

Finland: Global to Personal Wellbeing

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Office Hours: By appointment or drop-in

GLBL 311, 3-credits

Preq: None

Term: Fall 2026

Class Meeting: Mondays 3:30-5pm

Classroom: AG Hill 122

Catalog Description

This course will take a sociological approach to understand how people use and act within their environment, in both nature and urban settings and how this impacts their own wellness practices. Students will learn how to incorporate wellbeing practices into their academic, personal, and professional lives.

Detailed Course Description

This course examines the dimensions of health and wellness with emphasis placed on the practices embedded in Finnish culture that have contributed to this country being one of the world's leaders in health and happiness. Students will learn about Finland's focus on well-being and healthy habits and to inform their own health and wellbeing practices as they transition to college and post college life.

Course Objectives

There will be two eight-hour classes scheduled before departure that will outline the course topics, what you will be seeing in Finland, and health and safety. There will be four 90-minute classes held upon return to debrief the experience, cover course topics and to give final project presentations.

Students will be able to:

- Explore, identify and evaluate sources of information related to personal wellness
- Demonstrate appropriate conventions and communication skills in an international setting
- Recognize and verbalize key historic and cultural aspects of Finnish culture.
- Articulate the observed differences in wellbeing practices across cultures
- Understand the relationship between societal resources and attitudes on health and wellbeing.
- Identify and implement strategies to improve their personal wellness
- Gain a sense independence with the ability to think of creative solutions to real world problems

Required Resources

Laptop or Tablet (if you do not have access to one, please let me know so I can make arrangements)

Journal/notebook

Article Readings:

Students will read various articles throughout the semester, which will be provided by the instructor in Blackboard.

Book:

Pantzar, K. (2018). *The Finnish Way: Finding courage, wellness, and happiness through the power of sisu*. Tarcher.

Assignments/In-class Activities

Assignments: This course will consist of three assignments that will be due before travel. These assignments will contribute to deeper learning of the Finnish identity, culture, and what you will be experiencing on the ground.

1. **Wellness Assessment (10 points).** Report on your current well-being practices identifying what you currently do related to your personal wellness and identify what well-being strategies you believe you will implement as a new student at NDSU. Your Wellness Assessment must address all 8 areas of wellness and your self-observations. You will use this assessment to help inform your Wellness Plan at the end of the course. **(2-page worksheet)**
2. **Reflective Practice (50 points – 10 points per entry):** Throughout the pre-departure sessions and while in-country, you will have five reflection prompt journal activities. A prompt related to a specific aspect of well-being will be given that will relate to the topic for that day, and you will be asked to report on your observations of that prompt and also about how you are feeling about those observations. Items to include would also be questions that bubble up for you and if these observations/feelings may be something to incorporate into your own well-being practices. These will be graded on completion and thoughtfulness, not specific content and will be uploaded into Blackboard upon return to the United States.
3. **In-Country Participation (50 points - 5 points per day):** You will be expected to participate in all program activities, group debriefing sessions, site/cultural visits, drop-off activities, and homestay events. You will also be expected to be on time and respectful of the local communities we will be interacting with. We will be doing/seeing some very exciting things and participation is key to a successful group dynamic and experience.
4. **In-class Activities and Participation (60 points - 10 points per day):** Throughout the pre-departure sessions, and NDSU classroom time, there will be numerous in-class activities that will relate to the topic of that class. You will work on your own or in small groups on in-class activities such as worksheets, photo displays, and team pair and shares. This course is heavily dependent on class interaction and discussion. You will be responsible for showing up to class having read the required readings and ready to have intellectual conversations with your classmates related to the overall theme of the class as well as how this has prepared you to transition to college.
5. **On-Campus Resources Team Activity (15 points):** As you start your life at NDSU it's important that you are aware of the resources that you have available to support you through your journey. In assigned teams, you will be asked to create a team powerpoint featuring the team photos taken at each of the corresponding checklist locations. Powerpoints are submitted via Blackboard on due date.
6. **Sisu Paper (25 points):** The Finnish culture prides themselves on the concept of Sisu. As you start out on your collegiate academic journey, one could argue that an element of Sisu may be needed for you to meet your goals. This assignment asks you to:
 - Define Sisu using your own observations and experiences in Finland in cooperation with the text and supplemental readings you find.
 - Identify and briefly describe one experience you are willing to share where you had to draw on Sisu.
 - Correlate how what you've learned from that experience and your knowledge of Sisu has prepared you for this next chapter of your life.

