



HNRS 1520 SS/CC - Living the Dream: Conceptualizing success across disciplines and cultures

Honors Program
Weber State University

PROPOSED COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructors:	Dr. Jennifer Gnagey	Dr. AMK	Fall 2026
Office:	WB 239	[office]	[days]
Email:	jennifergnagey@weber.edu	[email]	[time]
Office Hours:	[days/times]	[days/times]	[location]

University Course Catalog Description

This course explores how success is conceptualized across the disciplines of economics and psychology and across American and Middle Eastern culture. Students are introduced to the fields of economics and psychology including their history, subject matter, and methods of inquiry. The concept of success is treated from the perspectives of contrasting disciplinary (economics and psychology) and cultural (American and Syrian/Middle Eastern) lenses. Evidence on academic and socio-emotional skills and their relationship to different concepts of success is also studied. Students will critically evaluate these different concepts of success, work toward their own conception of success, and learn to appreciate the different ways other people feel and experience success. This course satisfies the General Education requirements for the areas of “Social Science” (SS) and “Cultural Competence” (CC).

Required Materials

No textbook is required for this course.

Any required reading will be available on the class website via Canvas
(<https://weber.instructure.com/login>).

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed for you to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Develop basic familiarity with the central subject matter and methods of inquiry in economics and psychology
- Compare and contrast how success is conceptualized in economics and psychology
- Compare and contrast how success is conceptualized in American and Syrian/Middle Eastern cultures
- Understand the primary academic and socio-emotional skills that are associated with different concepts of success
- Work toward your own conception of success and appreciate those of others

General Education (Gen Ed) Learning Outcomes

This is a Gen Ed class meeting the requirements for the areas of “Social Science” (SS) and “Cultural Competence” (CC). The SS and CC learning outcomes are provided below and can also be found here:
<https://weber.edu/gened>

Social science (SS) area learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the Gen Ed Social Science requirement, students will be able to:

1. **Examine:** Examine institutions and human behavior through social and behavioral concepts, methods, or theories;
2. **Analyze:** Identify diverse perspectives to explore and examine social and behavioral phenomena;
3. **Apply:** Apply discipline-relevant and scientific theories and methods to make inferences about or applications to social and behavioral phenomena at personal, institutional, or cultural levels.

Cultural competence (CC) area learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the Gen Ed Cultural Competence requirement, students will be able to

1. **Evaluate** their own perspective as one among many
2. **Analyze** the ways in which biases or values influence and/or have influenced the structures, policies, practices, norms, or perspectives often assumed to be neutral.
3. **Apply** diverse perspectives to complex subjects in the face of multiple or conflicting positions, in accordance with their sense of personal and civic responsibility.

Honors Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the WSU Honors Program, students will be able to

1. Students will demonstrate critical thinking that is curious, open-minded, persistent, and interrogative.
2. Students will analyze familiar cultural assumptions and views in context of the world's many values, traditions, and belief systems.
3. Students will adapt and apply ideas, concepts, skills, methodologies, and/or theories across disciplines.
4. Students will write and communicate in clear and compelling ways.

Big Question and Signature Assignment

This course is part of the WSU General Education program. GE courses introduce students to academic disciplines through important “big questions” (BQ). At their core, “big questions” provide students the opportunity to integrate and apply their knowledge of the discipline to address a significant, personal, social, or professional issue. GE courses also introduce students to underlying foundational knowledge and intellectual tools that run through all academic areas and are part of the ongoing preparation to address real world problems.

All WSU General Education courses have “signature assignments” (SA) that require you to integrate and apply course content to address a big question with, for instance, critical or creative thinking, problem solving, or analysis. Signature assignments 1) will address a specific audience, 2) will tackle personal, social, or a professional question or issue, and 3) will integrate and apply course content through the use of 4) intellectual tools. You are enrolled in the WSU General Education course HNRS 1520 SS/CC.

This course's Big Question (BQ) is: **What does it mean to be successful?**

This course's Signature Assignment (SA) is titled **Success in my own words.**

Please see below and on Canvas for detailed information about the signature assignment

Grading Components

Written reflections	25%
In-class activities	15%
Reading presentation	25%
Signature assignment	25%
Attendance & Participation	10%

Grading Scale

Grading Scale (%)			
		77 - <80	C+
93 - 100	A	73 - <77	C
90 - <93	A-	70 - <73	C-
87 - <90	B+	67 - <70	D+
83 - <87	B	63 - <67	D
80 - <83	B-	60 - <63	D-
		0 - <60	F

Course Components & Grading

Written Reflections: About every other week, you will submit written reflection assignments. In these assignments you will respond to a series of questions that ask you to reflect on the assigned readings and/or material presented and discussed in class. Most reflections will be 1-2 pages.

In-class activities: On a regular basis, class time will be spent doing small-group activities such as responding to discussion questions, concept mapping, comparing/contrasting, etc. Discussion sheets and other written records of these activities will be submitted at the end of class for this component of your grade. We will drop your lowest in-class activity score before calculating final grades.

