

## Psychology for Sustainability

**Professor Sue Koger**

**Contact Information:** skoger@willamette.edu (503) 370-6341

*My primary role is to help you learn, so please contact me if you have any questions!*

**Class Meetings:** M W 12:50 – 2:20

**Psych 321-01**

**Spring, 2018**

office: SML 201

SML 159

**Course Description:** Environmental degradation (e.g., resource overconsumption, pollution, climate change) is the most pressing problem confronting contemporary society: Without a livable planet, humans, like other animals, cannot survive. Because human behavior is at the root of the problem, Psychology, the science of behavior, offers important insights for understanding and changing unsustainable individual and societal systems. Due to the applied nature of the material, a **service learning component** is included.

**Learning Objectives:** This course will enable students to

1. Recognize the myriad ways in which humans live unsustainably.
2. Appreciate the cultural context in which unsustainable lifestyles developed.
3. Understand the scientific method as utilized in the study of human behavior.
4. Describe psychological theory and research illuminating situational, social, cognitive, and individual difference factors underlying unsustainable behaviors, and how these factors can be recruited to promote alternatives.
5. Realize that human health and well-being is inextricably connected with environmental health.
6. Envision behavioral and social systems that are more compatible with ecological systems.
7. Apply conceptual and empirical knowledge to promote individual and group behavioral change.

*Competencies assessed by successful completion of Psyc 321, as detailed below.*

### **Required Text:**

Scott, B. A., Amel, E. L., Koger, S. M. & Manning, C. M. (2016). *Psychology for Sustainability (4e)*. New York: Routledge.

**Course Requirements and Student Evaluation:** Willamette's Credit Hour Policy holds that for every hour of class time, there is an expectation of 2-3 hours work outside of class. Thus, for a class that meets three hours per week, you should anticipate spending *6-9 hours outside of class* engaged in course-related activities. Your preparation and participation in class, performance on exams and essay reflections, completion of two major term projects, and a service learning/volunteer component will determine your final grade.

**I. Class Participation.** The success of this class is as dependent upon your preparation and participation as it is on mine. Thus, I expect you to be consistently present in class (both physically *and* mentally), and overtly engaged in the material (answering and asking questions, taking notes, etc.). You should *come to class having completed the reading assignments*. I will supplement the reading and discussions with lectures and occasional films.

To earn participation points, you should answer/ask questions or make relevant comments on a regular basis (at least 1-2 times during each class period). Please be mindful to *not* dominate the discussion or lead it astray (points are not earned for either tendency), and feel free to invite other students to join in the conversation!

**Classroom Etiquette.** Cell phones and other electronic devices are distracting, so they must be turned off or placed in silent mode *and put away* prior to the start of class. Repeated instances of a device sounding in class or its use will result in its confiscation. iPads or Laptops are **only allowed** when I have specifically requested you to use them (i.e., if there were supplemental readings/homework assigned). Please grant your peers and me your respect by listening and attending to whomever has the floor at the moment.

**II. Exams.** There will be three exams over the course of the semester, consisting of multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, and short answer questions. All exams are *semi-cumulative*, to the extent that early material is foundational for later concepts, and some content will be revisited throughout the course. Questions are based on assigned readings, as well as lectures, videos, *and* class discussions. Thus, attendance and participation, as well as good reading, note-taking, and study habits, are all critical for successfully completing the course. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero for that exam. There are no make-ups, and an exam may not be taken earlier than it is scheduled, *so please don't ask*. Medical excuses provided *prior* to the exam may be considered for exemption to these rules. (*Exams assess SLO 1-6.*)

**III. Reflective Essays.** Because the focus of this course is on human behavior, we will engage in regular reflection on class material as it pertains to our own lives. Further details will be provided in-class and on WISE. Note that you should always use *APA style* for citations and references in your written work. (*Essays assess SLO 1, 2, 4, 5.*)

**Note:** Trees are a valuable resource, so please be conservation minded in ALL assignments. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due electronically *on WISE*, *prior* to the start of class (i.e., by 12:30 pm). Assignments turned in as hard copies, by email, or after the due date/time **will not be accepted for credit**. See *WISE course calendar for due dates*.

**IV. Term Projects:** In the spirit of the well-known dictum to **think globally and act locally**, students will complete each of the following applications of course material over the course of the term: a) a project focusing on students' behavior as **individuals**; b) a second project focusing on our larger **community**; and c) a third comprising a **service learning** component and accompanying reflection essay. You are free to formulate your own ideas to create projects that interest you, but all projects are subject to my approval. See *WISE Assignments* for further details and due dates (*SLO 4, 6 & 7*).

