ENR 3400: Psychology of Environmental Problems

Autumn Semester: Tues/Thurs 2:20-3:40 | Kottman Hall 103

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bruskotter, bruskotter.9@osu.edu

TA: Hugh Walpole, walpole.23@osu.edu

Office hours: Hugh- Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 2:15 PM and Wednesdays 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM in Kottman 247; Dr. Bruskotter-By Appointment

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. Likewise, traditional resource management fields (i.e., forestry, fisheries, wildlife) have increasingly sought to integrate “human dimensions” into professional training.

Coincident with these changes, 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.

Decades of research across a variety of fields show that helping people understand the magnitude of environmental problems often fails to elicit behavioral change; knowledge gained from such interventions is insufficient. 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.

(4) Think critically about how context (i.e., the social and physical environment), human thought, and public policy combine to shape human 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. Students who miss an assignment or exam and wish to make it up at a later date must either (a) have excused the absence ahead of time, or (b) provide written evidence with a legitimate conflict (e.g., medical doctor’s note) after the fact.

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. Please do 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 effectively, and efficiently.

Grading:

1. **Quizzes & Participation (20%)** - 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). In addition, points will be awarded for weekly participation in out-of-class discussions; these discussions will be facilitated through Packback – an online discussion forum (see description below).

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

3. **Exam 2 (25%)** – Exam 2 will be based on lectures, readings, and class discussions after Exam 1.

4. **Exam 3 (25%)** – 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 (10%)** – Each student will be required to submit 3 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 3 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](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/](https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/top-hat/getting-started-top-hat/)

**Out-of-class Discussion (via Packback):** Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback is an online discussion platform that we will use to share ideas and ask questions about the content for the week.

Our goal for using Packback is to facilitate critical thought and exchange of ideas concerning the topics discussed in course. Additionally, use of Packback will help you to: (a) develop writing skills necessary in your career, (b) learn to communicate clearly and concisely about complex topics, and (c) reinforce critical life skills, such as the ability to justify thoughts and claims with credible evidence. Most importantly, it is our hope that these discussions will deepen your understanding of course content through interaction with your peers.

Your participation in Packback will count for 10% of your total grade.

Before you start posting, be sure to read the [Community Guidelines](https://tophat.com) found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post doesn’t follow the Packback Community Guidelines, there is a chance it will be removed and you won’t receive points for that post.

In order to receive points each week, you must post *answers* and *questions* according to the
following schedule:

Note: All **questions** must be submitted by Wednesday 11:59PM each week; **answers** can be posted any time, but to receive credit for the week you must submit them no later than Sunday 11:59PM.

**PackBack Q&A schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your last name begins with an A-L:</th>
<th>If your last name begins with a M-Z:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 2 answers</td>
<td>2 answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even weeks 1 question, 2 answers</td>
<td>2 answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd weeks 2 answers</td>
<td>1 question, 2 answers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14</strong> 20 &amp; 22 NOV. Thanksgiving, nothing due</td>
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**Note 1:** it is important that your questions and answers are thoughtful reflections of course materials. To acclimate you to what we expect, we’ve posted several ‘starter’ questions.

**Note 2:** it takes 24 hours for the Packback team to moderate a post and send a coaching email. If by any reason your post is moderated because it does NOT meet the Community Guidelines, you will need to edit and re-publish your post to receive credit for the week. This is why it is important that you complete your Packback questions and responses far before the deadline in case your post is moderated.

**Instructions:** You will receive a welcome email from holla@packback.co prompting you to finish registration and payment. Packback has already created an account for you with your school email, **all you need to do is reset your password**. This email may be directed to spam or filtered out, so make sure you do a thorough scan of your inbox if you can’t find the email.

**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.