

## FLOURISHING, Fall 2025

BSPA-UB-52

New York University, Stern School of Business

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**Professor:** Jonathan Haidt

**Course Overview:** People are like plants: if you get the conditions right, they will usually flourish. So what are those conditions, and why are so many members of Gen Z (born 1996 and later) failing to flourish? We will look at research in social and positive psychology on happiness, virtue, self-change, and personal growth. We will also look at ancient wisdom--insights into mind and heart passed down to us from many cultures because they work.

The goal of this course is to help you understand the conditions that lead to flourishing, and then to develop specific habits that will help you to thrive at NYU, at work, and in your personal relationships. Each student will choose a specific “self-change project” and will design a plan to cultivate new habits in order to carry out the project over the 14 weeks of the course. The final paper will include a self-evaluation of your progress in becoming stronger, smarter, and more sociable, which will make you happier.

**Readings:** Please obtain these six books:

1. Caroline Webb (2016) [How to have a good day](#).
2. Jonathan Haidt (2024) [The Anxious Generation](#) (I will use the royalties I earn from the class--\$3 per copy-- to donate to a Stern-related charity chosen by the class)
3. Dale Carnegie (1936 or 1981) [How to win friends and influence people](#) (do not buy the “digital age” version)
4. James Clear (2018), [Atomic Habits](#) ([author homepage](#))
5. William Irvine (2021), [The Stoic Challenge](#)
6. 5 minute journal: [book is recommended](#); (app is free, but less meditative)

**Grade Breakdown:**

30% of the grade will be based on your verbal contributions to our classroom discussions, your professionalism, and your wholehearted engagement in the various components of the course.

30% will be based on 10 one-page integration papers that you’ll submit by 3pm each Monday. [you can skip 2 of the 12 assigned] [THIS PART OF THE COURSE WILL BE REVISED BECAUSE OF AI]

40% will be based on your final paper

This course is all about helping you. It is likely to be the best chance you’ll ever have to learn how to change your habits and adopt better ones. So don’t think about your grade, think about how to get the most out of this class so that you reap dividends for the *rest of your time at NYU, and the rest of your life*.

[More instructions can be found below the detailed syllabus]

**Course Schedule:**

	<p><b>BEFORE EACH CLASS:</b> [B]=Brightspace, <a href="#">link to integration paper templates</a></p>
<p>Week 1 Sep 8</p>	<p><b>Getting started: Habits, routines, and self-improvement</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Haidt, <i>The Happiness Hypothesis</i>, Intro &amp; Chapter 1 [B]</li> <li>2) Clear, <i>Atomic Habits</i> ch. 1-3</li> <li>3) Matt Walker, TED talk, <a href="#">Sleep is your superpower</a></li> <li>4) 5 minute Journal: read the intro text, fill it out for at least 2 days</li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Get the books, do the readings and watch the video</li> <li>--come to class with ideas for a habit or two that you'd like to change or adopt, after completing the <a href="#">initial survey</a> that I sent you.</li> <li>--Start 5 Minute Journal, do at least 2 days of it.</li> <li>--Begin to notice how well and how much you are sleeping. Are you getting at least 7 hours of good sleep every night? Notice your evening routine, but don't change anything until we talk in class.</li> </ul>
<p>Week 2 Sep 15</p>	<p><b>Getting stronger: Antifragility, stoicism, and biological foundations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Read <a href="#">this page with instructions on a sleep diary</a> and notes on sleep hygiene</li> <li>2) Lukianoff/Haidt, <i>Coddling of the American Mind</i>, Ch. 1 (antifragility) [B]</li> <li>3) Haidt, <i>Anxious Generation</i>, Introduction and Ch. 1</li> <li>4) Irvine, <i>Stoic Challenge</i>: Intro and ch. 1, 2</li> <li>5) Clear, ch. 4-6</li> <li>6) Huberman on <a href="#">the 7 pillars of health and performance</a>, and this <a href="#">tweet</a></li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Fill out 5 Minute Journal at least 5 days; come to class ready to discuss.</li> <li>--Finalize your choice for your self-change project. What exactly will you change, and how?</li> <li>--Notice challenges, apply Irvine's stoic challenge</li> </ul>

