ENR 3400: Psychology of Environmental Problems

Autumn Semester: TR 8-9:20
Kottman Hall 103

Instructors: Dr. Robyn Wilson
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TA: Hugh Walpole, walpole.23@osu.edu
Office hours: KH 355, Tues from 9:30 to 11:00, Fri from 9:30 to 11:00
By appointment (email) if you are not free during the designated times

Course Description: Historically, the term “environmental science” referred to an understanding of the biological, chemical, and physical processes in nature. However, over the past several decades, this term has broadened to include the study of the psychological and social dimensions of environmental problems. In particular, psychological research can provide powerful insight into why humans make the choices that they do in relation to the environment, and how these choices could be improved by focusing communication and outreach on the most important motivators of human behavior and decision making. It is not enough to just help people understand the magnitude of environmental problems, as this knowledge-centric approach does not often lead to behavior change. Rather information about a problem must be provided in ways that captures public attention and appeals to fundamental values, as well as removes any barriers to the ideal behavior (e.g., building bike paths if you want to encourage more biking). ENR 3400 is designed to provide an overview of psychological perspectives on human behavior with a focus on behaviors that are impactful to the environment, and to provide students with the ability to apply this knowledge to improve communication, policy and outreach for public audiences.

Prerequisites: ENR 2300 (203) or PSYCH 1100 (100)

Content Topic List: Psychology, human behavior, attitudes, decision making, environmental problems, social science research methods

Course Objectives: This course is designed to help students...

1. Understand different psychological perspectives that explain the contribution of human attitudes and behavior to environmental problems.

2. Understand basic psychological constructs (e.g., values, attitudes, beliefs, norms) that are commonly used to explain environmentally significant behavior.

3. Know how to design policy and communication efforts that are likely to be more effective at positively influencing attitudes and behavior.

Course Format: Course content will be delivered primarily via interactive lecture. While lectures will incorporate much of the reading material, readings are meant to augment and inform the lecture and in-class discussion. Exams will incorporate material from both the readings and the lecture.

Make-up and Late Assignments: There is a no tolerance policy for late assignments. Any assignment not turned in on time will be assigned a zero.

Seating in KH 103: Given the size of the room it is required that all students sit in the front 2/3 of the auditorium, not in the seats behind the aisle that runs across the top of the auditorium. This is to ensure that our class discussion and small group activities can be carried out more effectively.
Grading:

1. **Participation (15%)** - We will be using readings-based and review quizzes at the start of class and a variety of in-class activities throughout the semester in order to gauge attendance and participation. These activities will largely take place through the use of Top Hat response technology (see details on required technology below). Points will be weighted for correct answers on quizzes, but you will get points just for trying. Your final participation grade will be calculated out of the highest student point total in the class.

2. **Exam 1 (20%)** – Exam 1 will be based on the prior lectures, readings, and class discussions.

3. **Exam 2 (20%)** – Exam 2 will be based on lectures, readings and discussions after Exam 1.

4. **Exam 3 (20%)** – Exam 3 will be based on lectures, readings, and class discussions that have taken place throughout the semester, with a greater emphasis on material after Exam 2.

5. **Social Marketing Assignment (25%)** – Each student will be required to conduct a community-based social marketing assessment that will consist of two ~1 page single-spaced memos due throughout the semester, and a final 5-10 page double-spaced report documenting why a particular behavior should be targeted, the identified barriers and benefits to the selected behavior (using both available literature and new data collection), and your proposed behavioral change strategy focused on reducing the barriers and promoting the perceived benefits of the behavior. Additional details on the assignment will be provided throughout the semester. The memos will be averaged together and account for 10% of the social marketing assignment grade, and the final project paper the remaining 15%. *The memos and the final report should be placed in the CARMEN dropbox by midnight on the day that they are due.*

**Required Technology:** You do not need to purchase clicker for this course but we will be utilizing the TopHat student response tool during lectures. This system requires that each student have access to either a computer with internet access, a smartphone with the appropriate (free) mobile app or a phone capable of sending text messages. In order to fully participate in class you will need to have one of these devices with you every day.

You will also require a TopHat account. As an OSU student your TopHat account will be free of charge, you can sign up on tohat.com using your university login and password. Please note that when searching for our school you have to put “Ohio State University” not “The Ohio State University (clearly the TopHat folks aren’t from around here). You should sign up for an account on a computer rather than through a mobile device to make sure your account syncs properly. Detailed instructions for signing up are available at [https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/top-hat/using-top-hat-students](https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/top-hat/using-top-hat-students).

**Required Readings:** There is one required textbook that we will use for several weeks in the course (see below – it is available as an eBook online through OSU). For those interested in further reading, there are three additional suggested texts. Additional required readings will all be available as PDFs through CARMEN.


**Academic Misconduct:** It is expected that all students have read and understand the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.” The Ohio State University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct.

