

Ecological Psychology

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Course Objectives

Purpose. The purposes of this course are to survey central issues in the emerging field of ecological psychology, to examine competing conceptions of this field, and to review our growing understanding of the relationship between human beings and the physical environment. At the end of this course, students should understand a perspective on psychology that differs from both the mainstream and from the humanistic psychology views of humans. Students should also be able to articulate a framework for addressing environmental problems and their own responses to the crisis.

Students will learn how the successful self of contemporary culture may be an incomplete and unhealthy construction. They will understand how the matrix of nature within which we live impacts human health and dysfunction. The psychological roots of the environmental crisis and the psychological and cultural sources of its continuance are described. Students will be exposed to selected fields within psychology relevant to environmental issues and will acquire skills to become more effective change agents. Finally, students will develop an ecological perspective that can be brought to bear on the important issues of our times.

Who Will Benefit from This Course?

Students interested in sustainability, social transformation, organizational leadership, psychotherapy, community building, consciousness and spirituality may all benefit from developing an ecopsychological perspective. This course also counts toward fulfilling the requirements of the certificate in building sustainability.

Prerequisites and Related Courses

It is assumed that you are aware of the scope and nature of the global environmental crisis. If not, you should take *Building Sustainability: The Global Crisis* (#7077). Related courses include *Building Sustainability: Present Practices* (#7078), Saybrook's psychopathology courses (# 2050 and #2070), and other courses in the Sustainability track.

Relationship to Saybrook's Mission and Curriculum

For thirty years, Saybrook has explored the full range of human experience, from the dysfunctional to the constructively creative. Members of the Saybrook community have also challenged accepted worldviews and have investigated alternative paradigms in epistemology, methods, health, consciousness, therapy, and systems. The growing recognition in American society that humans are part of the natural world, with impacts and responsibilities that must be acknowledged, has been adopted in Saybrook's certificate in Sustainability, for which this course is an elective.

Readings

You are asked to purchase:

Metzner, R. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.

Roszak, T., Gomes, M., & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.) (1995). *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club.

Winter, D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

The *course reader*, which includes articles not available online.

Other assigned articles can be found in Saybrook's database.

Introduction

The Field of Ecological Psychology

Ecological psychology is a study of the human being as a part of the web of life. Previously, the term "environmental psychology" was used to describe the effects on humans of their immediate environment, particularly the visual and spatial environment. It dealt, for example, with how the colors, sounds, or spaciousness of our surroundings might affect our moods or behavior. "Social ecology" referred to the embeddedness of the person in his or her social transactions. More recently, "ecological psychology" has

referred to the myriad inter-relationships between the individual and the natural world.

This new field has been critical of traditional psychology that emphasizes the self and its capacities for mastery and control. Instead, ecological psychology explores the potential for human development that may come only from a deep respect for our interconnections with the larger systems of nature of which we are a part. Awareness and appreciation of our embeddedness in a larger natural order can be a source of spiritual comfort in the face of pressures chiding us to garner a greater share of the planet's resources for ourselves. One of the driving forces behind this new field is the pain that human exploitation of the environment has caused to other humans. Environmental contamination of air and water continues to take a tremendous toll in human and animal life. Economic development has jeopardized the intricate chain of life that sustains us all. Some people and some communities are direct and obvious casualties, especially poor communities and those inhabited mostly by people of color. Many others never know the exact source (excess radioactivity or toxic exposure) of the particular genetic disorder, chemical sensitivity, respiratory or circulatory disorder, cancer or weakened immune response that affects them most closely. Many people live with a fear of the environment and a serious loss of trust in the institutions of business and government that they hold responsible. Technology and the degradation of the environment have also brought about a highly unequal distribution of the benefits and the costs of the technologies. These psychological reactions derive in part from a worsening state of the planetary environment. Beyond the framework of human interests lies the natural world itself, whose oceans, jaguars, ecosystems, soil, insects, and millions of living species are seen by some to have inherent values and rights.

Rationale

Ecological psychology concerns the relationship between humans and the natural world. Whether you are an environmentalist seeking to understand how humans created the global crisis and how to resolve it, or a clinician broadening your knowledge of how our unskillful behavior is related to suffering, or a business executive trying to become more effective in your organization, or an advocate for animals, this course will introduce you to key concepts about human nature and how they play out in the environmental crisis and our response to it.

Each person is an intricate internal ecosystem of impulses, self-images, motivations, object representations, loyalties, and defenses. It has been necessary to create the field of ecopsychology because we are not rational creatures: the dangers to earth, species, climate, and our own future are well known, yet as individuals and a nation we ignore, deny, or oppose the changes necessary to ensure a livable future. Ecopsychologists hope that by integrating psychology's many fields with knowledge of nature and systems,

we may improve our skill at raising environmental awareness and stimulating action.

