

Sociology

International Master in Comparative Social Research

CODE - 193

180 minutes

They may bring a Russian-English dictionary but no prepared notes of any kind. The test will be completely in English.

The exam will be composed of 3 sections. Grading of the overall exam will be based on weighting of the time allotted for each section. Students may use sheets of blank paper in order to take notes, but official answers must be provided in the test booklet.

1. Short Essay. Sample comparative-historical problem. 60 minutes.

Students will be presented with a table with countries as rows and country traits as columns. The table cells will contain either '1', meaning that a trait is present in a given country, or '0', that the trait is not present.

Write an essay that identifies the conditions that are necessary and/or sufficient for the '**Legal Equality of Same-Sex Partnerships/Marriage**' to emerge in a country based on the presence of the other traits. Students should describe their logic for arriving at the given result and assume the cell entries are correct.

Table 1

	World War 2 Victor	Internal Armed Conflict	Recent Sexual Revolution	Strong Information Economy	High Religiosity	Allow for marriage or registered partnership of Same-sex couples
Germany	0	0	1	1	0	1
India	0	1	0	1	1	0
Italy	0	0	1	0	1	1
Japan	0	0	0	1	0	0
Turkey	0	1	0	0	1	0
China	1	1	0	0	0	0
France	1	0	1	1	0	1
Russia	1	1	0	1	1	0
USA	1	0	1	1	1	1

2. Long Essay. Develop a research proposal. 90 minutes.

First, read the review by Catherine Rottenberg about the new book by Lynne Segal “Radical happiness: moments of collective joy”.

Radical happiness: moments of collective joy

 www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/catherine-rottenberg/radical-happiness-moments-of-collective-joy

Catherine Rottenberg

True happiness is produced by cultivating our ties to one another: a review of Lynne Segal’s new book.

In a recent Guardian expose, Michael King, a London ombudsman, warns of a new phenomenon—the rise of homelessness in the UK among people who have stable jobs and a steady income. In 2017 it is not unusual to see nurses, taxi drivers, hospitality staff and council workers find themselves on the streets after being evicted by private-sector landlords seeking higher rents. The problem of homelessness, King continues, can no longer simply be ascribed to drug addiction or mental health issues; rather, the erosion of the social safety net is what is pushing an ever-increasing number of people into precarity.

It is in the midst of these devastating new realities that Lynne Segal’s book *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy* has appeared on the literary scene. In her new book, Segal adamantly refuses despair. Instead, she insists that we must never stop imagining and struggling for alternative—and, yes, even utopic—spaces and futures. This urging could not come at a more opportune time.

As study after study has shown, levels of individual misery, depression, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation are at all-time highs in the Anglo-American world. Meanwhile, the billion-dollar happiness industry—that “culturally orchestrated ideology of individual happiness with its ubiquitous commercial incitement to pleasure” as Segal puts it—continues to thrive, from positive psychology to mindfulness and the wellness movement: think Gwyneth Paltrow’s GOOP and the explosion and popularity of TED talks endlessly exhorting us to foster a positive outlook.

In her book, Segal posits radical happiness as the antidote, not only to the ersatz happiness that is sold to us via pills, apps, and self-help guides but also to the more general sense of despondency. Happiness, Segal gently reminds us, is not something we find; nor can it be bought on the market. Unlike the dominant ideology of individual felicity—with consumerism and individuated sexual desire mixed up with ideals of romantic love at its core—radical happiness is produced by cultivating and reaffirming our ties to one another and to the world.

Thus, while love is central to happiness (both individual and collective), love is also infinite in its variety, making it imperative to expand notions of attachment and care well beyond heteronormative coupledom. As the title of the book suggests, radical happiness is therefore most accurately defined in terms of moments of collective joy, moments that are created when we are moved to go beyond

and outside ourselves to act together with a plurality of others. Crucially, for Segal, these moments emerge as we forge communities that struggle together to ensure the creation of social conditions and infrastructure that would enable the greatest number of people possible to thrive.

