

Environmental Psychology at Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado:
The Human Relationship with the Natural Environment

Psychology 255, St. Olaf College: Interim 2006
Professor: Donna McMillan, Ph.D., L.P.

Welcome to our exploration of our relationship to the rest of the natural world. I hope that this month will be an exciting opportunity for you to explore in-depth the human relationship with nature, both in our readings and discussions, and in your personal experience here in the natural wonders that are the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

While the broad field of environmental psychology addresses interactions between human beings and a range of environments (including social and built environments), this course focuses specifically on human beings' relationship to the *natural* environment, an area of psychology also known as conservation psychology or ecopsychology. We will examine ways in which the natural environment is psychologically significant, and to this end, we will consider questions such as:

What does nature mean to people?

What do we value in nature? What sorts of value does nature have in our modern, Western, technological society?

How are we affected by nature?

What influences people's attitudes and behaviors toward the environment?

How do we affect the natural environment?

How do we respond to environmental challenges? What does psychology have to offer regarding environmental issues such as waste production, consumerist lifestyles, and the destruction of forests?

This exploration crosses disciplinary lines, integrating aspects of theoretical and empirical psychology, environmental studies, and literature. We will read, write, discuss, and engage in reflective experience in nature. Because this course is academic and experiential, I hope that you will find that our course material and your chosen reflective experiences in the natural environment inform each other and inspire you to delve more deeply into the human relationship with the natural world.

Goals

Each of us has personal goals when we embark on a course of study. I hope that you will be able to pursue your goals in the context of our course, and I hope that you will:

- increase your ability to think critically and creatively about issues in environmental psychology
- gain more knowledge and understanding of psychology as well as of the natural environment
- delve more deeply into the human relationship with the natural world, both in our readings and discussions as well as in your own experience with nature during our month in Colorado
- increase your appreciation and understanding of different ways of knowing, including both the empirical method so central to the science of psychology and reflective personal experience
- become more aware of and curious about the world around you
- become more accustomed to taking an active, inquiring approach to your learning by:
 - experiencing nature in an open-minded, reflective way (the experiential component)
 - stimulating your thinking by keeping a journal of your thoughts and reactions
 - daring to be an active participant in class discussion (including both speaking and listening)
- enjoy your time in nature as you learn

Requirements

Our class meetings will consist of a combination of discussion and lecture, with two students helping to facilitate discussion many days. Class requirements include:

- Participation: This includes on-time class attendance, completion of readings for that day, class discussion, one discussion-facilitation with brief (1 or 2 page) reaction paper/ questions to stimulate discussion. 15% of grade.
- Journal/log of your course-related reflections, questions, and experiences in the natural world. 10% of grade.
- First paper: Gruchow and Nature: First, summarize some of the important points from Gruchow's *Grass Roots: The Universe of Home* by making a typed list of "Meanings of Nature to Gruchow." Your paper should then consist of reflections on your own nature experience (entries in your journal/log should help here), amply and specifically referencing Gruchow's ideas about nature's psychological significance in *Grass Roots*. The paper should be 4-5 pages long, not including the list. 15% of grade.
- Research Proposal: This assignment asks you to pose an interesting *question* related to our course material, and then to propose *how* this question could be addressed empirically. (See handout for more info). This paper should be 3-4 pages. 15% of grade.
- Quizzes and Test: There will be several brief quizzes and one test, the final exam. Quizzes = 20% of grade; Final exam = 25% of grade.

Readings

- Gruchow, Paul. (1995). *Grass roots: The universe of home*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions. (ISBN: 1571312072)
- Howard, George S. (1997). *Ecological psychology: Creating a more Earth-friendly human nature*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. (ISBN: 0268009384)
- Kasser, Tim. (2003). *The high price of materialism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (ISBN: 026261197X)
- Kellert, Stephen R. (2003). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Washington, DC: Island Press. (ISBN: 1559633735)
- Melson, Gail F. (2005). *Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (ISBN: 0674017528)
- Reserve readings.

Grading

Assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus unless due dates are modified in class. In the interest of fairness for all students, late papers will have 10% subtracted for each day they are late. I will use a standard grading scale:

A+ 98-100%	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D+ 67-69%
A 93-97%	B 83-86%	C 73-76%	D 63-66%
A- 90-92%	B- 80-82%	C- 70-72%	D- 60-62%

Environmental Psychology: Class Schedule

The Nature of Nature, and Human Responses to the Natural World

1/3: Our encounters with the natural environment; Introduction to the national parks.

- Sax, Joseph L. (1980). Quiet genesis. *Mountains without handrails: Reflections on the national parks*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, Ch. 1, pp.5-15. (Reserve reading.)

1/4: Morning: Welcome talk and film introduction to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) with Mark DeGregorio, Education Program Specialist, Rocky Mountain National Park at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center in the Park.

Afternoon class:

What is "nature"?

- Gruchow, Paul. (1995). *Grass roots: The universe of home*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, Part 1, pp.3-61.
- Kellert, Stephen R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Washington, DC: Island Press, Chs. 1 & 2, pp. 1-32.