Another important theme of ecological psychology is that many people are more happy and fulfilled when they develop strong bonds with the natural world based on intimate knowledge of their local ecosystems. For many, this bond is spiritual as well as emotional. Therapists and wilderness leaders have developed ways of reviving and enhancing this bond. Indeed, some ecopsychologists believe that the motivation to reverse the current crisis will need to come from this positive connection with the natural world, rather than from fear of environmental destruction.

The field of ecopsychology is still being formed, and already has several streams. The term "environmental psychology" (which was originally used to designate studies of humans in their built environment: responses to colors, spaces, crowding, planned communities and community gardens, and so forth) has been accepted by some to refer to the new focus. Other terms are ecopsychology, ecological psychology, green psychology, eco-feminism, and conservation psychology. Are these different fields of study? Who gets to define them? How do these studies fit into existing fields of social psychology, perception, psychopathology, cross-cultural studies, social transformation, and so on? These questions are still being debated. In this course, we attend to many diverse aspects of the relation of individuals to their habitats. Hence, the readings include work that some have considered ecopsychology or ecological psychology, as well as what others have called environmental psychology. We focus strongly upon the place of human participation in the preservation of a world that can sustain life. We focus on humans' relationships to nature (both functional and dysfunctional), and to the mission of changing our paradigms, economies, and behaviors to promote a sustainable and healthful future for humans and all living things.

The immediate stimulus for this course is the environmental crisis. (The first core course in Saybrook's sustainability certificate, *Building Sustainability: The Global Crisis*, describes this crisis in more detail). Humans are endangering species, ecosystems, and our own health by altering, depleting, and poisoning our nest.

Less urgent but no less important are the cultural and spiritual contexts. What does it mean to be human? What beliefs do we hold about our place in the universe? What are the consequences of these beliefs? Such questions have practical import. If we believe humans are the pinnacle of creation entitled to gratify every wish, we will see no moral obstacles to factory farming, lab animal experiments, SUVs, damming rivers for hydroelectric power to run a multitude of consumer gadgets, etc. If we believe species are interchangeable and unimportant, we will not object to the unraveling of intricate ecosystems through mass extinctions. If we believe the individual ego is separate and dissolves at death, we are less likely to feel kinship with worms, birds, jaguars, or indigenous peoples, and more likely to feel entitled

to pillage the rainforest for medical cures to prolong our individual lives. Cultures, whether they are as large as a nation or as circumscribed as a corporation, have practical consequences.

Humanistic psychologists have begun to take an interest in environmental issues. Special issues of *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and *The Humanistic Psychologist* have been devoted to environmental psychology. A chapter in a recent authoritative anthology about humanistic psychology concerns the environment (see optional additional reading list at the end of this learning guide).

The Contaminated Planet

The Human Consequences of Exposure

Harm to the environment also includes exposure to toxins by individuals, families and communities. Many victims of contamination and environmental illness have found their entire lifescapes dramatically compromised by loss of health, employment, and trust in their employers and their nation. The inequality of power between the injured person or community and the corporate or military polluter makes it difficult to redress even the most egregious environmental degradations. Further, there are grossly disproportionate impacts of contamination associated with race (environmental racism) within the United States and internationally.

A medical system predicated on studying single causes of discrete illnesses has traditionally missed the harmful effects of contamination -- cancers, allergies, sterility, birth defects, fatigue or general susceptibility to illness from compromised immune systems. The harmful effects upon health may be synergistic rather than separate. Who should decide what risks are acceptable -- the perpetrators (polluting industries assisted by scientists and enabled by politicians) or the emotionally concerned victims? There is an assumption that resources for cleanup are limited and we must choose which of the various hazards to clean up. The alternative -- to tackle all problems at once -- would require us to make major shifts in consumer behavior, lifestyles, market-driven economic system, and the uses of technology.

Harm to human health is merely one locus of environmental damage; others include climate change, ecosystem degradation, and species extinctions.

Psychopathology and the Environment

Why have we created this mess? How do we allow it to continue? Our disturbed relationship with nature has been compared by various authors to autism, addiction, collective amnesia, narcissism, eating disorders, and ecocide. Psychological defenses such as rationalization, splitting, and denial

perpetuate the problems. Consumerism, labeled as a psychological defense only recently, is generally regarded a primary cause of the environmental crisis. Thus the foundations for examining the dysfunctional human attitudes that create the crisis have been laid; those interested in this area might wish to explore Saybrook's courses on psychopathology. Other barriers to change include investment in the status quo, apathy, greed, and patriotism (when it is used as a rationalization for domination and war).

