Title: Happiness Advantage, 1 Unit

Schedule: Mondays 5:00pm – 6:00pm, OR Tuesdays 4:00pm – 5:00pm, OR Wednesdays 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Facilitator: Sarah Chen

Course Description:

“I’ll celebrate after I____.”

Popular belief holds that if we fill that blank with our personal or career goal and aim for success in achieving it, happiness will follow. Once we succeed, however, we form new goals and happiness gets pushed farther and farther into the future. Inspired by recent groundbreaking research in the field of positive psychology, Harvard alumns and professor Shawn Achor posits a theory that happiness fuels success, not the other way around. He has performed numerous experiments to gather evidence to support his belief and compiled his findings in a book called The Happiness Advantage.

Anchor has found that priming a person’s brain for happiness will always increase their performance. He bolsters his argument with research that shows that an increase in happiness not only helps the individual improve their own focus and quality of work, but also creates a “ripple effect” which benefits those around them. The seven strategies he suggests are capitalizing on positivity, adjusting our mindset, retraining our brains, finding the right path to cope with defeat and stress, forming manageable goals, making small adjustments to the prep work leading up to a test, and investing in our social network. A simple change, such as recognizing one thing that you are grateful for each day, has been proven to improve people’s happiness and, in turn, their performance. Achor challenges everyone to become a scientist and learn about positive psychology through experience, by conducting experiments and coming up with their own conclusions about what works best for them.

The objective of this course is to socialize strategies that are proven to improve one’s outlook (and happiness), have you try them for a period of 21 consecutive days, and then measure the tangible as well as intangible (perceived) benefits to test Achor’s hypothesis. Working under the umbrella of happiness, we will delve deeper into the practices of mindfulness (meditation), gratitude, and kindness. We will explore these themes through guest speakers, literature on the topics, in-class discussions, and four hands-on projects that challenge you to apply these practices to your daily lives. The hope is that with continuous practice over the course of 21 days, these practices will develop into habits that manifest more naturally and regularly.