The paper should be 1-2 pages single-spaced using Times New Roman and submitted via Blackboard on due date.

7. **Wellness Plan (40 points):** Finland and the other Nordic countries have consistently been ranked as being some of the happiest countries in the world and amongst those with the highest life expectancies. Researchers attribute this health and happiness to social structures and well-being practices. As you transition to independent adulthood as a first-year college student you will be solely responsible for your health and well-being. This assignment asks you to:

- Briefly summarize in 1-2 paragraphs the findings that you listed in your Wellness Assessment that was completed during the two Orientation sessions at the start of the course.
- Identify and explain in detail 5 well-being practices from at least three of the dimensions of wellness that you plan to adopt in your first year as a NDSU student. Each of these well-being practices should include:
 - The goal in which you hope to attain for that well-being practice.
 - The strategies that you will use to reach that goal.
 - The timeline in which you hope to attain that goal.
 - How you will know that you attained the goal.
 - On-campus resources that will assist you with reaching that goal.
- Briefly describe how adopting the well-being practices will contribute to your overall well-being for your first year as a NDSU student.

The paper should be 3-4 pages single-spaced using Times New Roman and submitted via Blackboard on due date.

Grading Criteria and Scale

Pre-Finland Wellness Assessment	10	A =	> 90%
Post-Finland Wellness Plan	40	B =	80 to < 90%
Reflective Practice x 5	50	C =	70 to < 80%
Sisu Reflection Paper	25	D =	60 to < 70%
In-Class Participation	60	F =	< 60%
On-Site Participation	50		
<u>Team Resource Activity</u>	<u>15</u>		
	250		

ATTENDANCE

This course consists of traditional lectures, in-class discussion and exercises, interactions with local residents and guest speakers and cultural excursions. Therefore, In accordance with NDSU Policy 333, attendance is expected at all class sessions and activities.

Veterans and student service members with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible and are encouraged to provide Activation Orders.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Services (<https://www.ndsu.edu/accessibility-disability>) as soon as possible.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT ([FERPA](#))

Your personally identifiable information and educational records as they relate to this course are subject to [FERPA](#).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. [NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct](#) applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the [Office of Registration and Records](#). Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty.

Date	Course Topic	Assignments Due	Readings
Pre-Session 1	Creating Connections Finland 101 Responsible Traveler Free Day Planning Chapter 1	• Pre-Departure Wellness Assessment • Talking Circle #1	<i>Chapter 1</i>
Pre-Session 2	7 Dimensions of Wellness Reflective Writing Class Expectations Chapter 2	• Talking Circle #2 • Reflective writing assignment	<i>Chapter 2</i>
In Country		• Reflective writing assignment x5 • Talking Circle #3 & #4	<i>Chapter 3-10</i>
Post-Session 1	Ch.3, 4, 5 Observation of well-being in Finland Sauna & Cold Water Plunge Nature Connection Well-Being & Sisu Papers	• Reflective Group Activity comparing wellbeing in Finland vs. US	
Post-Session 2	Campus Resources - Counseling Ctr; Wellness Center; Student Health; ACE Tutoring	• Team Photo Scavenger Hunt • Report back one way you interacted with nature since last session	<i>Article: Bridging the Gap: Promoting Physical Activity in College-Aged Students</i> https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2025/25_0118.htm
Post-Session 3	Ch. 6, 7, 8, 9 Physical Well-Being (diet, sleep, and exercise)	• Finding Your Sisu Paper Due • Report back one campus resource you visited since last session	
Post-Session 4	Ch. 10 & Conclusion Nordic Minimalism Mental Well-Being	• Wellness Plan Due • Report back on one physical activity offered by the Wellness Center you did or will participate in	