Kanner, A. D. (1998). Mount Rushmore syndrome: When narcissism rules the earth. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26 (2/3), 101-121. R

Kanner, A. D., & Gomes, M. E. (1995). The all-consuming self. In T. Roszak, M. E.

Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

Metzner, R. (1999). Psychopathology of the human-nature relationship. In R. Metzner, *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press. M

Riebel, L. K. (2001). Consuming the earth: Eating disorders and ecopsychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 41 (2), 38-58. O
Retrieved April 14, 2004, from EBSCO Electronic Journal Service database.

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Freudian psychology. (pp. 27-54) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Not required for this course but highly recommended is Timothy Kasser and Allen D. Kanner (Eds.) (2004) *Psychology and Consumer Culture: The Struggle for a Good Life in a Materialistic World*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Paradigms and Worldviews

The global environmental crisis did not evolve in a vacuum, but within a rapidly expanding society in a concrete time and place – Western industrial capitalism. It is not without precedent; some earlier human societies degraded or destroyed their environments – although many others lived sustainably for thousands of years, even into our own times. But the sheer scale of the present crisis, which has been called the Sixth Extinction, made up of the power of technology to escalate the destruction and the apathy that allows the destruction to continue even after we have become aware of it, makes this crisis unique in human history.

In the dominant worldview, delayed gratification is believed to be rewarded by the attainment of long-term goals, high value is placed upon individual

achievement, and growth and technological development are equated with progress and considered inevitable. In this worldview, the natural world is composed of discrete entities, separate from the self, and capable of being studied, mastered and exploited. This worldview is being challenged by ecopsychologists who believe that this separation between person and environment is an unfortunate social construction.

Ecopsychology and Awareness of the Ecological Paradigm

The emerging philosophical and spiritual worldview reenvision the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world. This is the subject most commonly considered to be ecopsychology. Much of our standard psychological understanding of the person derives from a study of internal mechanisms for behavior, thought, and feeling, and how they interface with a social environment of parents, peers, or other role models. We focus on the ego's ability to master its human and physical surroundings. Ecopsychology suggests that the psyche and the natural world are an integrated reality and that separating the self from its surroundings comes with great psychological and physical costs, while a deep personal connection with nature can bring many psychological benefits.

The new views will be examined from several perspectives, including the cross-cultural, the psychodynamic, and the ecofeminist. The readings will offer perspectives on how the social construction of a self separate from its environment affects our health and spirit, our comfort with our surroundings, the viability of the planet, and our will to sustain it. They deal also with the possibilities for a transformative change in the relation between the self (in the developed world) and the surrounding habitat.

The change could also have implications for our conceptions of humanistic psychology and human sciences. Humanistic psychologists have been critical of the task-oriented lifestyles of modern society and the devaluation of some human experience, particularly joyful and creative experience. This perspective has opened a path to the examination of our relationship to the natural environment. Some humanistic psychologists have claimed that the self-actualized individual is less restrained by pressures to conformity and more willing to face issues like the destruction of people and the environment, even when such activity has a social cost. However, humanistic psychology has also been criticized for focusing on the human actualization to the neglect of nature.

The ecological perspective also raises questions about human sciences. The distinctive capacities for rigorous thought and mastery of the environment have been a major part of human history since the golden age of Greece, and help to define what humans have done to distinguish themselves from the rest of nature. Human science differentiates our study of humans from the methods of objective research by which we study nature. Does this assume that those aspects of the person that are inseparable from his or her

physical surroundings are peripheral to our understanding of the person? Could this perspective also be wrong or at least limiting? Can the humanistic psychology and human science perspectives be reconciled with ecological psychology? If so, might the new integration require a spiritual dimension for knowing our place in the surrounding universe?

Dunlap, R., Van Liere, K., Mertig, A., & Jones, R. E. (2000). Measuring endorsement of the New Ecological Paradigm: A revised NEP scale. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 425- 442. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Metzner, R. (1999). Transition to an ecological worldview. In R. Metzner, *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press. M

Pilisuk, M. (2001). Ecological psychology, caring, and the boundaries of the person. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 41* (2), 25-37. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from EBSCO Electronic Journal Service database.

Riebel, L.K. (2004). A paradigm for sustainability: Limits and interdependence. Unpublished manuscript.

