

HUXLEY COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Estu 487/587 (CRN 42377/42775) -- 4 cr. -- Aut, 2005
CONSERVATION PSYCHOLOGY

Location: College Hall 131. Time: Tues & Thurs, 10:00-11:50

Instructor: Gene Myers, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Mon 10:30-12:00; Tues 2:00- 3:30. --Signup on door preferred, or appointment

Course webpage URL: <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~gmyers/envr487.html>

OVERVIEW:

Conservation Psychology (CP) is a new term that is being used to characterize a blend of research and practice that aims to use the tools and insights of psychology and allied disciplines to understand and improve the relationship between people and the natural systems they both benefit from and depend on. It draws on potentially every area of psychology, and has relationships to allied fields of environmental social science, such as environmental psychology, eco-psychology, environmental education research, human ecology, environmental sociology, "human dimensions" research, commons research, economics, political science, and others. It has important links also to conservation biology, whose primary concerns are biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. Conservation psychology contributes to applied fields such as environmental education, policy, planning, communications, and management. Conservation psychologists work in close practical partnerships with institutions that do advocacy, formal and informal education, conflict resolution, preservation, training, outreach, sustainable systems development, and other environmental change work. It brings the insights and tools of the diverse field of psychology to improve these practices.

This course will focus on the psychological foundations of environmental education (EE) and related change strategies. In course readings and discussion we will identify important developmental patterns as they relate to the non-human environment, focusing on the relationship between moral development and environmental ethics. Together we will conduct some initial parts of a significant project in a local elementary. This project will involve us in obtaining objective behavioral data, as well as learning to help children learn to actively participate in exploring and making decisions about their school ground environment. At the end of the course students will educate each other about their findings from the research literature on questions of significance for conservation psychology.

OBJECTIVES:

Through lecture, reading, discussion, activities and individual papers and projects, the aims of the course are that the student:

- 1) Gain an understanding of human psychology and psychological development as they relate to human ecology and environmental education.
- 2) Expand your experience working with young people in an empowerment / research paradigm.
- 3) Investigate and report on a topic of interest in conservation psychology and/or environmental education research.

Ground rules:

This course aims to combine direct experience, personal reflection, intellectual rigor, and community-building in the pursuit of starting you off on a path of real contribution as an environmental educator.

Here are some of the most important principles to follow:

- * Strive to be a strong, interdependent, well-integrated *learning community*.
- * Invite, listen to, and try to understand points of view different than your own.
- * Identify and articulate your own thoughts. Ask questions whenever you don't understand.
- * Treat others respectfully, whether you agree with them or not. Focus disagreement on the ideas, and examine them (especially your own or those you agree with) rigorously.
- * Learn: "To continue to grow, your reach must continue to exceed your grasp." - S. Bryan

REQUIREMENTS:

1) Attendance, readings, and well-prepared participation in class. **100 points**

In a community of learners, time together inevitably produces non-reproducible moments, whether it be sparked by lecture, discussion, activity, practice, or serendipity. *In a group of interdependent learners, attendance is not an elective choice, but rather a community responsibility.* Preparation includes careful study of the materials listed *prior* to each class session. Students are expected to take responsibility in leading discussions of common readings (sign-up sheet will be provided)

2) Practicum & report **300 points**

This course always has a practicum component in which the students partake in new forms of interaction with kids, usually individually or in small groups, so as to get a more direct and focused sense for some of the characteristics and abilities of young people that are of concern in CP and EE. This year you will be working at Bellingham School District's Columbia Elementary School. I have been actively involved there over the last several months, working with other parents to initiate a project to change the school grounds. You will play important roles both in gathering data, and in ensuring that children participate meaningfully in decisions affecting an environment (the school grounds) in which they are a key stakeholder. You will gain insight into how to help young people explore an issue, analyze and voice their thoughts, and discuss these with each other. The project definition and design phases of this project extend beyond this quarter, so you will only be seeing a portion of the children's involvement, but it should be very stimulating. You will each be part of a team including one or more parents and one teacher & his/her students at Columbia. We will discuss this practicum early in the term, get oriented, read about children's participation in the Hart book, and get started by later October. You will have responsibility for:

