

Questions for Professor Wilson

1. What was the assignment for this essay?

Here is the exact assignment:

FOCAL QUESTION PAPER FORMAT TOPIC: HAPPINESS/WELL-BEING

- How has happiness/well-being been defined? You can answer this question with definitions, description, and theories.
- What are the routes or sources of happiness?
- What variables (e.g., age, wealth, religion) have been correlated with happiness and which have surprisingly not been associated with well-being?
- How is the role of suffering related to happiness and well-being?
- Discuss criticism of happiness theory and provide how you think researchers/theorists in this area would respond to these criticisms.

STEP 1: Review ALL READINGS: Look for the answer to the questions in text not just titles or subtitles. Don't just scan for words in question. Answer these questions by synthesizing all of the evidence from all of the readings in this section.

STEP 2: Write.

- Be careful to use your own words. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism check the *HWS Writes* website. You may quote but use sparingly. Citations within the text and the references section must be in MLA or APA format. If you are unfamiliar with these formats check *HWS Writes* website or speak to me.
- When one author answers the question, some example formats are
 - DiMarco (2000) notes that... or indicates that... or cites that...
 - When two authors both agree you can indicate this with one statement (e.g., There is some agreement that...) and one citation (e.g., DiMarco, 2000; Montgomery & Cote, 2003).
 - When authors disagree, a few formats are, "While Seligman (2002) reports that...the Dalai Lama and Cutler (1998) would suggest" or "Contrary to Deiner et. al (date), Seligman (2002) suggests..."
- Make sure transitional words are provided (you can find these in a grammar and style handbook under "transitions"; they include words like: therefore, however, furthermore, and so on). Avoid a series of short, choppy sentences.

Remember the key to synthesizing information is to answer the above questions using multiple sources of evidence (when possible). Some questions may only be answered with one source.

Of course, proofread your paper and check spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Let me know if you have questions!

2. How did this essay assignment fit with your overall goals for the course?

This assignment fits with course goals by assisting students in developing their writing skills. I used their first writing assignment as a diagnostic tool and found that they were struggling with identifying central concepts in the readings and they were having trouble synthesizing work. This assignment provided them with focal questions to model one method of looking for themes in writing and the opportunity to synthesize their responses. The topic well-being and happiness is central to course content on transition and change. Essentially I believe that understanding research and theory on well-being and reflecting on this content can provide students with some of the tools necessary to make a successful transition to college.

3. Why does this student's essay stand out for you as an example of strong writing?

Emma's essay was close to perfection. She was thorough, she synthesized well, and it was extremely well-written. I also enjoyed the humor she threw in at the end.

Questions for Emma Daley

1. How did you go about completing this essay? What steps did you follow?

First, it's very important that I did all the readings. This seems obvious, but it really is crucial. I took notes on some of them, either as I read or after. Prof. Wilson gave us focus questions for the paper, so I looked through the readings and my notes for information that fell under each question. I have a huge window, so I put all my notes for the paper on it in colored Expo markers, under headings for each question. It was a great organizational tool and was a lot of fun. I was a bit worried when three days before the paper was due I was still writing on my window, but it turned out to be an excellent investment. Once everything was up there, it was very easy to put it into the paper.

2. What was the most challenging aspect of this essay assignment?

There was a huge amount of information in the readings, so the hardest part was deciding what to include, and then making sure all of that got in. It was challenging but fun to try to fit it all together in a way that made sense.

3. How does this essay connect to your work in the course as a whole?

This has been my favorite paper so far, not just because it's been my favorite topic, but also because I think it really hits the main point of the course. Although the course is labeled as being about change and transition, the idea is to be able to navigate changes in such a way as to promote well-being, not just get through them. It's a given that the only constant is change. The question is how happy we can be with that.

4. What is the most important thing you learned from doing this essay?

The most important thing I learned from this assignment is that I am in control of my own happiness and well-being. Obviously some circumstances are more conducive to happiness than others, but ultimately it is up to me. That's a little bit scary because of the responsibility involved, but it's really empowering.