If we suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, we are obligated to report our suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please let us know. Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages (http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html)
- *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* (http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html)
- *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* (http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/students/integrity/rules.html)

**The course syllabus (including the breakdown of assignments and points), schedule, and assigned readings are subject to change. The syllabus can be made available in alternative formats upon request; students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and for seeking available assistance in a timely manner.**
1. Introduction: Human Behavior and Environmental Impact

- Session 1 (8/25): Linking Human Behavior to Environmental Problems
  - No readings

- Session 2 (8/27): Understanding Human Behavior
  - Read: Schultz 2011 “Conservation is Behavior”

- Session 3 (9/1): Changing Human Behavior
  - Read for Class: Heberlein text CH 1
  - Read for Memo 1: McKenzie-Mohr et al. 2012 “Introduction (pp. 3-9)” in Social Marketing to Protect the Environment: What works

2. The Irrational Human Mind

- Session 4 (9/3): The Rational Actor vs. The Cognitive Miser
  - Read: Read Koger & Winter CH 7 “Cognitive Psychology: Information Processing” in The Psychology of Environmental Problems
  - **BONUS:** 10 participation points available to those who attend Dr. Markowitz’s SENR seminar

- Session 5 (9/8): The Need to Feel
  - Read: Gardner 2008 CH 1 and 2 (pp. 5-31) in The science of fear

- Session 6 (9/10): The Desire to Avoid Loss
  - Read: Thaler and Sunstein 2008 CH 1 “Biases and blunders” in Nudge

- Session 7 (9/15): The Focus on the Present
  - Read: Hardisty et al. 2012 “About time: An integrative approach to effective env'l policy”
  - **DUE DROPBOX BY MIDNIGHT: Memo 1 – Identifying the Right Behavior

- Session 8 (9/17): Case Study: Public Support for Wildfire Management
  - Read: No reading

3. Motivation (not Education) for Pro-Environmental Behavior

- Session 9 (9/22): Science Communication and the Myth of Information Deficits
  - Read for Class: Clayton & Myers 2010 “Attitudes, Values and Perceptions (pp. 15-33)” in Conservation Psychology
  - Read for Memo 2: McKenzie-Mohr & Smith 1999 “Uncovering Barriers and Benefits” pp. 19-45 in Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-based Social Marketing

- Session 10 (9/24): Universal Human Values
  - Read: Dietz et al. 2005 “Environmental Values” pp. 335-352

- Session 11 (9/29): Values and the Environment
  - Read: Dietz et al. 2005 “Environmental Values” pp. 356-362

**Session 12: EXAM I (OCT 1st)**

- Session 13 (10/6): Attitudes and the Environment
  - Read: Heberlein text CH 2-3

- Session 14 (10/8): Environmental Risks and Related Beliefs
  - Read: Gardner 2008 CH. 4 in “The science of fear”

- Session 15 (10/13): Case Study: Public Support for Carnivore Conservation
  - Read: No reading
SESSION 16 (10/15): FALL BREAK, OSU CLOSED

4. Humans and Their Relationship with Nature

Session 17 (10/20): Environment and Identity (Guest Lecturer: Hugh Walpole)
- Read: Clayton & Myers 2010 “Environment and Identity” in Conservation Psychology

Session 18 (10/22): Children and Nature (Guest Lecturer: Lauren Bates)
- Read: Clayton & Myers 2010 “Theoretical foundations for the human response to nature (pp. 81-84, 85-86)” in Conservation Psychology
- DUE DROPBOX BY MIDNIGHT: Memo 2 – Identifying the Benefits and the Barriers

5. The Importance of Social (and Cultural and Physical) Context

Session 19 (10/27): Social Identity and Culturally Motivated Reasoning
- Read: TBD – Guest Lecturer: Dr. Erik Nisbet

Session 20 (10/29): Social Trust
- Read: Earle and Gutscher, 2015 “Trust and Climate Policy: Applying the Trust Confidence Cooperation (TCC) Model” in Understanding Social Trust (blog)

Session 21 (11/3): Social Norms
- Read: Heberlein text CH 4-6

Session 22 (11/5): Case Study: Public Support for Hunting/Fishing (Guest Lecturer: Dr. Bruskotter)
- Read: No readings

Session 23: EXAM II (NOV 10)

6. Bringing it Together to Promote Pro-Environmental Behavior

Session 24 (11/12): Best Practices for Behavioral Change
- Read for Class: Schultz and Kaiser 2012 “Promoting pro-environmental behavior (pp. 556-580)” in The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Conservation Psychology

Session 25 (11/17): Strategic Messaging and the Power of Framing
- Read: McKenzie-Mohr & Smith 1999 “Communication: Creating effective messages” pp. 82-102 in Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-based Social Marketing

Session 26 (11/19): Structural Change and the Power of Context
- Read: Heberlein text CH 8-10

Session 27 (11/24): Matching the Approach with the Behavior
- Read: Heberlein text CH 11 & Schultz 2013 “Strategies for Promoting Pro-environmental Behavior”

Session 28: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving – November 26)

Session 29 (12/1): Case Study: Public Support for Climate Change
- Read: Markowitz et al. 2014 “Connecting on Climate”

Session 30 (12/3) – Case Study: Promoting Climate Action
- Read: Markowitz et al. 2014 “Connecting on Climate”
Session 31 (12/8) – Catch-up and Review
  • No readings
  • DUE DROPBOX BY MIDNIGHT: Final Project – Proposed Behavioral Change Strategy

FINALS WEEK (EXAM III) - Tues, Dec 15 8:00-9:45 am