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Программа дисциплины

Applied research: Happiness and Subjective Well-being Research
(Прикладное исследование: исследование счастья и субъективного
благополучия)

для направления 040100.68 «Социология» подготовки магистра
для магистерской программы «Сравнительные социальные исследования»

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Happiness and Subjective Well-Being Research

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Short description

How happy are you? This naive question proved to be so powerful as to shake up social sciences and attract the attention of media and policy makers around the globe. Thanks to the recent progress in measuring well-being, social sciences learnt that people's own evaluation about their well-being must be taken seriously. The opportunity of measuring happiness in a consistent and reliable way animated an extensive, joint effort from a variety of disciplines to reconsider the way modern societies are organized. Starting from the way jobs, education, health-care, cities and democracy are organized, the studies on subjective well-being provide ideas for policies that can effectively change the quality of life of millions of people.

The course will explore issues such as the foundations of the measurement of subjective well-being, the economic and non-economic determinants of well-being, the role of economic growth for well-being, the importance of social capital for people's quality of life, the causes of the economic crisis of 2008 as well as the multi-faceted role of Internet and of new media for quality of life.

The course will provide, in an accessible way, the tools to understand current social developments and to look from new perspectives at policies to promote prosperity and well-being.

Topics

The course is organized in four parts:

1. Measuring subjective well-being

- what is subjective well-being;
- how to measure subjective well-being;
- what do we know about well-being.

2. The happiness paradox:

- trends of objective and subjective indicators of well-being across
- countries;
- negative endogenous growth;
- economic growth, working hours, social capital, environment and
- well-being across countries;

3. Values, relationships and well-being

- the role of personal values for well-being and relational goods;

- the role of media for personal values;
- the economic crisis of 2008 from a different perspective;

4. Policy implications:

- should policy makers care for well-being?
- policies for happiness.

Main readings:

Stefano Bartolini, Manifesto for happiness, Pennsylvania University Press, forthcoming.

- Nick Powdthavee, The happiness equation: the surprising economics of our most valuable asset, Icon Books, 2010 (selected chapters)

During the course, I will provide further optional readings to those who want to know more.

Prerequisites

There are no special prerequisites for the course. All the topics will be discussed at length and in an accessible way. Everyone with a background in social sciences and interested in the topic is welcome.

Examination and grading

The final grade will consist of:

Written exam 50%

Presentation 35%

Participation in the class 15%

Written exam. At the end of the course students will undergo a written test in which they will have to answer to three questions on the topics discussed during the course. I will evaluate the degree of understanding of the topic along with the students' critic skills.

Presentation Throughout the course the students will prepare a 5 – 10 minutes presentation on a specific topic. I will ask each student to examine in some detail one of the topics covered together and to share the reading with the whole class. The presentation will give the opportunity to perform some autonomous work and to involve the class in the debate.