Much of *Radical Happiness* charts how and why this movement beyond oneself has become more difficult in the contemporary era. Despite the Anglo-American obsession with happiness and the thriving happiness industry, the populace is increasingly miserable. Segal draws on a range of thinkers from Émile Durkheim to Hannah Arendt to underline the point that that such widespread misery, even though it may be experienced at the individual level, has deep roots in social context and structures.

One of these roots—and the preponderant one for Segal—is the rise of neoliberal governance, which has, since the 1980s and the era of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US, seen the steady dismantling of the welfare state and the social safety net. This has, as the book details, translated into increasing economic insecurity for ever more people. Not only has work become increasingly precarious over the past few decades but employees are also putting in more hours for less money, which, in turn, leaves people less time for leisure and, often, the ability to fulfill care commitments. Furthermore, neoliberal governance erodes any sense of social responsibility while fostering intensified individualism, which merely exacerbates feelings of isolation and loneliness.

This deepening cultural crisis is the direct result of on-going policies of austerity and privatization, which siphon wealth upwards at a staggering pace while eviscerating public resources, spaces, and community life. The World Inequality Report recently published data showing that the richest 0.1 per cent of the world's population have increased their combined wealth so much that they currently have as much as the poorest 50 per cent, or 3.8 billion people. With rising rates of poverty and homelessness alongside deteriorating health and educational infrastructure, it really is no wonder that so many people are miserable and feel so alone.

Radical Happiness is not, however, a gloomy book. Rather, after diagnosing the ills of the current Anglo-American political and social landscape it offers us hope, reminding us of the wealth of resources on which we can draw in order to continue struggling for alternative futures. Taking us back to the ancient Greeks, Segal underscores Aristotle's notion of happiness or eudonomia as a form of human flourishing; it derives from activities we desire to do for their own sake, which are both noble and good. Happiness was thus conceived as *activity*, not a static emotional state. This is a crucial insight and one that could potentially reorient our understandings of pleasure and joy in the present.

Indeed, throughout the book, Segal taps into the resistance archive, drawing on a wide range of resources from socialist visionaries like Robert Owen to anarchist and political activist Emma Goldman to utopian feminist fiction like Marge Piercy's *Women on the Edge of Time*. These dreamers and their political engagements serve as key resources for the on-going struggle to create a more egalitarian world, even as this task appears more daunting today than ever before.

Segal also recounts her own participation in the woman's movement in the 1970s, underscoring how her involvement in such a movement was utterly transformative, personally as well as politically. Collective resistance to oppression in its various forms—with its shared sense of agency—

symbolizes for Segal the very essence of radical happiness. These movements or moments of collectivity are often fleeting, but they make us feel alive and hence happier.

In other words, whether or not these struggles for a more egalitarian world ultimately succeed—and historically they most often have not—the very struggle to cultivate and (re)build a sense of the commons compels us to move beyond ourselves while reaffirming our connection to each other. It is precisely this kind of “acting in concert” to create a more just and better world that facilitates these life-affirming moments of collective joy.

While Segal herself is perhaps best known for her feminist interventions—particularly her *Straight Sex*, and for her more recent critical musing on ageing, *Out of Time*—in the neighborhood of Islington in London (where she lives) she is renowned for her decades of radical activism as well as for her indomitable spirit. *Radical Happiness* is a panoramic yet exquisitely detailed book, erudite but extremely accessible, and cautiously optimistic while scathingly critical. It is a tour de force and a vital light in these dark times.

Then, fulfill the following task in an essay:

Lynne Segal argues that happiness is a social phenomena, and as such is heavily influenced by general conditions of the spheres of contemporary life, such as economics, politics, and the characteristics human interrelations in every-day life.

Sketch out a research proposal that can test some aspect(s) of this idea across a range of countries. Be sure to define a research question, define your concepts, list assumptions or hypotheses and the reasoning behind them, describe in detail the method and its details (sampling, data gathering, analysis technique) that you will use to answer your question.

