

COURSE CONTENT

Course Code / Title : HP3005 “Fun Will Now Commence”: The Psychology of Leisure

Pre-requisites : HP1000 + HP1100 or CS2008 (PSMA)

No. of AUs. : 3

Contact Hours : 39

Course Aims

Many students feel perpetually busy. Between classes, CCAs, part-time work, family commitments, and the constant buzz of smartphones and social media, leisure often gets squeezed into the margins—or happens only “by accident” when everything else is done (which, let’s be honest, is rare). Over time, free time can start to feel like a luxury, a guilty pleasure, or something to scroll through rather than actually experience.

But leisure isn’t just leftover time. The way you spend your free time quietly—but powerfully—shapes your well-being, health, relationships, identity, and even how well you learn and work. Why do some activities leave you feeling energised, connected, and refreshed, while others leave you oddly drained, restless, or vaguely unsatisfied? What actually makes something fun? And is fun always good for you?

This course offers an introduction to the psychology of leisure—with a generous sprinkle of fun. You’ll explore major theories and frameworks that explain why we choose certain leisure activities and how we experience them, alongside how psychologists study leisure in real life. That includes lab research, but also methods beyond the lab, such as time-use diaries and naturalistic observation of everyday behaviour. Along the way, we’ll examine why leisure matters for happiness and health across the lifespan, and how personal, social, and cultural factors shape what you do for fun—and how it feels when you do it.

Ultimately, this course invites you to rethink leisure not as wasted time, but as a powerful psychological resource. The goal is to equip you with evidence-based tools to design leisure that is not only enjoyable, but also meaningful, restorative, and sustainable—so that fun works for you, not against you.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Articulate major theories and frameworks relevant to the psychology of leisure.
2. Explain how leisure experiences impact health and well-being across the lifespan.
3. Evaluate empirical research on leisure using psychological concepts and methodological reasoning.
4. Analyse how personal, social, and cultural factors shape leisure behaviour and experience.

5. Design evidence-informed plans to optimise leisure for yourself and others, including strategies to recognise opportunities, overcome constraints, and cultivate high-quality experiences.

Course Content

- Introduction: What is “leisure” and what counts as “fun”? Course overview and roadmap.
- Brief History of the Field: Early theories, key research developments, and psychology’s evolving view of leisure.
- Studying Leisure Scientifically: Core definitions, constructs, measurement approaches, and research designs.
- Leisure Experience: Common experiences (e.g., interest, excitement, flow); must leisure always be “fun”?
- Leisure Needs and Motivation: Major models and paradigms; perceived freedom and control; intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation.
- Personality and Leisure: How personality traits and attitudes influence leisure.
- Social Influences on Leisure: Social processes affecting leisure (e.g., persuasion, conformity, social comparison).
- Impacts of Leisure Across the Lifespan: Leisure in childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and later life.
- Optimising Leisure Outcomes: Identifying opportunities, overcoming constraints, and cultivating high-quality leisure experiences.

Course Assessment

CA1	Class Participation	: 10%
CA2	Reflection Collage	: 25%
CA3	Midterm Quiz	: 20%
CA4	Oral Exam	: 20%
CA5	Group Presentation	: 25%
Total		----- 100%

Reading and References

Textbook:

Walker, G. J., Kleiber, D. A., & Mannell, R. C. (2019). A Social Psychology of Leisure (3rd ed.). Sagamore Publishing.

Supplemental Readings:

1. Iwasaki, Y., Messina, E. S., & Hopper, T. (2018). The role of leisure in meaning-making and engagement with life. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(1), 29–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2017.1374443>
2. van der Klashorst, E. (2025). For the community, by the community: Refugee and migrant empowerment through co-designed leisure programmes. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 28(1), 28–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2024.2358760>
3. Cleary, M., Le Lagadec, D., Thapa, D. K., & Kornhaber, R. (2025). Exploring the impact of hobbies on mental health and well-being: A scoping Review. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 46(8), 804–814. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2025.2512006>
4. Zins, A. H., & Ponocny, I. (2022). On the importance of leisure travel for psychosocial wellbeing. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 93, 103378. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103378>
5. Hood, C. D., & Carruthers, C. P. (2012). Facilitating change through leisure: The leisure and well-being model of therapeutic recreation practice. In Freire, T. (Ed.), *Positive leisure science: From subjective experience to social contexts* (pp. 121-140). Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5058-6_7

NB: The above listing comprises the foundational readings for the course and more up-to-date relevant readings will be provided when they become available.

Planned Weekly Schedule (subject to changes, if any)

Week	Topics or Themes	ILO	Activities	Readings
1	Introduction	1, 2	No activities	Textbook Chapter 1
2	Brief History of the Field	1, 3	No activities	Textbook Chapter 2
3	Studying Leisure Scientifically	3	No activities	Textbook Chapter 3
4	Leisure Experience	1, 2, 3, 5	Reflection Collage 1	Textbook Chapter 4
5	Leisure Needs and Motivation	1, 2, 4	No activities	Textbook Chapters 5 & 6
6	Personality and Leisure	1, 4	Reflection Collage 2	Textbook Chapter 7
7	Midterm Quiz	1-4	No activities	No readings
8	Social Influences on Leisure	2, 4	Reflection Collage 3	Textbook Chapter 8
9	Impacts of Leisure Across the Lifespan	2-4	No activities	Textbook Chapters 10 & 11
10	Optimising Leisure Outcomes	5	Reflection Collage 4	Textbook Chapter 12
11	Oral Exam	1-4	No activities	No readings
12	Guest Lecture	4	Reflection Collage 5	No readings
13	Group Presentation	5	No activities	No readings