, even if you are looking up class-related material!** It is a distraction—for you and for those around you. (e.g., Hembroke & Gay, 2003; Kraushaar & Novak, 2010; Ravizza et al., 2017; Sana et al., 2013). **If you are "caught" using your laptop or tablet during lecture to check email, to browse the internet – to do anything other than take notes, you will be given a second chance. If you are caught a second time, you will longer to be allowed to bring your laptop or table to class at all.** [Please speak to me if you have an accessibility accommodation that requires you to use a laptop or table to take notes on.] **Evidence is also clear that talking notes by hand (not typing) enhances memory retention, understanding, learning.** (Aside from the temptation to switch tabs and look at your email or browse the internet or looking something up – even if it's related to the lecture!)



For further information see:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/creative-leadership/201902/why-you-should-take-notes-by-hand>

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200910-the-benefits-of-note-taking-by-hand>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-writing-by-hand-is-better-for-memory-and-learning/>

No Cellphones: I have a strict no cell phone policy in classes. **Cell phones must not be visible or within easy reach, and must be turned off.** (If you have an exceptional circumstance that warrants your cell [phone being turned on, please speak with me.] This policy is based on scientific evidence.

I strongly encourage you to [watch this commencement speech](#) by Dr Angela Duckworth (2025) or to [read the transcript](#).

Below are a few excerpts:

"Now, each time you pick up your phone, you invite a cascade of notifications, messages, and images to hijack your attention. ... But as I said, relying on willpower to rescue us from digital distractions is downright foolish. So what do we use instead? Something smarter than willpower. Situation modification.

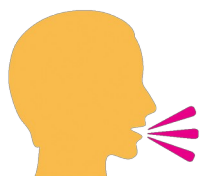
Situation modification means using physical distance to create psychological distance. ...

In what's now known as the brain drain study, researchers found that when taking an IQ test, having your phone within sight, even if it's face down, lowers your score. While keeping your phone in a bag or in another room raises it. Seeing your phone and then forcing yourself to ignore it saps mental energy, leaving you with less cognitive bandwidth for the task at hand.

My research team has found a very similar pattern. In a nationally representative sample of teenagers, we found that students who keep their phone farther away while studying do better in school. The farther the phone, the higher the GPA."



Classroom conduct: Classrooms are meant to be interactive dialogues between the professor and students as much as possible. It is expected that all students will at all times demonstrate respect for others' opinions, along with patience and common courtesy when others are speaking. **Please remember that some students (and your professor!) may have difficulty hearing; side conversations by students exacerbate this difficulty to attend to and hear class discussion and instruction.**



When the instructor or your classmates are speaking, please refrain from having conversations at the same time. Voices carry in a large classroom and some classmates may have hearing impairments or sensory processing difficulties and extra noise impedes their ability to learn.

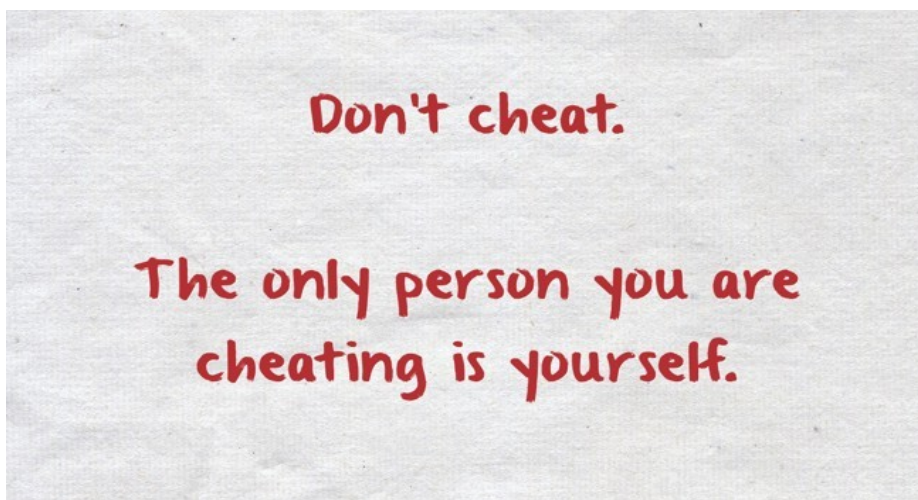
Academic Honesty (Plagiarism and "AI" Use):

(See also CUE's Academic Integrity Policy listed under Standard CUE Course Policies)

Bottom line – DON'T CHEAT – DO YOUR OWN WORK.