Thomashow, M. (1998). The ecopsychology of global environmental change. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 275-300. R

Spirituality, Ecofeminism, and the Environment

Certain religious tenets are part of the problem: that earth is ours to rule; the body is inferior; the feminine is inferior; killing in the name of religion is acceptable or even praiseworthy; birth control is unacceptable; other religions are false and should be exterminated; individual salvation is paramount; life in this world is a mere dress rehearsal. A whole web of such beliefs can have direct impacts on the environment.

To name just one example, Christian conservatives in the US have influenced the federal government to block contributions to United Nations directed to population control efforts in poor countries.

Conversely, some spiritual beliefs are harmonious with sustainability, such as the Iroquois belief that when making decisions, one should keep in mind the wellbeing of the seventh generation. Today, individuals and groups from many spiritual traditions are contributing to the environmental movement, through writing, preaching, teaching, organizing, and modeling. Matthew Fox, former Catholic priest and now head of Oakland's Creation Spirituality University, teaches that creation is part of spirit, not some lower or opposite manifestation. Other religious leaders are organizing their congregations to take practical action. Sally Bingham has been working with San Francisco churches to create an earth-friendly energy system. Transpersonal

psychology is one of the few branches of psychology to address environmental issues. Spiritual beliefs and lifestyles, then, may either obstruct or support the environmental movement.

Davis, J. (1998). The transpersonal dimensions of ecopsychology: Nature, nonduality, and spiritual practice. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26 (2/3), 69-100. R

Gaard, G. (2002). Vegetarian ecofeminism. *Frontiers* 23 (3), 117-146. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Metzner, R. (1999). Reunification of the sacred and the natural. In R. Metzner, *Green Psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press. M

Zelezny, L.C., Chua, P.-P., & Aldrich, C. (2000). Elaborating on gender differences in environmentalism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (3), 443-457. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

From Denial to Awareness

We are affected by environmental conditions even if we are in a state of denial about them. Some of us are affected by contamination, some by the shock of environmental destruction, and some by what they have experienced as activists. Some people awaken to the global crisis because their personal health has been damaged by technology. Others awaken because of love of places, animals, other cultures, or their children and grandchildren. Yet others intensify their loyalty to the American Way of Life of privilege and consumerism, forming an entrenched opposition to change.

Nature as Source of Health

Some interesting studies have found that people are more likely to be physically, emotionally, and socially healthy if they have access to nature, even contact as minimal as a window view onto trees and grass. The national epidemic of depression is thought by some to be due partly to our lack of contact with nature; the obesity epidemic is certainly due in part to our sedentary lifestyle, which takes place mostly indoors or in cars.

Animals, too, are sources of contact and health. Apart from their jobs as seeing or hearing dogs, servant monkeys, or law enforcement horses and dogs, animals provide friendship and meaning. Ill, incarcerated, and elderly people in institutions benefit from contact with animals who are brought to visit them. On the other hand, we have an exploitative and sometimes cruel relationship with the animals we eat, kill for their skins and other body parts, and use in experiments. How do we explain this split attitude? What rights do other animals have? Or to put it another way, do humans have rights over other animals? Should we question the ethics of our exploitation

of animals?

Thus, from several lines of observation and research, we learn that human health benefits from contact with the outdoors and with animals. We mention this not as one more exercise of anthropocentrism (saving nature for our own sake), but as evidence that we are part of a larger universe, woven into and partaking of the web of life.

Stages of awakening

People are at varying levels of awareness about the larger natural systems within which they live.

Denial

Pilisuk, M. (1990). Unaffordable denial. *Readings: A Journal of Reviews and Commentary in Mental Health*, 5 (4), 16-19. R

Experiencing environmental harm

Hallman, W. K., & Wandersman, A. (1992) Attribution of responsibility and individual and collective coping with environmental threats. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48 (4), 101-118. R

Awakening

Macy, J. (1995). Working through environmental despair. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, &

A.D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

Thoms, L. (2003). Back to our roots for serenity? *Psychologist*, 17 (7), 356-357. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Becoming and being an activist

Gomes, M.E. (1998). Personal transformation and social change: Conversations with ecopsychologists in action. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26 (2/3), 217-241. R

Kovan, J. T., & Dirkx, J. M. (2003). "Being called awake": The role of transformative learning in the lives of environmental activists. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 33 (2), 99-118. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Effective Influence and Behavior Change

Creating a Sustainable World through Social Action

The global economy lures and pushes the less developed world to become more like the developed nations -- entrepreneurial and consumption-oriented. Jobs, profits, and life goals have become tied to the exploitation of finite resources. By forcing poor regions to bear the greater consequences, those with more privilege and ability to affect policy can be temporarily shielded from awareness of the danger. There are, however, measures that individuals and groups can take to address the needs of their planet. A number of influential national environmental organizations try to do this, sometimes with great success. They have a paradoxical relationship to their constituencies. While they are supported by member dues, their efficacy is limited by the amount of popular concern they can bring to the policy process and by ties to funders whose wealth is often embedded in the global economy. They may be managed in corporate rather than participatory forms of operation, sometimes at the expense of attention to smaller local problems that might be more on the minds of their constituents. Hence, local and grassroots efforts have become a critical part of environmental activism.