<p>Week 3 Sep 22</p>	<p><b>Getting smarter: Deep work, input control</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Webb, Intro and science essentials and the first 2 chapters of Part 1 (priorities) which are “choosing filters” and “setting goals”</li> <li>2) Clear, ch. 7-10</li> <li>3) Cal Newport: <a href="#">Summary of Deep Work</a>, online</li> <li>4) Haidt, <i>Anxious Generation</i> ch. 5 (fundamental harms)</li> </ol> <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Cal Newport, on <a href="#">Are we getting dumber?</a> Yes.</li> <li>--Cal Newport recommends this <a href="#">16 minute video</a> overview of deep work, and this <a href="#">case study</a></li> <li>--check out our shared google doc: <a href="#">Notification Reduction</a></li> <li>--Add: <a href="#">Maria Popova and William James</a> on attention</li> </ul> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Decide what changes you’ll make to your work habits and digital habits, in light of Newport’s arguments</li> <li>--Do integration paper #2 and submit on Brightspace; see template for details</li> </ul>
<p>Week 4 Sep 29</p>	<p><b>More play, more fun</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Haidt, <i>Anxious Generation</i>, chapters 2-4</li> <li>2) Having Fun: Catherine Price TED talk on <a href="#">Why having fun is the secret to a healthier life</a></li> <li>3) Catherine Price handout, “The Funtervention” [B]</li> <li>4) Carnegie, <i>How to Win Friends</i>, Part 1 (3 chapters).</li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Read the Price handout carefully, to figure out what kind of fun is best for you. Write out those 3 examples. Find your fun magnets and fun factors. Print out your list of those magnets and factors and bring them to class on Wednesday.</li> </ul>
<p>Week 5 Oct 6</p>	<p><b>Getting more sociable: Love, attachment, and relationships</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Haidt, Happiness Hypothesis, ch. 6 (love) [B]</li> <li>2) Webb, ch. 8, 9, 10 (relationships)</li> <li>3) Carnegie, <i>How to Win Friends</i>, Part 2 (6 chapters).</li> <li>4) Kahlil Gibran, <i>The Prophet</i>, on love, and on work [B]</li> </ol> <p>Do before class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Make progress on your self improvement project. describe it in your integration paper.</li> </ul>

<p>Week 6</p> <p>Oct 14 (Tues)</p>	<p><b>Social Media and the The Phone-Based Life</b></p> <p>1) Haidt, <i>Anxious Generation</i>, chapters 6-7 (and we'll revisit ch. 5)</p> <p>2) short video: Simon Sinek, <a href="#">This Is Why You Don't Succeed</a></p> <p>3) Christine Rosen, <a href="#">On The Death of Daydreaming</a>, at AfterBabel.com</p> <p>--visit from Briana Goncalves, office of the president [next time: <a href="#">kori janes</a>]</p> <p>Do before class:</p> <p>--Just read closely. IP 5 will be written in class, about the readings. Keep working on your self-change project. What can you measure to track your progress?</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>Oct 20</p>	<p><b>Getting stronger #2: Cultivating stoicism, reducing distortions</b></p> <p>1) Irvine, <i>The Stoic Challenge</i>, chapters 4, 7-10</p> <p>2) Gillihan, <i>Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Made Simple</i>, Ch. 4 [B]</p> <p>3) Fill out 3 CBT worksheets; try to catch yourself using a cognitive distortion</p> <p>4) Marcus Aurelius on the 3 great untruths [B]</p> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <p>--notice challenges, apply Irvine's stoic challenge</p> <p>--cog therapy handouts: fill out 3;</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>Oct 27</p>	<p><b>Getting wiser: wisdom, beauty, and</b></p> <p>1) Barry Schwartz and Ken Sharpe: <i>Practical Wisdom</i>: Ch. 1 and 3 [B]</p> <p>2) <i>The Anxious Generation</i>, Ch. 8</p> <p>3) Haidt &amp; Keltner, <i>Awe/Responsiveness to Beauty and Excellence</i> (chapter from the VIA Classification of Strengths) Read <b>pages 1-8</b>. [B]</p> <p>4) Dacher Keltner, <a href="#">New science of awe</a> podcast, with Krista Tippett</p> <p>Optional: Abe Maslow: <a href="#">25 aspects of peak experiences</a> [online excerpt from his book <i>Religions Values, and Peak Experiences</i>] [next year: <a href="#">Schwartz talk</a> not chapters?] --<a href="#">David Brooks on wisdom</a></p> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <p>--Take an awe walk. And find beauty. See template</p>