3. Analytical reasoning. 30 minutes.

The following multiple-choice analytical questions are designed to test your ability to accurately and quickly correctly determine the answer to problems. Please answer the following questions below:

Each question in this section is based on a set of conditions. Choose the response that most accurately and completely answers the question.

I. Erin is twelve years old. For three years, she has been asking her parents for a dog. Her parents have told her that they believe a dog would not be happy in an apartment, but they have given her permission to have a bird. Erin has not yet decided what kind of bird she would like to have. Based on these statements which of the following conclusions is true?

- 1) Erin's parents like birds better than they like dogs.
- 2) Erin does not like birds.
- 3) Erin and her parents live in an apartment.
- 4) Erin and her parents would like to move.

II. The Pacific yew is an evergreen tree that grows in the Pacific Northwest. The Pacific yew has a fleshy, poisonous fruit. Recently, taxol, a substance found in the bark of the Pacific yew, was discovered to be a promising new anticancer drug. Based on these statements which of the following conclusions is true?

- 1) Taxol is poisonous when taken by healthy people.
- 2) Taxol has cured people from various diseases.
- 3) People should not eat the fruit of the Pacific yew.
- 4) The Pacific yew was considered worthless until taxol was discovered.

III. When they heard news of the hurricane, Maya and Julian decided to change their vacation plans. Instead of traveling to the island beach resort, they booked a room at a fancy new spa in the mountains. Their plans were a bit more expensive, but they'd heard wonderful things about the spa and they were relieved to find availability on such short notice. Then which of the following statements is correct?

- 1) Maya and Julian take beach vacations every year.
- 2) The spa is overpriced.
- 3) It is usually necessary to book at least six months in advance at the spa.
- 4) Maya and Julian decided to change their vacation plans because of the hurricane.

IV. If Tim's commute never bothered him because there were always seats available on the train and he was able to spend his 40 minutes comfortably reading the newspaper or catching up on paperwork. Ever since the train schedule changed, the train has been extremely crowded, and by the time the doors open at his station, there isn't a seat to be found. Which of the following statements is correct?

- 1) Tim would be better off taking the bus to work.
- 2) Tim's commute is less comfortable since the train schedule changed.
- 3) Many commuters will complain about the new train schedule.
- 4) Tim will likely look for a new job closer to home.

V. Vincent has a paper route. Each morning, he delivers 37 newspapers to customers in his neighborhood. It takes Vincent 50 minutes to deliver all the papers. If Vincent is sick or has other plans, his friend Thomas, who lives on the same street, will sometimes deliver the papers for him. Which of the following statements is correct?

- 1) Vincent and Thomas live in the same neighborhood.
- 2) It takes Thomas more than 50 minutes to deliver the papers.
- 3) It is dark outside when Vincent begins his deliveries.
- 4) Thomas would like to have his own paper route.

VI. On weekends, Mr. Sanchez spends many hours working in his vegetable and flower gardens. Mrs. Sanchez spends her free time reading and listening to classical music. Both Mr. Sanchez and Mrs. Sanchez like to cook. Which of the following statements is correct?

- 1) Mr. Sanchez enjoys planting and growing vegetables.
- 2) Mr. Sanchez does not like classical music.
- 3) Mrs. Sanchez cooks the vegetables that Mr. Sanchez grows.
- 4) Mrs. Sanchez enjoys reading nineteenth century novels.

VII. Georgia is older than her cousin Marsha. Marsha's brother Bart is older than Georgia. When Marsha and Bart are visiting with Georgia, all three like to play a game of Monopoly. Marsha wins more often than Georgia does. Which is the correct conclusion drawn?

- 1) When he plays Monopoly with Marsha and Georgia, Bart often loses.
- 2) Of the three, Georgia is the oldest.
- 3) Georgia hates to lose at Monopoly.
- 4) Of the three, Marsha is the youngest.