This section deals with options for involvement, the factors that affect involvement, and the effects of such involvement on governmental policies about the environment. Illustrations include the environmental impact review process, social policy, sociocultural change and local community action. Environmental activism raises issues of environmental justice. If protection of the earth requires major changes in behavior, what costs of change must be borne by which people? Last, we examine data on who participates behaviorally in environmental actions and what popular actions affect support for environmental action by governments.

Changing people's attitudes about the environment is only the first step. Many Americans, when polled, express pro-environment sentiments, but, when questioned more closely, show how unwilling they are to make real sacrifices and actually live sustainably.

Psychologists are uniquely positioned to address the environmental crisis. Psychologists study motivations, defenses, perception, socialization, identification, and many other topics relevant to the crisis. Your personal familiarity with these basic bodies of psychological knowledge can deepen and strengthen your effectiveness as an environmental professional.

Hall, M. (2004). The social psychology of compassionate activism: Its relevance to averting further environmental destruction. Unpublished manuscript.

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000a). Fostering sustainable behavior through community-based social marketing. *American Psychologist*, 55, (5), 531-537. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000b). Promoting sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (3), 543-554. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Behavioral psychology. (pp. 87-120) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Social psychology. (pp. 55-86). In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Clinical Tools and Skills as Resources for Environmentalists

In an earlier section, we mentioned ways in which the human/environment relation in modern society has been characterized as pathological. These later sections might be compared to treatment. Clinical psychology can offer direct contributions, both general and specific. For instance, some basic principles of psychotherapy could inform our efforts to awaken and persuade: Start where the client is; work with defenses rather than provoking them unnecessarily; teach alternatives, skills, and hope; model what you're teaching; work in the other person's optimal learning range (provide enough challenge, but not too much).

Successfully influencing people depends partly on their state of readiness. Some people are deeply invested in materialism and imperialism, some are dimly conscious of the environmental crisis, some give lip service to living sustainably, some support the actions of environmental groups, some are highly ready to make real change, and some are making changes. These places along a continuum of environmental action resemble stages of readiness that have been researched in clinical settings. Prochaska and diClemente and their colleagues, while studying the elements of psychotherapy that cut across theoretical boundaries, found six classic stages of change: *pre-contemplation* (the person does not see a problem); *contemplation* (the person admits a problem might exist); *preparation* (he or she gathers information and chooses steps to take); *action*; *maintenance*; and *recovery from relapse*. If the therapist selects techniques matched to the client's stage of readiness, therapy is more likely to succeed. This is just one model of human change that could be adapted for the environmental movement, as hinted in our earlier section on stages of awakening.

Another way of viewing people with respect to the environment is to look at them through the lens of psychological development. In mainstream American culture, the psychological traits of independence, mastery, and separation are valued, and a person's development is considered a success if he or she manifests these traits. By contrast, some environmental

psychologists write about “the ecological self” – a sense of personhood that is connected to the larger universe, rather than distinct and separable from it. In their view, successful development does not require domination of one’s environment or a bounded concept of self, but rather an appreciation of one’s interdependence and connection with the rest of the natural world and larger human communities.

For humans to play a constructive role in the preservation of life on the planet, translating intentions into actions is a key step. Polls show that most Americans state they are concerned about environmental issues, or even call themselves environmentalists. Yet our cars have gotten bigger, our houses are larger, and our meat consumption is still high. Research shows that even a small personal sacrifice deters people from taking action. To make it worse, calling attention to this contradiction between people’s self-image and their actions could trigger cognitive dissonance. This may, in turn, cause them to disown or downgrade the importance of their pro-environment beliefs in order to restore inner equilibrium. So we must tread skillfully.

deYoung, R. (2000). Expanding and evaluating motives for environmentally responsible behavior. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 509-526. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Hillman, J. (1995). A psyche the size of the earth: A psychological foreword. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

Kaplan, S. (2000). Human nature and environmentally responsible behavior. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 491-508. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Schultz, P. W. (2000). Empathizing with nature: The effects of perspective taking on concern for environmental issues. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 391-406. O Retrieved April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Stern, P. (2000). Toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behavior. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 407-424. O Retrieved, April 14, 2004, from Academic Search Premier database.

