

ENVI/PSYC 270
Psychology of Sustainable Behavior

Macalester College, Fall 2014
Olin-Rice 270, TR 9:40 – 11:10 p.m.
Prof. Christie Manning



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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:15 – 12:00
(or by appointment)

Course Description:

This is an introduction to the psychological study of sustainable human behavior. Effective solutions to environmental problems require that we understand and address the behaviors that lead to them. In this course we will use psychological principles, theories, and methods to examine the reciprocal relationship between human beings and the natural world. We will discuss the complex nature of environmental problems and review important psychological and social factors that underlie a range of sustainable and non-sustainable behaviors. We will cover approaches that encourage sustainable actions and apply these approaches in three class projects: a self-change project, a community-change project, and a communication/education project.

Course Goals:

The course will provide an overview of the basic knowledge, theories, and research methods that characterize the field of Psychology as it pertains to sustainability. Course goals include:

- Introduce students to psychological perspectives on global environmental issues, particularly climate change
- Familiarize students with the psychological, social, and real-world factors that lead people to engage in sustainable behavior
- Cover the main theories and approaches guiding psychological research pertaining to sustainability
- Develop and enhance student analytical skills through critical reading and discussion
- Develop and enhance student writing ability through instruction, practice, feedback, and revision
- Demonstrate the practical implications and limitations of psychological theory with real-world testing and application of course material
- Encourage students to reflect upon their personal values and lifestyle choices

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand how psychological theories, findings, and methods have been and can be applied to problems of environmental sustainability
- Identify advantages and shortcomings of sustainability analyses and responses that ignore/include individual-level considerations
- Connect psychological theory to behavior in the real world
- Design and implement strategies to address specific communication and action goals
- Collaborate with a group to define a problem, make observations, devise a strategy, and test a solution
- Write an effective psychological paper that contains an academic argument

Learning Environment:

As we work cooperatively to create a positive and productive learning environment, I would like you to keep the following thoughts in mind:

- *We are all potential teachers.* The diversity of perspectives and experiences that we each bring to class is an invaluable resource. Your peers' insights will give you new understanding of old ideas and challenge your assumptions. Each of us has a voice that is valid and important, and we can disagree with respect, consideration, and empathy for each other and our differing points of view.
- *Each individual is ultimately responsible for his or her own learning and growth.* You will benefit from this class exactly to the extent of the effort that you put into it. This means coming to class curious about the ideas and willing to engage in discussion and brainstorming, and taking an active role in defining the interesting themes and questions.

Course Materials:

Book (pre-publication version, posted on Moodle)

Scott, B.A., Amel, E.L., Koger, S.M. and Manning, C.M. (2015). *Psychology for Sustainability*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Other Readings:

All other readings listed in the Readings Schedule are available through the course's Moodle website (ENVI/PSYC 270).

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Final grades for the course will be based on the following:

1. Completion of weekly reading preparation 10%
2. Participation and attendance 15%
3. Attendance at and one-paragraph summary of **three** EnviroThursday presentations (required) 5%
4. Self-change project 15%
5. Campus-change project 20%
6. Campus-change project in-class group presentation 5%
7. Communication project 15%
8. Communication project in-class presentation 5%
9. Portfolio final (collection of in-class assignments) 10%

Late policy: If you submit any of the above assignments late, you will be graded down one full grade for each day beyond the deadline. That is, if an assignment that was due on Tuesday is turned in on Wednesday, the highest grade it can receive is a B+.

Final Grade Scale:

A (95 – 100), A- (91 – 94), B+ (88 – 90), B (84 – 87), B- (81 – 83). Similar ranges apply for C grades and D grades.

Below 60 is a failing grade.

Assignments

Reading preparation (10%):

You will post a short response to each reading assignment. The intention of this requirement is that we all come to class familiar enough with the material that we can spend a significant amount of time applying it rather than explaining it. For each reading, I will post the format of your reading response on moodle.

Response postings are due by 9 p.m. on the evening before class (Monday at 9 pm for Tuesday's class, Wednesday at 9 pm for Thursday's class). Be concise - the best responses are short and to the point. Writing thoughtfully and thoroughly within a word limit is an important academic skill that this assignment will help you master.