Reading Presentation: Students will work in groups of 2-3 to make a 10-12 minute presentation on one of the class readings during the semester. This presentation will serve to kick off discussion about the reading in class. Student groups may select any of the readings except weeks 1, 2, and 4. If two groups want the same reading, it will be allocated by random drawing. Readings not selected by a student group will be presented by the instructors.

Signature assignment – success in my own words: Students will give a 5-6 minute presentation about their personal conception of success. They will briefly compare their concept to those from the disciplines and cultures studied. They will identify one skill they want to improve, explain why this skill is important, and discuss what they will do to develop this skill.

Attendance & Participation: This is a face-to-face class. We expect you will make a good faith effort to attend in person. We do not plan to record or livestream class sessions. If you miss a class period, please review any materials posted on Canvas and/or get notes from a classmate. If you have questions afterward, we will be happy to set up a one-on-one meeting with you. If you have an extended absence (more than 1 week) due to COVID or other reasons please email us so we can make appropriate arrangements. In such cases, virtual attendance may become an option.

Grading Policies

Requests for re-grades: All requests for re-grades or grade changes for any course component must be received in the form of an email. No grades will be reconsidered until this email is received.

Grades of "Incomplete": The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. Incomplete grades are typically given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course, the student currently has a passing grade, and the remaining work can be completed the next semester.

Additional Course Policies

Email: This is the best way to contact us (jennifernagey@weber.edu and _____). If you do not receive a reply from one of us within 24 hours, we apologize and please email us again. However, if the email is non-urgent and received after 5pm on Friday, we may not reply until Monday morning.

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices have the potential to both enhance and distract from learning. In order to maximize enhancements and minimize distractions, we ask that those who use a laptop or tablet in class sit in the front of the room with the device flat on the table. We will also permit the use of smart phones in class to fact-check and/or access information that is relevant to class. However, we ask that students keep their phones on the table in front of them in plain sight (no use of phones under the table.) It is important to reiterate that use of electronic devices for activities other than classwork will not be tolerated. Individual violators of this policy may be asked to leave. If the class as a whole struggles with this policy, we reserve the right to make stricter rules.

Professionalism and Respect

The sense of human dignity and belonging of all members of the Weber State community is a necessary part of a healthy learning environment. Therefore, you should practice civil deportment, and avoid treating others in a manner that is demeaning or derisive in any respect. Diverse viewpoints and opinions are welcome in this class, and we will practice the mutual deference so important in the world of work when expressing them. Thus, while I encourage you to share your opinions, you will be expected to do so in a manner that is respectful toward others.

Academic Integrity

As part of the student code (PPM 6-22), you are expected to be academically honest and ethical. Academic dishonesty includes cheating; plagiarizing; colluding with others to be dishonest; falsifying information; giving, selling, or receiving unauthorized course or test information; using a tool or other aid not explicitly permitted by your instructor such as generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT) to complete assignments or exams; or infringing on others' copyrights and intellectual property. Academic dishonesty can have serious consequences in the class and/or at WSU. Be sure, if you borrow an idea, to express it in language entirely your own and let the reader know the idea's source in a citation note.

Artificial Intelligence: Written assignments must reflect your original thoughts and your unique authentic voice. We will permit limited use of AI for editing/proofing, but written assignments must be conceived and composed by you. Violations will be treated as plagiarism.

Study Groups and Homework: I encourage you to study and complete assignments in groups. Your classmates can often be your best teachers. However, the work you turn in must be your own. In cases of direct copying or other forms of free-riding, neither the copier nor the student who allowed their work to be copied will receive credit for the assignment.

ADA - Disability Services

If you require accommodations or services due to a disability, please contact [Disability Services](#) (DS) in room 181 of the Student Services Center (Ogden campus) or room 262 Building D2 (Davis Campus). Disability Services can arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats upon request.

Recording

The university prohibits students from recording class lectures unless the faculty member grants explicit permission (PPM 6-22.6.6). Any lectures recorded and posted on Canvas or shared to your

Weber State University student email are for the exclusive use of students enrolled in the class and may not be shared without previous authorization. Violations will be referred to the Dean of Students for adjudication under the student code (PPM 6-22).

Campus Closure Video Conferencing

If the class needs to be held virtually due to campus closure, sickness, or any other appropriate reason, you will receive a notification from your instructor via Canvas. Remember that attendance is just as important virtually as in the face-to-face option. During video conferencing, be present, avoid multitasking, and wait for your turn to speak and/or contribute to the class discussion. Be courteous and respectful of your classmates. As stated in the class recording policy, you may not record any segments and/or the full class unless you have authorization from the instructor. If you do not have the technology necessary for video conferencing, contact your instructor as soon as possible. This policy applies also to virtual office hours.