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Cognitive psychology. (pp. 154-184) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Holistic approaches. (pp. 185-210) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Logistics

Methods of Instruction

Traditional. Students work individually with instructors, sending them papers and receiving detailed feedback.

Cohorts. Cohorts of four or more students may take this course together as a team, using the Saybrook "virtual classroom." Each cohort member is expected to spend an average of one hour per week in the virtual classroom environment, reading accumulated entries and posting responses that reflect critical thinking and a systems perspective. Each student (and faculty member) is expected to comment on each posted essay and to respond to all comments on his or her own essay.

Feedback

Traditional: The instructor will reply to each written assignment by returning a copy of the assignment (via e-mail, fax or regular mail) with questions, reactions and a critique. You may be asked to rewrite the paper or to write an addendum to address criticisms or questions. If you need clarification or guidance on an assignment, do not hesitate to contact the instructor immediately.

Cohort: Please post your assignments on the blackboard site and respond to the assignments posted by the other cohort members. Your instructor will provide you feedback on both aspects of course participation.

Format for Submitting Assignments

Traditional: Hard copy: Please submit two copies of each assignment. Include your name, address, date, course name and number, and name of the assignment on a cover page. Feedback and any requests for further work on the assignment will be sent to you, along with your assignment, within two weeks of receipt. *Electronic:* Email your instructor and send your paper as an attachment. Ask your instructor which method he or she prefers.

Cohort: Post to blackboard site.

Timetable

Traditional: There are three sections in the course, and three written assignments. You should plan to complete one written assignment approximately every six weeks in order to complete the course in one semester. Do not wait for feedback/completion of one assignment to begin working on the next one.

Cohort: There are two written assignments. The first should be posted by

the 8 week into the course and the second by the 17th week of the course. The written assignment will be posted on the web site. Each student in the cohort, as well as the instructor, will be expected to comment thoughtfully on each paper posted. Each student will also be expected to comment on the comments received.

Flexibility

You may have a special reason for modifying one or more of the assignments. Submit a detailed proposal of the changes you wish to make to the instructor, making sure to have the instructor's approval on any changes before beginning work.

Assignments

This course requires extensive reading and *three papers*, all written and documented in APA style, and integrating the readings from the course. The recommended approach is to look over these assignments and then to go through the readings, selecting examples that interest you from each section. Select three of the following ten assignments. These should have variety: we suggest writing one paper with a personal component, one theoretical paper, and one paper about applied ecopsychology. Beyond the questions listed below, you may propose another topic – discuss it with your instructor before proceeding.

- 1 Describe a positive experience with the natural environment that you believe has been transformative or deeply restorative for yourself. (If you have not had one, you may wish to go out and try again). Account psychologically for why this was a good experience. Did it change your attitudes or behavior? If so, would these changes cause you to help preserve the environment? Why or why not? Discuss in the context of the literature you have read for the course.
- 2 How can a therapy practice be influenced by environmental awareness? What would be the benefits for the client? for the therapist? for the planet? What would be the risks involved? the ethical issues?
- 3 Describe how one or more psychological defense mechanisms operate to cause or perpetuate the environmental crisis, using your personal observations/experience, literature, or examples from public knowledge.
- 4 How could understanding developmental stages help you implement a specific project?
- 5 Describe an environmental impasse, in public life or your community or workplace. How would you apply psychological knowledge to resolve it?
- 6 There are many divisions or fields in psychology not mentioned in this learning guide. Describe a general or specific way that ecopsychology could be applied to one of these other sub-fields of psychology. How might inclusion of an environmental perspective change this area?
- 7 Explore the limits of the assumptions of this course: when or where might psychological expertise *not* be relevant or helpful in solving an environmental crisis? This should be not an example of a failed attempt by

- an approach that is relevant, but rather a problem for which you think that ecopsychology is irrelevant.
- 8 Write a section about a topic you think should be added to this course. Include rationale; orientation to basic literature of that field; why existing sections of this learning guide do not cover the topic; and how learning about this topic would make a practical difference.
 - 9 Propose an environmental program in which psychology can make a practical contribution.

Criteria for Evaluation of Your Work

In evaluating your written work, your instructor will consider the following points:

- 1 Is your work grammatically correct, well organized, and clear?
- 2 Is your writing well documented? That is, do you present relevant evidence to support the various arguments or positions you present? Have you cited your sources accurately and completely and presented other authors' perspectives in a reliable and fair manner?
- 3 Is your argument persuasive and convincing?
- 4 Have you introduced your own ideas or experiences, some creative or intriguing ways of understanding the particular issues covered, especially in your final paper?
- 5 Have you made an effort to call into question some of your assumptions regarding the issues raised by the course?