- a) Obtaining school district clearance to work as a supervised volunteer (**bring volunteer materials with you on your first day to Columbia school & present to admin. assistant in main office**).
- b) Completing the State Patrol Background Check (fingerprinting).
- c) Completing the NIH Human Subjects Rights (HSR) training module on-line, at: <http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp> Present certificate of completion to instructor. **Due Sept 29.**
- d) Going to the school on appointed days and times (TBA) to observe and record playground behaviors, and helping analyze and communicate these data. Submit your observational records on the form provided, using Excel (*training sessions TBA*), together with analyses you select and perform on the data (more info later) **Due Oct 25.** Class time will be devoted to training you in the observational methods.
- e) Coordinating with your team's parent member(s) and the teacher to arrange three 45-minute sessions in the classroom, spread out over about 3 weeks, starting (probably) in late October. Note that you will have to allot non-class time for these meetings.
- f) Preparing to conduct the activities (they will be developed ahead of time by me); some of our class time will be devoted to this. Then, showing up in your Columbia classroom at the arranged times and helping run the activities, taking different roles as needed during the activities, and after, to collect and analyze the data to:

- g) ***Produce a report on the children's important issues, preferences and insights (more info later). Due Nov. 17 (tentative)***
- h) Individually, write a short (1-2 page) personal reflective evaluation on what you learned from the practicum experience. ***Due Nov. 17 (tentative)***
- i) In your contacts with the school, please conduct yourself in a courteous and professional manner. Always enter and leave the school from the front (Utter St.) entrance, sign in and sign out at the office, and take a name tag.

3) Research review, critique and synthesis. ***300 points. Topic selected by Oct. 11; Draft due Nov. 10; in-class presentations Dec. 1 & 5 ; final version due Dec. 6***

This is an individualized part of your work for the course, and will consist of selecting a focused area of empirical research and critically / synthetically reviewing the available literature.

I encourage you to embed your project in this course in your broader thinking about philosophies of environmental education or environmental social change. Every such philosophy depends on a variety of assumptions. Some are normative, concerned with various values and purposes. Others are empirical, concerned with matters that could be true or false (the nature of the learner, for example). There are important overlaps too, like asking how effective a given strategy is at furthering a value-driven mission. The role of this course should be to help you distinguish these, and focus on how you can formulate and answer (even if tentatively --- probably always tentatively) some of the empirical questions about human beings and how we can live more harmoniously within natural systems.

Your topic will need to be fairly tightly focused. A statement of your topic is ***due Oct. 11***. You might also be stimulated by considering some currently 'hot' or critical issues in conservation psychology and allied fields (see also the link [Some research approaches and topics in EE](#) on the course web page):

- Free-choice learning environments
- Family-based learning & influence of children on adults
- Learners, learning, and learning styles in EE
- Models of Responsible Environmental Behavior (REB)
- Outdoor nature experience and learning
- Values and environmental ed.
- Adolescent learners and EE
- Psychology of environmental risk
- Connections between caring about different levels of biodiversity
- Community-based education and environmental management
- Overcoming consumerism
- Participatory environmental management structures outside the U.S.
- Social marketing and promoting sustainable behavior
- Access to nature for urban populations

For several of the above topics (and others) review or meta-analysis papers are available as good starting points (see list from instructor; many available in a binder in the Huxley Library). In reviewing the literature, however, you will want go beyond such review papers to the actual original research itself. Your paper must contain references to at least 6 empirical research papers which you read on the same focused area. Before your write, you will need to evaluate each article, considering the following:

purpose & type of research, research question, links to other research, variables measured, data collection methods, subjects, sampling procedures, analyses, findings and limitations. Were the claims presented in the articles warranted by the evidence? You might also consult:

Myers, How to critique a scientific article, <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~gmyers/crit.art.html>
Huron, D. (2001). Sixty methodological potholes,
<http://dactyl.som.ohio-state.edu/Music829C/methodological.potholes.html>

Taking all the research you reviewed as a whole, what stands out as the important researchable questions that remain unanswered, or answered inadequately? What are the strong aspects of our knowledge in the area you investigated? Are there weaknesses, and what would remedy them? Are there critical theoretical differences that should be resolved by a key "reality" test? How useful do you judge the body of research, and for what purposes could it be applied? What kinds of information might be needed by practitioners but that the research is not presently offering?

Your final write-up should represent a coherently organized critical synthesis that addresses what you judge to be the most salient of the answers to questions such as the above. Your report to the group should be a distillation of your report. Your work will be graded according to your choice of articles to review (their appropriateness & match to your question, as well as difficulty); how clearly you discern and communicate their strengths and weaknesses, and the analytical and synthetic insightfulness and usefulness of your overall appraisals, as well as writing quality

*****In this and all other assignments for the course, you should use the American Psychological Association's citation format, as presented in its Publication Manual. A summary of its features is at: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>. *****

For some useful resources on writing and research, see: <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~gmyers/resstud.html>; particularly see the links on academic honesty and plagiarism & related WWU policies.