If you're thinking about cheating at some point in the semester, stop a minute and ask yourself, "Is this behaviour I would be proud to tell my parents? My aunts/uncles? My grandparents? Is this behaviour I would want my children/nephews/nieces to be engaged in? How proud will I be of my degree if I haven't actually earned it by my own efforts?"

If you're struggling in the class—come chat with me!



Cheating is just not worth it. You're better than that.

The following are just a few examples of cheating or academic dishonesty:

- copying a classmate's assignment – or simply paraphrasing it;
- letting someone copy your work;
- checking with anyone other than me, your prof, during an exam;
- taking photos of exam questions or of review slides during exam reviews;
- audio recording class lectures without permission;
- using ChatGPT or similar, or directly copying from other sources, to write your individual or PsychoBuddy group assignments (see also "AI" use and Plagiarism sections below).

"AI" Use Policy: I have zero tolerance for either plagiarism or the use of generative "AI" (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly) for any of your writing at any stage—including generating ideas, initial notes, and drafts.

Students are not allowed to use any kind of generative "AI" for any part of your written assignments, engagement plan assignment, or reflections. This includes no "AI": use for idea generation, outline drafts, writing, checking grammar or typos, refining your written assignment – or any part of these assignments. **Generative "AI" tools include programs, sites, and applications includes programs/applications such as Grammarly, ChatGPT.**

Use of **ANY** such tools (not just the ones listed here) in this class constitutes **Academic Dishonesty** (which goes on your student record) and will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment.



Assignments are designed to help you build your communication, creative, and critical thinking skills. Using "AI" **DOES THE OPPOSITE!** Using "AI" reduces both your ability and your skill level. Generating ideas, thinking, writing, and learning must be practiced. There are no true shortcuts. **I want your ideas, your synthesis,** not some LLM bot that pieced together words from common information on the internet. Writing—and these assignments—are not primarily about output. Writing is a process of discovery, including the background work of searching, reading, and sifting through information, and the drafts produced before a finished product. These processes help you gain knowledge, help crystallize your thinking, and help you gain skills. Using "AI" robs you of all of this. **If I want "AI"'s output on a topic, I can do that myself. I am interested in your unique perspective, your voice.** Plus, "AI"-generated writing is generally just bad. The writing style sounds important and formal while being broad and vague. It is often empty writing that does not demonstrate understanding.

"AI" is not intelligent; it does not think, it does not understand the meaning of words or words. So-called generative "AI" tools are really Large Language Models. These are probability models and produce output purely on patterns and probabilities that a particular word or phrase is preceded and followed by a particular word or phrase. Further, the information that LLMs ("AI") is trained on often is done so without the original producer's permission.

Moreover, generative "AI" has an enormous negative impact on the environment. *"The collective energy demand of data centers in the United States is so high that Microsoft recently reached a deal to reopen Three Mile Island, the site of the worst nuclear accident in American history. The burgeoning AI industry needs so much electricity that plans to decommission several coal plants have been delayed. By some estimates, the collective demand for AI and other digital technologies will constitute 20 percent of global electricity use by 2030."*

"The training process for a single AI model, such as an LLM, can consume thousands of megawatt hours of electricity and emit hundreds of tons of carbon. AI model training can also lead to the evaporation of an astonishing amount of freshwater into the atmosphere for data center heat rejection, potentially exacerbating stress on our already limited freshwater resources."

"When compared to traditional search engines, AI uses "orders of magnitude more energy," says Sasha Luccioni of the AI research company Hugging Face, who studies how these technologies impact the environment. ... Luccioni's team has estimated it costs about 30 times as much energy to generate text versus simply extracting it from a source."