Please refrain from offering only opinion and free-wheeling social commentary: that is, simply deploring or praising the state of things, offering simple solutions to huge problems, going off on personal or metaphysical tangents unrelated to the assignment, or advancing unsupported personal opinions. Make your papers grounded, concrete, and well documented.

Further Resources

Rachel's Environment and Health News (REHN), published by the Environmental Research Foundation (ERF). Each article in *REHN* is well researched and carefully documented. Approximately 800 back issues of *REHN* are available free-of-charge on the ERF web site (http://www.rachel.org/home_eng.htm). These back issues can be searched either topically or chronologically from December 1, 1986, to now. A recent article also informed readers that, "three related web sites now offer daily updates of news stories, scientific studies, and medical reports linking environmental contamination to human disease. See <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org> and <http://www.protectingourhealth.org/newest.htm> and <http://www.ourstolenfuture.org/New/newstuff.htm>" (ERF, 2003c).

The ERF web site has other valuable features that may prove of value for

the Ecopsychology course. The site contains a library of documents, some of them very extensive, organized according to the following 16 topics: (1) agriculture and food security, (2) air pollution, (3) chemicals & health, (4) clean production /zero waste, (5) community participation and democracy, (6) corporations, (7) economics and inequality, (8) energy and transportation, (9) environmental justice and racism, (10) global concerns, (11) human rights, (12) prevention, precaution & risk assessment, (13) new technologies: bio-, nano- and genetic engineering, (14) waste management, (15) water issues, and (16) workers and labor. This library can be searched for up-to-date course readings to add to the syllabus.

Moreover, the ERF web site contains links to related sites, organizations, and publications that can be searched with reference to 42 different themes and, as needed, correlated with any states in this nation or with countries from A to Z (Afghanistan to Zaire). The 42 themes treated are as follows: (1) agriculture and food, (2) air and noise pollution, (3) biodiversity—flora and fauna, (4) cancer, (5) careers; internships, (6) children and youth, (7) climate change, (8) corporations, (9) directories, journals, and links, (10) economic development and sustainability, (11) energy and electromagnetic fields, (12) environmental exposures, (13) environmental justice, (14) food safety, (15) free trade and trade agreements, (16) hazardous materials and waste, (17) health--women's, (18) homes--healthy, (19) incineration, (20) indigenous people's issues, (21) landfills, solid waste, and municipal issues, (22) lead, (23) legal/laws/rights/agreements, (24) media, (25) Mexico and U.S. border issues, (26) military toxics, (27) mining and mine wastes, (28) money in politics, (28) nuclear power/waste and radiation, (29) occupational safety and health, (30) persistent organic pollutants, (31) pesticides, (32) petroleum industry (oil and gas), (33) plastics, (34) population, (35) pulp and paper, (36) sewage sludge, (37) Spanish language resources and Hispanic community, (38) technical assistance, (39) transportation, (40) waste alternatives, reduction, and prevention, (41) water issues, and (42) whistleblowers. These thematically organized links can be a treasure trove for a student in Ecological Psychology and also for a professor looking for relevant materials on any of a wide range of topics.

(We thank Saybrook student Mitch Hall for this wonderful writeup of ERF).

Readings for Ecopsychology

April, 2004

Books to Purchase

Metzner, R. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.

Roszak, T., Gomes, M., & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.) (1995). *Ecopsychology:*

Restoring the earth, healing the mind. San Francisco: Sierra Club.

Winter, D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). *The psychology of environmental problems.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

The *course reader*, which includes articles not otherwise available.

(Other assigned articles can be found in Saybrook's database.)

Course Readings Listed Alphabetically

key: E = Ecopsychology book by Roszak, Gomes, and Kanner

M = Metzner book

O = online in Saybrook's database

R = reader

S = electronic version on Saybrook website; active link in text

W = Winter and Koger book

Davis, J. (1998). The transpersonal dimensions of ecopsychology: Nature, nonduality, and spiritual practice. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 69-100. R

deYoung, R. (2000). Expanding and evaluating motives for environmentally responsible behavior. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 509-526. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Dunlap, R., Van Liere, K., Mertig, A., & Jones, R. E. (2000). Measuring endorsement of the New Ecological Paradigm: A revised NEP scale. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 425- 442. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Gaard, G. (2002). Vegetarian ecofeminism. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies, 23* (3), 117-146. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Gomes, M.E. (1998). Personal transformation and social change: Conversations with ecopsychologists in action. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 217-241. R