OPTIONAL FIELD TRIP:

I usually have one or two outside colleagues speak in this course, but this time, we will take the course to the colleagues. A limited number of students may elect to attend the 20th Conference of the Society for Human Ecology (SHE) with the instructor, who has coordinated a full strand focused on CP at the conference. The conference as a whole will be very stimulating, and the SHE crowd is a very simpatico bunch! There will be some cost to attend (probably about \$200 or less). We will leave early Weds. Oct. 12 and return late Sun. Oct. 16, doing a round trip drive to Salt Lake City (about 2000 miles) by van. More information will be delivered via email. *If you want to attend SHE, I need to have a definite "Yes" by Sept. 29!!*

EVALUATION:

- Expectations are commensurate with upper-division status (487) or graduate status (587).
- *Grading breakdown:* 90-100, A; 80-89, B; 70-79, C; 60-69, D; below 60, F
- *Late assignments:* In the interest of fairness, scores will drop 5% for each day after the due date that an assignment is turned in (unless late submission is pre-arranged), except for excused medical reasons with a note from the student health center. No late assignments will be accepted more than one week late.
- All unclaimed papers will be in a folder in the 'student papers' file in AH 217 after quarter grades are turned in.

DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATION:

Any student with a disability that may affect their performance in this class is encouraged to speak to the instructor or the Office of Student Life (360-3844) to arrange for suitable accommodation.

TEXTS:

- Hart, R. (1997). *Children's Participation*. New York: Earthscan / UNICEF.
- Selected articles. Link to Table of Contents on web page. ("rdgs" below)
- Web-connected readings ("web" below; live links on the on-line syllabus, from course webpage)
- Other sources as may be assigned, placed in a notebook in the Huxley Library.
- A useful supplemental bibliography list for research is linked to the course webpage.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS:

Wk/Day/ Date	Topics	Readings	Due Dates
1/R Sept. 22	Introduction to course. EE & Conservation psychology. Normative and empirical assumptions.	Highly recommended: Saunders, <i>The emerging field of CP</i> (and commentary responses). Find, at: http://www.humanecologyreview.org/102.htm	Submit State Patrol Background check materials as soon as possible
2T Sept. 27	CP- further discussion. Course practicum intro: School grounds transformation. Observational research methods.	Diamond, Observational tools (rdgs)	
2R Sept. 29	Observational methods, continued. Training for Columbia School observations.	Malone & Tranter 2003 (web)	SHE trip decision. Complete NIH HSR training module
3T Oct. 4	Gene to WWC. (probably time slots for some observers at Columbia).		
3R Oct. 6	Paradigms of EE. Education for sustainability. Accessing, assessing & reviewing research literature.	Myers, Three paradigms (web) Hart, Ch. 1 Rec'd: Wals & Jickling (web)	
4T Oct. 11	Children's participation. Children's soc. & cog. development.	Hart, Ch 2-3	Research topic decision.
4R Oct.13	SHE field trip. (probably time slots for some observers at Columbia).		
5T Oct. 18	Facilitating children's participation. Listening to children.	Hart, Ch. 4 Interviewing children (rdgs)	Complete Excel training.
5R Oct. 20	Research with children. Qualitative / inductive research.	Hart, Ch's 5-10 Qualitative research (web, read thru all links on left)	Have teacher-team-parent schedule for practicum
6T Oct. 25	Further preparation for in-class sessions.	Hart, Ch's 11-14	Submit completed Excel data form & analyses. Approximately

			here, start in-class sessions.
6R Oct. 27	Human nature, human development & human ecology	Myers.1998.2005.doc (web) & Hum. ecol. epistem.(rdgs).	
7T Nov. 1	above, continued discussion		
7R Nov. 3	Formative influences: "Significant Life Experience" research	Chawla, 1998 (rdgs).	
8T Nov. 8	Formative influences, cont: Research design considerations	Bixler, 2002 (rdgs).	
8R Nov. 10	Moral philosophy and moral psychology & "biophilia"	The moral dimension (rdgs).	Draft of research lit review report
9T Nov.15	Development of environmental moral judgment	Kahn 2002(rdgs).	
9R Nov. 17	Development of environmental moral judgment	Myers & Saunders 2002 (rdgs)	Practicum write-up & reflection
10T Nov. 22	Moral exclusion & moral functioning	Opatow, 1990 & 1994 (RDGS)	
10R Nov. 24	Thanksgiving break- No class		
11T Nov. 29	Research reports		
11R Dec. 1	Research reports		
Tues. Dec. 6	Research reports Finals time is 8-10 am; we will pick a different time if no one has a conflict.		Final research lit review report