See:

<https://allianceforscience.org/blog/2025/02/ai-is-bad-for-the-environment-and-the-problem-is-bigger-than-energy-consumption/>

<https://hbr.org/2024/07/the-uneven-distribution-of-ais-environmental-impacts>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-do-googles-ai-answers-cost-the-environment/>

<https://kanoppi.co/search-engines-vs-ai-energy-consumption-compared/>

Exam procedures:

Exams will be in class during regularly scheduled class time. More information will be presented in class including how many questions, what type of questions, how many questions from each lecture. I **strongly encourage students to ask questions during exams**. Seriously, put your hand up and ask me if you're stuck!

Students in the past have commented that my exams are fair, but sometimes difficult – you need to study for exams. It is in your best interest to complete the Study Guides that each PsychoBuddy Group will create for each exam. Also come to the review classes!

- All books, bags, digital devices, etc must be left at the front of the classroom during exams,
- Only items approved by your instructor are to be on your desk and on your person.
- You cannot leave the room and re-enter while an exam is in progress.
 - GO TO THE BATHROOM BEFORE CLASS!

Missed work (reflections and assignments) and missed exams

Reflections: Reflections submitted late (up to 24 hours – which means slide under my office door before 12:35pm the day after the due date) will be bumped down a letter grade. See particulars in the Reflection Assignments document. Reflections submitted more than one day late will not be graded; a 0% will be given. **Consideration may be given for extraordinary circumstances which you bring to my attention before the deadline.** Not planning, having other assignments in other classes also due, work obligations, icy roads, etc. will not be considered valid reasons for submitting an assignment late. This criteria is set to enable me to schedule my time for grading assignments, in addition to reinforcing consequences for “life outside academia”. Job, scholarship, grant (and even contest) deadlines are, by and large, hard and fast deadlines.

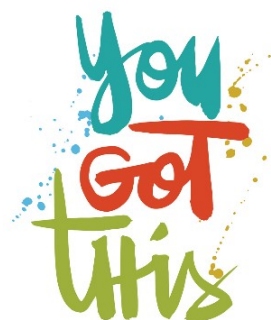
The Concept Integration Paper: Late assignments will not be accepted except in highly unusual circumstances and only if arranged prior to the deadline. This policy makes it fair to everyone. Note that being busy, having many assignments due at the same time, work scheduling, laptops dying, internet down, icy roads, having other assignments due, work obligations, etc. are not unusual circumstances. These things happen. **Plan ahead.**

Exams: Students must write exams on the scheduled exam dates. A grade of “0” will be given if a midterm exam is missed without valid reason (e.g., severe illness, Concordia sports team events). **You need to notify me ahead of time regardless of the reason.** Supportive documentation may be required. **Only in exceptional circumstances will a student be allowed to write a missed exam when they have not contacted me ahead of time.**

There will be no alternative methods of making up failed/missed exams or dissatisfactory exam marks.



*I love teaching! I'm here to help you –
so just ask if you have questions
or you just want to chat!*



Standard CUE Course Policies:

i. Student Academic Integrity

- Student Academic Integrity Policy: Academic integrity is fundamental to the academic enterprise. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with Section 9.2.5 of the Calendar and to take note that cases of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, collusion, unauthorized submission for credit of previously graded work, and misrepresentation) are serious offenses. Penalties for academic dishonesty range from a grade of zero on the work in question to expulsion.
- Appeals: Refer to [section 9.2.5 of the Academic Calendar](#) (Section H)

ii. Classroom

- Concordia provides learning accommodation services for students with disabilities. Please refer to [Section 8.3.1 of the Academic Calendar](#) for more details.
- Recording of classes is permitted only if recording is part of an approved accommodation plan or with prior written consent of the instructor. Please refer to [Section 9.2.2 of the Academic Calendar](#) for more details.
- Please refer to [Section 9.2.4 of the Academic Calendar](#) for details regarding Educational Decorum. It is the responsibility of both students and instructors to facilitate the educational process.
- At Concordia, Faculty Advising allows students to build a relationship with faculty members so they can plan their university education and access appropriate resources and services. To make use of faculty advising, please talk to your instructor or program coordinator for input or referral.

iii. Exam Procedures

- See Class Policies above and posted on Moodle.

iv. Missed work and missed exams

- Missed work and exams: See Class Policies above and posted on Moodle.
- Deferred Final Examination:
 - Students who are unable to complete scheduled final examinations because of illness, severe family difficulty, religious observance, or circumstances beyond their control may apply online to the dean for a deferred final examination within 48 hours of the missed examination. In the case of intended absences, students must submit their application at least one month prior to the originally scheduled final examination. Deferred examination requests for any other reasons will not normally be considered. The dean's decision to accept or decline the application is final. Students are directed to Section 9.2.3 of the Calendar for further information.