After you have posted your response, Moodle will allow you to read the responses from the other students who have already posted theirs. Please take a few minutes at some point during the evening or morning before class to look through the reading responses from your peers.

You must upload your assignment to the Moodle site for that date. NOTE: The Moodle clock does not always correspond to yours - Moodle will timeout at 9 p.m. so don't wait until the last minute. DO NOT e-mail reading responses to me. I cannot accept late reading responses.

Your reading responses will be evaluated on a 0 (no credit = F), 1 (needs work = C), 2 (satisfactory = B/B-), 3 (good = B+), 4 (very good = A-), 5 (truly outstanding = A) basis. Most reading responses earn a 3 (B+).

Note: I understand that sometimes life gets stressful and class readings are the last on your priority list. Therefore, you can skip readings **twice** during the semester with no penalty. To do this, simply type "SKIP" into the Moodle response forum for that day's response. You must type in "SKIP" for there to be no grade penalty.

Participation and attendance (15%):

The quality of the course, and value of the experience for all of us, depends on careful preparation for class by everyone. Thus it is critical that you read the readings carefully and on time and be prepared to discuss them and apply them to in-class assignments. Your attendance and participation are required for the entire session of each class. Good participation has four foundations:

- *Regular attendance.* Regular attendance is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments. More than two unexcused absences results in no evaluation (0).
- *Preparation for discussion* by carefully and critically reading the class readings and completing the required Moodle response posting.
- *Active engagement* in class demonstrated by regular, thoughtful and substantive contributions to the discussion, the brainstorming, and the in-class assignments.
- *Supporting others' contributions* through attentive and respectful listening, offering responses that refer to others' contributions, not dominating the discussion and brainstorming, and allowing others to have a turn to speak.

For those who are less comfortable speaking in class, remember that asking a good question is also a valuable way to contribute to the discussion. However, if you are having serious difficulties with participation, please talk to me outside of class so that we can develop a strategy for improvement.

****Laptops are not allowed during class discussions.****

Attendance at and summary of three EnviroThursday presentations (required) (5%)

Every Thursday, the Environmental Studies department sponsors a speaker from 12:00 to 1:00 in OLRI 250. You are required to attend three of these presentations and to write a one-paragraph summary of each. The summaries are due on the last day of class (or email them to me soon after you've attended all three presentations). By the way, there is always food served at EnviroThursday.

Self-change project (15%)

It is easy to underestimate how difficult behavior change can be when thinking about it in the abstract or when focusing on other peoples' behavior. To help you understand some of the challenges that arise when attempting to change a behavior, and the thought patterns that accompany these challenges, you will choose a personal behavior

(one that has damaging environmental consequences - I strongly suggest you take on the challenge of producing no garbage) and change it for ten days. A detailed description of the assignment will be available on Moodle.

Campus-change project (20%):

Does this psychology stuff really work? For this project you will work with a small group of your peers in class to help a community partner organization create the conditions for a desired behavior change here on campus. Our partner has identified a target behavior and an audience. Your group will make observations, develop a strategy to foster change (based on course materials), pilot test your strategy, and evaluate the results. Your grade will not only reflect the final results of your project and the quality of your written report, but also how well your group functioned. A description of the assignment will be available on Moodle.

Campus-change project in-class group presentation (5%):

With your project group, you will make a 15 minute *formal* presentation to the class and to the partner organization, describing your project and its results. All students are required to attend and be a part of the group presentation.

Communication project (15%):

An important step in any social change is raising awareness of an issue. Your assignment is to develop a display/demonstration for the Eco-Experience building at the Minnesota State Fair or for the Living Green Expo held every May. You will take an idea or an issue that is personally important and develop materials that educate people about that issue and/or encourage a sustainable action. Your demonstration/display must be clearly based on the principles learned over the course of the semester. We will be working with the group at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) that organizes the Eco-Experience. A detailed description of the assignment will be available on Moodle.

