ENR 3400: Psychology of Environmental Problems

Autumn Semester: Tues/Thurs 8-9:20 | Kottman Hall 103

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Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM in Thompson Library Cafe
Wednesdays 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM in Kottman 305
Additional Office hours by appointment (email)

Course Description: Historically, “environmental science” was an interdisciplinary field that integrated the biological and physical sciences. However, in recent decades, the field broadened in scope to include study of the social, psychological and economic dimensions of environmental problems. At roughly the same time, a group of psychologists began investigating the psychological aspects of environmental dilemmas, noting that psychology can provide powerful insight into why humans make the choices that they do in relation to the environment, and how these choices can be affected by different types of interventions informed by basic principles of psychology. Thus was born the field of Conservation Psychology.

Numerous studies indicate that it is not enough to just help people understand the magnitude of environmental problems, as this knowledge-centric approach often fails to elicit behavioral change. Rather, information about a problem must be provided in ways that captures public attention and appeals to fundamental values, aligns with social norms, 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 thought and behavior to environmental problems.

(2) Develop a familiarity with and basic vocabulary of psychological constructs (e.g., values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, risk perceptions, etc.), and understand how these constructs are used to explain environmentally significant behavior.

(3) Recognize how to design interventions that are likely to be more effective at influencing human judgments, decisions and behaviors.
**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. **Quizzes & Participation (15%)** - We use readings-based review quizzes and a variety of in-class activities throughout the semester in order to gauge students' understanding of concepts and participation. Points will be weighted for correct answers on quizzes, but students will earn some points for participating. Quizzes will sometimes be given before class (on Canvas) and other times given during class using the Top Hat response technology (see details on required technology below).

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 class discussions after Exam 1.

4. **Exam 3 (30%)** – Exam 3 will be based on lectures, readings, and class discussions that have taken place throughout the semester, with the greatest emphasis on material after Exam 2.

5. **Annotated Bibliography (15%)** – Each student will be required to submit 4 bibliographies (see the assignment document for due dates). In each assignment, students will briefly summarize 3-4 readings from each section of the course (note: the course is divided into 6 sections--you only need to turn in bibliography assignments for 4 of the 6). For each assignment, students will (a) briefly summarize (~150 words per reading) each reading, and (b) discuss how the ideas conveyed in those readings could be used to modify environmentally-relevant behavior. Note, we are looking largely for the application of the readings to observations you have made of real-world behavior, or ideas you have about using the psychological concepts to change behavior. Additional details on the assignment will be provided in class.

**NOTE:** ALL BIBLIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD BE PLACED IN THE CANVAS DROPBOX BEFORE MIDNIGHT ON THE FRIDAY THAT THEY ARE DUE.
**Required Technology:** This course will use 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.

Use of TopHat require a TopHat account. As an OSU student your TopHat account will be free of charge, you can sign up at https://tophat.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 getting started with TopHat are available at the Office of Distance Education and eLearning’s Resource center: see https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/top-hat/getting-started-top-hat/

**Required Readings:** There is one required textbook that we will use for several weeks in the course (see below). For those interested in further reading, there are two additional suggested texts. Required readings in the form of journal articles and other excerpts will all be available through CANVAS.


**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)

Important notes about the syllabus: 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.
PROVISIONAL COURSE CALENDAR

Note: The course calendar is subject to change. Please check CANVAS for most recent updates.

1. Introduction: Human Behaviors and Environmental Impact

   Session 1 (8/23): Introduction: Linking Human Behavior to Environmental Problems
   - No readings

   Session 2 (8/25): Conservation and Human Behavior
   - Read: Schultz (2011) “Conservation is Behavior”

   Session 3 (8/30): Changing Human Behavior
   - Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes”, CH 1
   - Read: McKenzie-Mohr et al. (2012) “Introduction” (pp. 3-9) in *Social Marketing to Protect the Environment: What Works*