**a. Individual, self-change project:** It is easy to underestimate how difficult behavior change can be when thinking about it in the abstract or when focusing on other peoples' behavior. To help you understand some of the challenges that arise when attempting to change a behavior, and the thought patterns that accompany these challenges, you will choose a personal behavior that

has damaging environmental consequences; gather baseline data; implement an intervention; track and reflect on your progress in light of course material; and deliver a class presentation.

**b.** For the **campus** or **community behavioral change project**, you will **work in small groups** to address an environmentally relevant practice or problem within the Willamette campus or the larger Salem community. Your team will:

- a) Assess the situation and identify target behavior(s);
- b) Develop a research-based communication strategy to foster change (based on course materials);
- c) Pilot test your strategy; and
- d) Evaluate the results.

Your grade on this project will not only reflect the final results of your project and the quality of your written report, but also how well your group functioned.

**c.** Finally, you will be asked to engage in *8-10 hours of service learning/volunteering* in a context that relates directly to our course material. This could include volunteering with a local environmental organization, attending a rally or political “lobby day,” participating in an environmentally-focused TAB trip, organizing and attending a “work party” to begin mitigating the problem identified in your campus/community project, etc. Each student will write a final reflection paper on his/her service experience.

<b>Grading:</b>	Exams (3 at 20% each)	60%
	Attendance, Participation & In-Class Writing/Discussion	4%
	Reflection Essays (n=4)	8%
	<b>Act Locally Term Projects</b>	
	a) Indiv. Project, incl. component reports & pres.	10%
	b) Campus/Community Group Project	10%
	c) Community Service Hours & Reflection Paper	<u>8%</u>
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Academic Honesty** is essential to the educational process, and I trust that you agree with me. In fact, I believe that a small minority of students actively attempts to cheat. However, my experience suggests that I should say something about cheating and plagiarism. As described in the Willamette CLA catalog, “cheating is any form of intellectual dishonesty or misrepresentation of one’s knowledge. Plagiarism, a form of cheating, consists of representing someone else’s work as one’s own.” Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated in this course and will be treated severely, including failure of the course and possibly (at the Dean's discretion) suspension or dismissal from the college. If you have any question about what constitutes cheating, please see me for clarification. *Ignorance does not constitute a valid excuse for plagiarism or cheating.*

**Spring 2018 - Psych for Sustainability Course Calendar (may be subject to change)**

Week of...	Topic(s)	Reading Assignment
Jan 15 (W)	Introductions & Overview	Syllabus
22 (M)	<b>"Emotional impact statement" due (see WISE for details)</b> No "environmental" problems	Ch 1
29 (W)	How did we get here? <b>"Examining your worldview" due (WISE)</b>	2
Feb 5 (W)	Where do we go from here? <b>Personal Ecological Footprint &amp; Topic Statement due (WISE)</b>	3
12 (W)	Psychology can help <b>Personal Project - operational definitions &amp; baseline data due (WISE)</b>	4
19 (M) (W)	<b>Unit 1 Exam</b> Power of (unsustainable) situation <b>Personal Project - Contingencies &amp; progress report due (WISE)</b>	5
26 (W)	Not easy thinking green <b>Personal Project – Cx to climate change &amp; progress report due (WISE)</b>	6
Mar 5 (W)	Putting the "I" in environment, & Faith-Based Responses <b>The Person in the Personal - reflection &amp; progress report due (WISE)</b>	7
12 (M) (W)	To be green... <b>Unit 2 Exam</b>	8
19 (M)	<b>Personal Project final presentations due (WISE); Student presentations</b>	
26	<b>** No classes this week – enjoy your spring break! **</b>	
Apr 2 (F)	Intro to group projects & service learning Psych of Climate Change Communication & CBSM <b>Campus/Community Group project proposals/drafts due (WISE)</b>	<i>CRED Guide</i>
9 (W)	Making ourselves sick <b>Toxicant exposures reflection due (WISE)</b>	9
16 (W), 4/18	Healing the split <b>SSRD – No classes!</b> <b>** Public execution/exhibition of Campus/Community Group projects **</b>	10
23 (M)	<b>Connection to nature reflection due</b> Getting psyched for sustainability	11
30 (M)	<b>Service learning reflections due (WISE); Discussion &amp; class wrap up</b>	
May 3, Thurs, 2 pm	<b>Exam #3 (during Final Exam Period)</b>	