Core Beliefs and Challenging Subject Matter

Faculty members teach in line with the best standards of their discipline and choose materials appropriate to help the class master expected course outcomes. A student may disagree with course content, but unless the content conflicts with a student's core beliefs, students are expected to engage professionally, as described above. If after reading the syllabus and class program, you expect there will be a conflict with your core beliefs, you should consider withdrawing from the class before the last day to drop classes without penalty. If you find this solution unworkable, you may request a resolution from the instructor, in writing with a copy to the department chair, explaining what burden the class requirement would place on your beliefs. Students who are not satisfied with the outcome may seek assistance through the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Student Responsibilities

As a student at Weber State University, you are expected to act responsibly and appropriately as you attend a public institution of higher education. When you enroll as a student at WSU, you agree to abide by the standards of appropriate and responsible behavior outlined in the student code (PPM 6-22). This applies to your behavior as an individual when participating in group settings on campus and if you represent Weber State University at an off-campus event. Choosing to ignore these important student responsibilities could result in university disciplinary actions.

Harassment, Discrimination, & Sexual Misconduct

Weber State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, pregnancy, and pregnancy-related conditions such as childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, (including recovery), genetics, disability (see PPM 3-34), religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, veteran, active military status, age (over 40 in employment discrimination), and other classifications protected by law. If you have questions regarding the university's policy against discrimination and harassment, or if you have questions about reporting discrimination or harassment, you may contact the university's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) by calling 801-626-6240 or visit [the OEO website](#).

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignments due	Learning outcomes addressed
Week 1	Introductions and context	Blanchard, C.M. “Syria: Transition and US policy.” 2025.		
Week 2	What is economics?	Backhouse, R.E. and Madema, S.G. “On the definition of Economics.” Journal of Economic Perspectives, 2009.	Reflection 1: Introduce yourself and your context	SS: n/a CC: n/a HNR: 4
Week 3	Conceptualizing success in economics	Broome, J. “Utility.” Economics and Philosophy, 1991.		
Week 4	What is psychology?	Colman, A. M. “Psychology.” In A. Kuper and J. Kuper (Eds), <i>The social science encyclopedia</i> (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 820-826). London: Routledge, 2004.	Reflection 2: What resonates with you about the ways economics has conceptualized success? What do you find dissonant?	SS: 1, 2, 3 CC: n/a HNR: 1, 4
Week 5	Conceptualizing success in psychology	Black, J.S. et al. “Content theories of motivation.” Organizational Behavior, 2019. (Includes Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.)		
Week 6	Conceptualizing success in American Culture	“Reimagining the American Dream: Views from young Americans,” Sine Institute of Policy and Politics, 2025. (Results from a public-opinion poll of Americans age 18-34 conducted in Aug 2023)	Reflection 3: Compare & contrast concepts of success in econ & psych What resonates with you? What do you find dissonant?	SS: 1, 2, 3 CC: n/a HNR: 1, 3, 4

Week 7	Conceptualizing success in Syrian/Middle Eastern Culture	“Divided but hopeful.” The Economist, 2 April, 2025. (Results from a public-opinion poll of Syrian adults conducted in March 2025)		
Week 8	Dominating cultures in economics and psychology	Thaylmeyer et al. “The neglected 95% revisited: Is American psychology becoming less American?” American Psychologist, 2021.	Reflection 4: Compare & contrast concepts of success in American and Syrian culture. Do you identify with either culture? What resonates and what is dissonant?	SS: n/a CC: 1, 2, 3 HNR: 1, 2, 4
Week 9	Skills for success: What are cognitive skills/ intelligence? How can we measure these?	Mackintosh, N.J. “History of theories and measures of intelligence.” The Cambridge handbook of intelligence, 2011.		
Week 10	What are non-cognitive/ socio-emotional skills? How do psychologists study/measure them?	Soto, C.J. et al. “Taking Skills Seriously: Toward an Integrative Model and Agenda for Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Skills.” Directions in Psychological Science, 2021.	Reflection 5: Reflect on the complications of measuring intelligence and academic skills. Discuss one idea/theory/practice that resonates and one that is dissonant.	SS: 1, 2, 3 CC: n/a HNR: 1, 4
Week 11	Cognitive & socio-emotional skills in economics	Kautz, T. “Fostering and measuring skills: improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success.” National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014 Sections 1-2 ONLY (pp 1-20)		
Week 12	What is the relationship between different types of skills and success? Key findings from psychology	Ozer, D.J and Benet-Martinez, V. “Personality and the prediction of consequential outcomes.” Annual Review of Psychology, 2006.	Reflection 6: Compare and contrast psychological and economic approaches to studying and measuring socio-emotional skills.	SS: 1, 2, 3 CC: n/a HNR: 1, 3, 4

Week 13	What is the relationship between different types of skills and success? Key findings from economics	Kautz, T. “ Fostering and measuring skills: improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success. ” National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014 Sections 3-6 ONLY (pp 20-36)		
Week 14	Skill development: traits, states, and personal growth	Spielman, R.M. et al. “ Chapter 6: Learning. ” Psychology 2 nd Ed, 2020. (Discusses conditioning and social learning.) Optional - Deming, D.J. “ Four facts about human capital. ” Journal of Economic Perspectives, 2022.		
Week 15	Signature assignment presentations	n/a	Signature assignment – student presentations (see description above)	SS: 1, 2, 3 CC: 1, 2, 3 HNR: 1, 2, 3, 4