Hall, M. (2004). The social psychology of compassionate activism: Its relevance to averting further environmental destruction. Unpublished manuscript

Hallman, W. K., & Wandersman, A. (1992) Attribution of responsibility and individual and collective coping with environmental threats. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48 (4), 101-118. R

Hillman, J. (1995). A psyche the size of the earth: A psychological foreword. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

Kanner, A. D. (1998). Mount Rushmore syndrome: When narcissism rules the earth. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26 (2/3), 101-121. R

Kanner, A. D., & Gomes, M. E. (1995). The all-consuming self. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

Kaplan, S. (2000). Human nature and environmentally responsible behavior. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (3), 491-508. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Kovan, J. T., & Dirkx, J. M. (2003). "Being called awake": The role of transformative learning in the lives of environmental activists. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53 (2), 99-118. Retrieved January 11, 2004, from the Psychology Journals database. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Macy, J. (1995). Working through environmental despair. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000a). Fostering sustainable behavior through community-based social marketing. *American Psychologist*, 55, (5), 531-537. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000b). Promoting sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (3), 543-554. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Metzner, R. (1999). Psychopathology of the human-nature relationship. In R. Metzner, *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press. M

Metzner, R. (1999). Transition to an ecological worldview. In R. Metzner, *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press. M

Metzner, R. (1999). Reunification of the sacred and the natural. In R. Metzner, *Green Psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press M

Pilisuk, M. (1990). Unaffordable denial. *Readings: A Journal of Reviews and Commentary in Mental Health*, 5 (4), 16-19. R

Pilisuk, M. (2001). Ecological psychology, caring, and the boundaries of the person. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 41 (2), 25-37. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Riebel, L. K. (2001). Consuming the earth: Eating disorders and ecopsychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 41 (2), 38-58. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Riebel, L.K. (2004). A paradigm for sustainability: Limits and interdependence. Unpublished manuscript.

Schultz, P. W. (2000). Empathizing with nature: The effects of perspective taking on concern for environmental issues. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (3), 391-406. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Stern, P. (2000). Toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behavior. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (3), 407-424. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Thoms, L. (2003). Back to our roots for serenity? *Psychologist*, 17 (7), 356-357. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Thomashow, M. (1998). The ecopsychology of global environmental change. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26 (2/3), 275-300 R

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Behavioral psychology. (pp. 87-120) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Cognitive psychology. (pp. 154-184) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Freudian psychology. (pp. 27-54) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Holistic approaches. (pp. 185-210) In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). Social psychology. (pp. 55-86). In D. D. Winter & S. M. Koger, *The psychology of environmental problems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. W

Zelezny, L.C., Chua, P.-P., & Aldrich, C. (2000). Elaborating on gender differences in environmentalism. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 443-457. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

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Gomes, M.E. (1998). Personal transformation and social change: Conversations with ecopsychologists in action. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 217-241.

Hallman, W. K., & Wandersman, A. (1992) Attribution of responsibility and individual and collective coping with environmental threats. *Journal of Social Issues, 48* (4), 101-118.

Kanner, A. D. (1998). Mount Rushmore syndrome: When narcissism rules the earth. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 101-121.

Pilisuk, M. (1990). Unaffordable denial. *Readings: A Journal of Reviews and Commentary in Mental Health, 5* (4), 16-19.

Thomashow, M. (1998). The ecopsychology of global environmental change. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 275-300.

Optional Additional Readings

Barrows, A. (1995). The ecopsychology of child development. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. E

Clayton, S. (2000). Models of justice in the environmental debate. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 459-474. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Conn, S.A. (1998). Living in the earth: Ecopsychology, health, and psychotherapy. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 179-198.

Metzner, R. (1998). The place and the story: Ecopsychology and bioregionalism. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 35-49.

Miller, J. M., & Painter, M. (1991). *Taking charge: A community action guide to the environmental impact statement process*. Washington, D.C.: Sane Freeze and Rural Alliance for Military Accountability. 1-20.

Opatow, S., & Weiss, L. (2000). Denial and the process of moral exclusion in environmental conflict. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 475-490. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Oskamp, S. (2000). Psychological contributions to achieving an ecologically sustainable future for humanity. *Journal of Social Issues, 56* (3), 373-390. O Retrieved from EBSCO, Academic Search Premier.

Pilisuk, M., & Joy, M. (2001). Humanistic psychology and ecology. In K. Schneider, J.F.T. Bugental, & F. Pierson (Eds.) *Handbook of humanistic psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 101-114.

Sewall, L. (1998). Looking for a worldview: Perceptual practice in an ecological age. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 26* (2/3), 163-177.

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