<p>Week 9</p> <p>Nov 3</p>	<p><b>Getting happier: What causes happiness?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Happiness Hypothesis chapter 5 (happiness) [B]</li> <li>2) Webb, ch. 20, 21 (Energy)</li> <li>3) Carnegie Part 3 (how to win people over)</li> <li>4) Take the free “VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire” at <a href="http://www.viacharacter.org">www.viacharacter.org</a>. Click “take the free survey” only. Don't take the one that will ask you to pay. Print out or write down your top 5 strengths.</li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--do the VIA survey</li> <li>--Use at least one of Dale Carnegie’s techniques in a conversation or social interaction [see IP template]</li> </ul>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Nov 10</p>	<p><b>Getting Smarter #2: focus and productivity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Newport, Ch 6 (Rule 3) [B]</li> <li>2) Johann Hari: <a href="#">Extracts from Stolen Focus, in The Guardian</a></li> <li>3) <a href="#">Video summary of Hari’s book</a>, from Productivity Game, which focuses on what we can do to regain our focus. (9 minute video)</li> <li>4) Webb, chapters 4-7 (productivity)</li> </ol> <p>Check out the “Resources for Alumni of WWH” doc at <a href="https://tinyurl.com/WorkWisdomHappinessResources">https://tinyurl.com/WorkWisdomHappinessResources</a></p> <p>Check out the NYU Mindfulness page, with links to apps</p> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Try a meditation app for at least 3 days: Insight Timer, or Calm, or 10% happier. Try one for mindfulness, loving-kindness, anxiety, gratitude.... whatever you think you most need.</li> <li>--for class discussion: Assess your improved focus, input control, and productivity since Week 3. Are you able to do more deep work? Do you have many fewer interruptions? What can you do to get back even more of your limited focus, drawing from Newport, Webb, and Hari?</li> </ul> <p>Possible meditations for beginners, on Insight Timer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--To start, search for “Breathing Meditation” by Jack Kornfield, who is a leader in this field. It’s 8 minutes</li> <li>--for a Loving Kindness meditation, search for “LovingKindness Meditation,” by Sharon Salzberg, also really well known. 15 minutes.</li> </ul>