2. The Human Mind – Rational Actors or Cognitive Misers?

   Session 4 (9/1): The Rational Actor vs. the Cognitive Miser
   - Read: Koger & Winter CH 7 “Cognitive Psychology: Information Processing” in *The Psychology of Environmental Problems*

   Session 5 (9/6): An Aversion to Loss, and Focus on the Present
   - Read: Hardisty et al. 2012 “About time: An integrative approach to effective env’l policy”

   Session 6 (9/8): Common Heuristics & Biases
   - Read: Thaler & Sunstein 2008 CH 1 “Biases and Blunders” in *Nudge*

3. The (Somewhat) Rational Actor: Belief, Evaluation and Behavior

   Session 7 (9/13): At the Root: Universal Human Values
   - Read: Dietz et al. 2005 “Environmental Values” pp. 335-352

   Session 8 (9/15): CASE STUDY – Value Change and Conservation?
   - Read: Manfredo et al. (2015) Implications of Human Value Shift and Persistence for Biodiversity Conservation

   Session 9 (9/20): Attitudes – Formation and Function
   - Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes” CH 2 & 3

   Session 10 (9/22): Cognitive Consistency: Linking Belief, Evaluation and Behavior
   - Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes” CH 4
   - Read: McLeod (2008) *Cognitive Dissonance*

   **Session 11: EXAM I (SEP 27)**

   Session 12 (9/29): Environmental Risks & Related Beliefs
   - Read: Gardner 2008 CH 4 in “The Science of Fear”
Session 13 (10/4): Exam Evaluation & Intro to Measurement

- Read: DeVellis (2003) “Overview [of Measurement]” CH1 in (pp. 1-13) in Scale Development: Theory & Applications

4. The Importance of Context: Understanding the Social and Physical Environment

Session 14 (10/6): Social Trust, Values and Environmental Hazards

- Read: Bruskotter & Wilson (2014) Determining where the wild things will be

Session 15 (10/11): Conformity and Social Norms

- Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes” CH 6
- Read: McLeod (2007) What is Conformity?

**Session 16: OCTOBER 13 – NO CLASSES**

Session 17 (10/18): Social Identity, Stereotypes & Intergroup Conflict


Session 18 (10/20): Place, Environment and Identify


Session 19: (10/25) Morality and Ethics – The Root of Conservation?

- Read: Clayton & Myers 2010 “Moral psychology and the environmental” (pp.34-53) in Conservation Psychology.

Session 20 (10/27): Psychology of Outdoor Recreation

- Read: Roggenbuck (2000) Facilitating High-quality Visitor Experiences

**Session 21: EXAM II (NOV 01)**

Session 22 (11/3): Exam Evaluation & CASE STUDY—Delisting the GYE Grizzly Bear

- Read: Bruskotter et al. (2016) Of bears and Biases: Scientific Judgment and the fate of Yellowstone’s Grizzlies

5. Bringing it all Together: Promoting Sustainable Behavior

Session 23 (11/8): Best Practices for Behavior Change

- Read: Schultz and Kaiser 2012 ”Promoting pro-environmental behavior (pp. 556-580)” in The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Conservation Psychology

Session 24 (11/10): 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
- Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes” CH 5
Session 25 (11/15): Promoting Structural and Technological Fixes
  • Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes” CH 8-10
Session 26 (11/17): Matching the Approach with the Behavior
  • Read: Heberlein “Navigating Environmental Attitudes CH 11
  • Read: Schultz 2013 “Strategies for Promoting Pro-environmental Behavior”

6. Wrap-up: Biodiversity Conservation in the Anthropocene
Session 27 (11/22): CASE STUDY—Promoting Climate Action
  • Read: Markowitz et al. 2014 “Connecting on Climate”

SESSION 28: NOVEMBER 24 – NO CLASSES
Session 29 (11/29): Biodiversity Conservation in the Anthropocene
  • Read: No readings!
Session 30 (12/1): [Catch up day]
  • Read: TBD
Session 31 (12/1): Wrap up and Exam Review!
  • No Reading

FINALS WEEK (EXAM III) - Tue, Dec 13 8:00-9:45 am