Additional contacts and services:**a. Academic Administration****i. Dean of Faculty of Arts**

Name: Brett Buchanan, PhD

Office: HA 224

Email: dean.arts@concordia.ab.ca or brett.buchanan@concordia.ab.ca

Telephone: +1 780 479 9392

ii. Department of Psychology

Department Chair

Name: Holli-Anne Passmore, PhD

Office: AW 236

Email: holli-anne.passmore@concordia.ab.ca

Telephone: +1 780 479 9359

iii. Registrar's Office (HA 120, registrar@concordia.ab.ca +1 780 479 9250)**b. Academic Support****i. Vice President of Campus Life**

(Dr. Carmen Arth, vpcl@concordia.ab.ca,

+1 780 378 8459, HA 227)

ii. Student Life and Learning (studentlife@concordia.ab.ca

+1 780 479 9241, Student Success Centre)

iii. Manager, kihêwak kâpimihâcîk, 'Where the Eagles Fly' Centre

(Danielle Powder, danielle.powder@concordia.ab.ca,

+1 780 479 9394, AW 124)

c. Writing Centre

i. The Writing Centre (located in the Student Success Centre across from the book store) is a free service that provides support for teaching and learning through writing for students, staff, and faculty.

ii. Throughout the academic year, one-on-one consultations are offered.

Please go to Online Services to book your appointment.

Concordia Calendar Table 9.3.2: Extended Description of Grade Levels

| Grade Description | | Letter Grade | Grade Point Value |
|-------------------|---|--------------|-------------------|
| Outstanding | Outstanding performance, demonstrating complete and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter; full mastery of concepts and skills; exceptional interpretive and analytical ability; originality in the use of concepts and skills; achievement of all major and minor objectives of the course. | A+ | 4.0 |
| Excellent | Excellent performance, indicating superior grasp of subject matter and concepts; development of relevant skills to a high level; a high level of interpretive and analytical ability; originality or intellectual initiative; achievement of all major and minor objectives of the course. | A | 4.0 |
| | | A- | 3.7 |
| Very Good | Very good to good performance, indicating thorough understanding of subject matter and concepts; development of relevant skills to a fairly high level; good interpretive and analytical ability; evidence of intellectual initiative; achievement of major and minor objectives of the course. | B+ | 3.3 |
| Good | | B | 3.0 |
| | | B- | 2.7 |
| Satisfactory | intellectually adequate performance, of fair but not good quality, demonstrating an acceptable understanding of the subject matter and concepts; development of skills to C a satisfactory level; adequate interpretive and analytical ability; achievement of major objectives of the course; some minor objectives may not be achieved. The bottom of this range (C-) is the minimum satisfactory standard of achievement in a course. In courses graded CR or NC, CR denotes that the student has attained at least the C- level. | C+ | 2.3 |
| | | C | 2.0 |
| | | C- | 1.7 |
| Poor | Minimally acceptable performance, demonstrating some understanding of basic subject matter and concepts and partial development of relevant skills, with some evidence of interpretive or analytical ability; achievement of most but not all major objectives of the course; failure to achieve several minor objectives. | D+ | 1.3 |
| Minimal Pass | The bottom of this range (D) indicates that the student has achieved a marginal level of performance which may not be sufficient background for success at the next level in the discipline. | D | 1.0 |
| Failure | Unsatisfactory performance, demonstrating an inadequate understanding of the basic subject matter; failure to develop relevant skills; insufficient evidence of interpretive and analytical ability; and failure to achieve major and minor objectives of the course. | F | 0 |