1/5: Nature and human identity

- Gruchow, Paul. (1995). *Grass roots: The universe of home*. Part 2, pp.65-114.
- Clayton, Susan. (1999, August). *The significance of nature as a part of personal identity*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Boston. (Reserve reading.)

1/6:

- Gruchow, Paul. (1995). *Grass roots: The universe of home*. Part 3, pp.119-147.
- Kellert, Stephen R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Chs. 3-5, pp. 33-83.

1/9: Attitudes toward nature

- Gruchow, Paul. (1995). *Grass roots: The universe of home*. Part 4, pp.151-209.
- Kellert, Stephen R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Chs. 6 & 7, pp. 85-119.
- Thompson, Suzanne C.G. & Barton, Michelle A. (1994). Ecocentric and anthropocentric attitudes toward the environment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 14, 149-157. (Reserve reading.)
- Dunlap, Riley E., Van Liere, Kent D., Mertig, Angela G., & Jones, Robert Emmet. (2000). Measuring endorsement of the new ecological paradigm: A revised NEP Scale. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3), 425-442. (Reserve reading.)

1/10: Positive affect, restoration, fascination, self-actualization, and flow

- Kellert, Stephen R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Chs. 8 & 9, pp. 121-145.
- Kaplan, Stephen & Talbot, Janet Frey. (1983). Psychological benefits of a wilderness

experience. In I. Altman & J.F. Wohlwill (Eds.), *Behavior and the natural environment* (pp.163-203). New York: Plenum Press. (Reserve reading.)

1/11: 11:00AM – 2:30 PM: Snowshoe Winter Ecology Hike with Mark DeGregorio

Get a sack lunch; Meet at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, RMNP.

Evening class:

Spirituality, deep ecology, and ecofeminism

- Stokols, Daniel. (1990). Instrumental and spiritual views of people-environment relations. *American Psychologist*, 45, 641-646. (Reserve reading.)
- Gardner, Gerald T. & Stern, Paul C. (1996). Religious and moral approaches: changing values, beliefs, and world-views. In *Environmental problems and human behavior*. Ch 3, pp.33-70. (Reserve reading.)
- *Rough draft of First Paper due.*

1/12: Humans' relationships with other animals

- Goodall, Jane. (1990). The mind of the chimpanzee. From *Through a window*. London: Phoenix Giant, pp.12-23. (Reserve reading.)
- Melson, Gail F. (2001). *Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp.1-43.

- 1/13:**
- Melson, Gail F. (2001). *Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children*. pp. 44-131.
 - *First Paper due.*

- 1/16:**
- Melson, Gail F. (2001). *Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children*. pp. 132-199.

Psychological Perspectives on Environmental Problems

- 1/17:**
- Kellert, Stephen R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Ch. 10, pp. 147-161.
 - Oskamp, Stuart. (2000). Psychological contributions to achieving an ecologically sustainable future for humanity. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3), 373-390. (Reserve reading.)
 - O'Rourke, P.J. (1996). The greenhouse affect. In R. Jensen & E.E. Lotto (Eds.), *Constructing nature* (pp.426-431). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. (Reserve reading.)

1/18: 10:00- 12:00: Preservation & the Nature of the National Parks:

Lecture/ discussion with Mark DeGregorio.

- Howard, George S. (1997). Human behavior and sustainability. *Ecological psychology: Creating a more Earth-friendly human nature*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, Chs 1-5, pp.1-53.

- 1/19:**
- Howard, George S. (1997). Killer thoughts. *Ecological psychology: Creating a more Earth-friendly human nature*, Ch. 6, pp.54-62.
 - Winter, Deborah Du Naan. (2000). Some big ideas for some big problems. *American*

Psychologist, 55, 516-522. (Reserve reading.)

1/20: Human nature and lifestyles: Implications for the environment and for ourselves

- Howard, George S. (1997). Acting locally; Can human nature be changed? *Ecological psychology: Creating a more Earth-friendly human nature*, Chs 7-10, pp.63-104 & Epilogue, pp.117-124.
- Kanner, Allen D. & Gomes, Mary E. (1995). The all-consuming self. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, & A.D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, healing the mind* (pp.77-91). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. (Reserve reading.)

1/23: Consumerism and a materialistic value orientation: Implications for self and implications for the environment

- Kasser, Tim. (2003). Mixed messages; Personal well-being; Psychological needs; Insecurity. *The high price of materialism* (pp.1-42). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- *Research Project due.*

1/24: • Kasser, Tim. (2003). Fragile self-worth; Poor relationships. *The high price of materialism* (pp.43-72). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

1/25: • Kasser, Tim. (2003). Kasser, T. (2002). The chains of materialism; Family, community, and the Earth; Making change. *The high price of materialism* (pp.73-116). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

1/26: • Frumkin, Howard. (2001). Beyond toxicity: Human health and the natural environment. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 20, 234-240. (Reserve reading.)

- Kellert, Stephen R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development*. Chs. 11 & 12, pp. 165-218.

1/27: Reflections on our national parks

- Sax, Joseph L. (1980). An ideal in search of itself. *Mountains without handrails: Reflections on the national parks*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, Ch. 2, pp.17-26. (CoursePack.)

1/28: Final Exam.