<p>Week 11</p> <p>Nov 17</p>	<p><b>Getting more sociable #2: Embeddedness, fit, and happiness at work.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Haidt Psychology: Haidt TED talk on <a href="#">Religion and Evolution</a></li> <li>2) Amy Wrzesniewski, Finding positive meaning in work [B]</li> <li>3) Carnegie Part 4 (Be a leader)</li> <li>4) Krapivin (2022) <a href="#">5 Components To Achieving Happiness At Work</a> (Forbes)</li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS: --Just continue trying meditation. Try to use a meditation that will go up to 8 or 10 minutes, or use a meditation timer.</p>
<p>Week 12</p> <p>Nov 24</p>	<p><b>Getting wiser #2 -- Virtues, anger, and stoicism</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Watch Kathryn Schulz, <a href="#">TED talk: On Being Wrong</a></li> <li>2) Happiness Hypothesis, ch. 4 (faults of others) [B]</li> <li>3) Happiness Hypothesis ch. 8 (virtues) [B]</li> <li>4) Watch Daryl Davis, <a href="#">TED talk: Why I, as a black man, attend KKK rallies</a></li> <li>5) The Stoic Challenge (Irvine), chapter 2, on anger [this was already assigned in class 2; just look back at it and relate it to today's other readings]</li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS: Try to understand a group that you are politically or morally opposed to. See template for further instructions</p>
<p>Week 13</p> <p>Dec 1</p>	<p><b>The missing chapter: What Gen Z can do</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Haidt, <i>Anxious Generation</i>, chapter 9 (collective action)</li> <li>2) Read the "in sum" sections of <i>Anxious Generation</i> ch. 10 and 11</li> <li>3) Haidt, <i>Anxious Generation</i>, chapter 12 (what parents can do)</li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS: Sketch out the missing chapter from <i>The Anxious Generation: What Gen Z Can Do</i>. The integration paper template will have further instructions</p>
<p>Week 14</p> <p>Dec. 8</p>	<p><b>Love, Work, and the Meaning of Life</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Stoic Challenge, Part 4, chapters 11-15 (they are very short)</li> <li>2) Haidt, HH ch. 10, Happiness comes from between [B]</li> <li>3) See this google doc of <a href="#">Resources for alumni of Work, Wisdom, Happiness, and Flourishing</a></li> </ol> <p>DO BEFORE CLASS: --No IP due for this class. Just get started on your final paper, at least an outline of the two parts, so that writing will be easy.</p>

Dec. 14

**SUBMIT FINAL PAPER BY 9pm**

**Three-Part Integration Papers:** It is easy to skim through many readings, but hard to remember what you've read unless you do some higher-level integrative processing. To help you do so, please submit an "integration paper" before the start of each Tuesday class, 10 times (No paper due for weeks 1 or 14, and you can skip 2 others, of your choice). Find the [template text](#) for the week and copy it into a Word file, to submit.

Part one: Summaries. You'll see the title of each reading in the Template (e.g., "Happiness Hypoth, ch. 1.") Try to capture the main idea of the reading in a single sentence. It can have a few clauses in it; one semicolon is permitted. Do this for all the readings, chapters, web pages, and videos assigned for that day. Boiling down to a single sentence can require more processing (and therefore be more beneficial) than writing several sentences.

Part two: Integration: Apply the ideas in the readings to your own life. This should be a full paragraph, or two at most. Don't try to cover every reading but mention at least two. Find connections, ways to use the ideas in the future, or good examples of the ideas from your experience. See if you can derive some novel insight or offer a non-obvious connection.

Part three: Happiness Habits. Provide a brief update on what you did differently over the past week, how the change process is going, and any *insight(s) you have learned about yourself* as a result.

You'll fill in a [template](#) that I provide for each week. These will be graded on a five point scale where 3 is a "check," perfectly fine. 4 is a check plus. 5 is a check plus plus for the few papers that show unusual depth, insight, or creativity; 1 and 2 are a check minus, needs improvement. Good things to do here are to link a week's reading back to one's self-change project, or to readings from earlier in the course.

### **Final paper:**

Part one is a thoughtful presentation of and reflection on your happiness habits. What did you commit to do differently, what did you *do*, and how did it go? What did you learn about yourself? The key here is not that you were successful, it is that you used psychological principles (1) in a good faith effort to create new habits and (2) to thoroughly analyze the process with the goal of developing increased self-awareness. [1-2 pages single spaced]

Part two is your plan for a flourishing life. Drawing on your "personal happiness list" and all of the course readings, write a letter to yourself which you can read each year on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Design your life and your ideal career from the perspective of positive psychology. What will you do to maximize your chances of becoming stronger, smarter, more sociable, and happier? [2-4 pages single spaced] If you have another idea for Part 2 of your final paper, I am open to hearing it.

The two parts together should be 4-6 pages single spaced. Please attach your “personal happiness list” as an appendix. The key is to show that you have learned a lot in this class by explicitly referencing and applying concepts and vocabulary from the course readings and class discussions. Put such terms **in bold**. Be sure to talk about your future work and career satisfaction, along with your life, relationships, and goals more generally.