Communication project in-class presentation (5%):

You will make a 5 minute formal presentation to the class and to representatives from the MPCA planning team, explaining your demonstration/display.

Portfolio final (compilation and analysis of in-class assignments) (10%):

Instead of a final exam, I would like you to turn in a set of the in-class brainstorming, analysis, and application assignments that you have completed through the semester. Along with copies of these assignments, include a brief paragraph describing the psychological theory or principle that you based your ideas upon, your own evaluation of your work, and ideas of how you might use this work and/or improve it. Further information will be available in the fourth week of class.

Academic Integrity

All students will be required to abide by the Macalester College academic integrity guidelines found at <http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/integrity.html>. Instances of suspected academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, and using the same paper in more than one course) will be handled as outlined in the guidelines.

Accommodations

Academic Support

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center (x6121; Kagin Commons) is here to help you do your best at Macalester in meeting your own goals and highest standards. Through academic enrichment and support services, ranging from workshops to individual assistance, the MAX Center can help you excel in your academics.

Professional counselors and peer tutors in writing, mathematics, science, and study skills provide personal assistance in:

- Writing for any college course, from brainstorming through final editing
- Content areas such as calculus, statistics, organic chemistry, or cellular biology
- Sharpening study and time management skills

General hours are 9:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M., M-F and 7 P.M. – 10 P.M., S-Th. Peer tutors are usually available in all areas during the evening, but as schedules vary during the day, it is useful to call x6121 (daytime) or x6193 during evening hours to schedule an appointment.

The MAX Center also provides testing accommodations. Students must verify the need for accommodations through the Dean of Students Office.

Accommodations

In some circumstances, course design may pose barriers to a student's ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content. Reasonable academic accommodations can be implemented in such circumstances. If you need an accommodation for a disability, please contact the Office of Student Affairs at [651-696-6220](tel:651-696-6220) to arrange for an appointment with the Assistant Dean of Students, Robin Hart Ruthenbeck, if you are a first year, second year or new to accommodations. Contact the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, if you are a junior or senior who has received accommodations from Macalester in the past. Additional resources and information regarding the accommodations process for students with disabilities can be found at: www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices/

Moodle:

Our course Moodle website duplicates much of the information in this syllabus, including the reading schedule and assignment due dates. It also serves as the distribution system for paper prompts, and provides a direct link to our course's e-reserves. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your Macalester username and password. After logging in, click on the link to Psychology of Sustainable Behavior in the My Courses section. Anything posted to the forums will automatically be emailed to everyone registered for the course. Click on each assignment to get the description. There will also be an option on Moodle to submit your projects to me in electronic form.

Summary of Topics and Deadlines

Week 1

Tuesday, September 2 - Why are we here?

Syllabus review, student introductions, introduction to the course.

Thursday, September 4 - Human impacts – individual and aggregate

Readings:

Scott, Amel, Koger & Manning, Chapter 1 (There are no *environmental* problems)

In-class: Introduction to the self-change project (Due Thursday, October 2)

To do: Fill out one of these online eco-footprint calculators and play around with the settings

Carbon footprint: www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator/

Ecological footprint: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/> (click on “Footprint for you”)

Week 2

Tuesday, September 9 – How did we get in this pickle?

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 2 (How did we get here? From Western thought to “Wise Use”)

Thursday, September 11 – What needs to change?

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 3 (Where do we go from here? Developing an ecological worldview)

In class: Field trip to landfill

To do: Do some research on solid waste, landfills, and incinerators. Christie will create a google doc and invite everyone in the class to contribute one interesting piece of information about our human garbage habits.

Week 3:

Tuesday, September 16 – What’s Psych got to do with it?

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 4 (Psychology can help save the planet)

To do: Mock up a brief psychology experiment (to share in class) that examines some aspect of people’s garbage-producing behavior.

Thursday, September 18 – Contexts of sustainability and unsustainability

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 5 (The power of the (unsustainable) situation)

In-class: Make a public commitment to the self-change project (Due Thursday, October 2)

To do: Prepare your commitment to the self-change project, using the material we have discussed and experienced so far.

Put together a short list of the strongest situation factors that affect what you throw away.

Week 4:

Tuesday, September 23 - The habit-situation link

Readings:

Neal, Wood, & Quinn (2008) Habits – A Repeat Performance
Optional: Nevin (2005) The Inertia of Affluence

In-class: Self-change project check-in.

To do: Make a list of environmentally-relevant habits you notice around you (your own, your friends', others'). Choose two of those habits and describe the situational characteristics that support them.

Thursday, September 25 – Context changes

Readings:

Verplanken, et al (2008) Context Change and Travel Mode Choice

In-class: Self-change project check-in.

Week 5:

Tuesday, September 30 - Group project preparation – an example of a behavior change campaign

Readings:

Sussman, Greeno, Gifford, & Scannell, Ch2013

In-class: Introduce campus-change project (Due Tuesday, November 11). Meet with project groups.
Final self-change project check-in

Thursday, October 2 – Visit with Kevin Wilhelm

Readings:

TBA

In class: Self-change project report due
Visit with Kevin Wilhelm

Week 6:

Tuesday, October 7 – The cognitive connection

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 6 (It's not easy thinking green)

Thursday, October 9 - Experience vs. data

Readings:

Weber (2006)

In class: Group project check-in

To do: Look for effective examples of making data into something experiential. Bring an example to class. Or, if you can't find any, bring an example of something that utterly fails to make data experiential. (You can send me links before class and I can show them to the group.)

Week 7:

Tuesday, October 14 – Making hidden data visible

Readings:

Schultz et al (2007)
Allcott & Mullainathan (2010)

In class: Group project check-in

To do: Ask 2 friends: how would they respond to an energy bill like this? Would they change their energy use?

Thursday, October 16 – Affect, emotion, and coping

Readings:

Moser (2007)
Shiv & Fedorkhin

To do: View a few bleak climate commercials and note your coping reaction (Suggestions: “Bedtime stories”, “Train”, “Greenpeace global warming ad” (baby in bathtub), “Don’t give up”, “Polar bears falling from the sky”, “Tick” – NYC Global Warming ad) (Please send me other youtube suggestions!)

In addition: Watch the “Fun theory” videos (<http://www.thefuntheory.com/>)

Week 8:

Tuesday, October 21 – Identity

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 7 (Putting the “I” in environment)

In class: Group project check-in

Thursday, October 23 - HAPPY FALL BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 9:

Tuesday, October 28 – Identity politics

Readings:

Kahan et al – polarizing influence of science literacy (2012)

To do (absolutely required): Appreciate conservatism: Watch Jonathan Haidt’s TED video (http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind.html)

Thursday, October 30 – Why is the enviro movement so white? Race, privilege, and justice.

Readings:

TBA

In class: Group project check-in

Week 10:

Tuesday, November 4 – Conspicuous conservation

Readings:

Griskevicius et al (2010)

Thursday, November 6 – Class may attend climate conference in Minneapolis

Week 11:

Tuesday, November 11 – In class group project presentations

No readings

In class: Turn in your community change group project group report

Thursday, November 13 - Theories of motivation

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 8 (To be “green” or not to be “green”... it’s a question of motivation)

In class: Introduce the communication/education project (Due Thursday, Dec. 4)

Week 12:

Tuesday, November 18 - Intrinsic motivation

Readings:

Deci & Ryan (2000)

Thursday, November 21 – Unsustainability and individual health

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 9 (Making ourselves sick: Health costs of unsustainable living)

Week 13:

Tuesday, November 25 – Reconnecting to nature

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 10 (Healing the split between planet and self: We all need to walk on the wild side)

Thursday, November 27 - HAPPY THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Week 14:

Tuesday, December 2 – Human health and nature, continued

Readings:

No readings

Thursday, December 4 – Communication Project Poster Presentations

In class: Presentations to EcoExperience Team from MPCA

Turn in communication project report

Week 15:

Tuesday, December 9 – The final chapter

Readings:

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 11 (Getting psyched for sustainability)

**** Portfolio of in-class assignments due on moodle or to my office on Wednesday, December 17, by 12:30 p.m. ****