

PSY 318-01
Psychology of Environmental Issues
Fall 2014

Instructor: Katherine Lacasse, Ph.D.

Office: Judd Hall, Room 205

Office Hours: Mondays 1pm-2pm & Tuesdays 4pm-5pm; and also by appointment

Email: klacasse@wesleyan.edu

Class Times: Tuesdays, 7:00pm – 9:50pm

Room: Judd Hall, Room 113

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Environmental issues, such as climate change and the overconsumption of resources, are some of the most pressing problems facing our world. Many environmental psychologists specifically investigate how people think about and respond to these global challenges. In this course, we will discuss how psychological mechanisms help explain the roots of various environmental problems, and can also be used when designing interventions to address these issues. We will focus on both individual processes (cognitive processes, motivation, behavior change, connection with nature) and social processes (cultural worldviews, group relationships, media messages, social movements). Some of the broader questions addressed in this class are: Why are people generally unconcerned about climate change? Why is material consumption highly valued in American society? What motivates individuals to become involved in environmental social movements? Throughout the semester, you will practice applying the concepts learned in class to a specific environmental issue of your choice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) Critique and synthesize information from various theories in environmental psychology
- 3) Apply general psychological principles to the analysis of environmental issues
- 4) Gain an expertise in a specific domain of interest related to psychology & environmental issues that will be documented in your presentation and final paper
- 5) Develop scientific writing skills and oral presentation skills

REQUIRED READINGS

- 1) Quinn, D. (1992). *Ishmael*. New York: Bantam Books. ISBN-10: 0553375407, ISBN-13: 978-0553375404
- 2) McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2013). *Fostering sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing*, Third Edition. Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers. ISBN-10: 0865716420, ISBN-13: 978-0865716421
- 3) Most of the readings for this class, other than these two books, will be available on Moodle. The length of the readings will vary, but you may anticipate reading the equivalent of three articles or one book per week.

Online Resource & Readings: Moodle

The Moodle page will include most of the course readings, the syllabus, instructions for assignments, and the grade book. I will also use Moodle to communicate announcements to the class. You will use Moodle to access course readings & resources, check your grades, and to communicate with myself or your fellow students. Please set up your Moodle profile and upload a picture of yourself, so we can learn each other's names more quickly.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Organization & Assignments:

Since this class meets only once per week, class attendance is expected and necessary. One absence is permitted, and more absences will reflect in your participation grade. You will need to bring the readings for that week with you to each class. You may either bring a hard copy of the reading with you, or you may bring your laptop and access the readings from there. If you do choose to bring a laptop, please do not use it to check email or Facebook, or use it in any other way to distract you. If you are distracted by the computer, then I may ask you to bring hard copies of the readings for classes from that point forward.

We will take a break each night about midway through our meeting. You are welcome to bring food or coffee to class, as long as we keep the classroom clean.

1) Active Participation

This course is a seminar, and all students are expected to read all assigned readings carefully and to come to class on time and prepared to discuss their thoughts and reactions. Commensurate with the course level, all students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. Thoughtful and active participants who attend class will receive full credit (30pts.); occasional or underprepared participants, or those with more than one absence will receive partial credit (5-25pts.), and participants with many absences or who infrequently participate will receive no credit (0pts.).

2) Discussion Questions

For most classes during the semester, you will type and turn in four discussion questions based upon the readings. There should be at least one question from each reading. Each question should include a reference to the reading(s) that it is addressing, and should be an open-ended question (not a “yes/no”). Pay attention to what “strikes” you in the readings. The questions can include your reactions to, criticisms of, and/or further questions regarding the real-world applications related to the readings. For example, consider: What critiques do you have of the author(s)’ argument, theory, and/or method? What questions does the material raise for you? How do your life experiences and personal observations affect your reading of and/or reactions to the material? These questions will help everyone to participate actively and to stimulate class discussion.

Bring these questions, typed and printed, with you to each class. They must be turned in at the end of class. To avoid printing problems, please plan ahead and print them the night before. Emailed questions will not be accepted, and you must be in class for your questions to count for credit. These will be graded with a $\sqrt{+}$ (clear, thoughtful questions: 3 points) $\sqrt{}$ (question missing OR less clear or simple questions: 2 points), or $\sqrt{-}$ (questions missing OR poorly worded questions: 1 point). *Please note that the two lowest discussion question assignment will be dropped, including ones not turned in. So these will not negatively impact your grade.*

3) Seminar Presentation/ Discussion Leader

Each person will make a 10-12 minute presentation during one week of the class. However, this is not strictly a “research presentation.” Rather, you are expected to pull examples from various forms of media (web sites, TV shows, movies, news clips, song lyrics, magazines, newspapers, popular books) that portray your particular topic. You will want to highlight how these examples relate to the research we have been reading. For example, how does popular media deal with the topic and apply it to real-world scenarios? How might their portrayal impact the public’s

understanding of the environmental issue? Does the example support or refute the theory or positions from the articles? Does it lead to its intended reaction in the audience? You will want to bring in some form of media and/or to use interactive exercises during your presentation. I strongly encourage you to come to talk with me about the details of your presentation one week before your presentation.

You will also take charge of co-leading the discussion that day for the first half of the class period, along with the professor. You should know that readings for that week very well, and should be prepared to instigate discussion and to answer other student's clarification questions about the readings. You will prepare a one-page handout (notes style) that outlines key points from the readings that you think should be highlighted in discussion, and bring a copy to hand out for each person in the class. The discussion can build from the media examples in your presentation and/or from the readings.

4) Research Paper

Your research paper comprises a significant portion of your grade for this course. The aim of the paper is to delve into a topic of interest to you that is related to psychology and environmental issues. The paper will be related to the topic from the week you do the seminar presentation for the class. You will conduct a basic review and critique the research on your topic. You are welcome to incorporate the research and perspectives that we discuss in class, along with additional readings.

You will schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your paper **topic by October 17th** (before fall break). Please come prepared to talk about your paper topic idea(s) (i.e., you should do a literature search using PsychINFO, Google Scholar, or some other search engine to determine whether there is sufficient research on your topic). Specifically, we will spend time narrowing your paper topic and discussing the paper's organization. The paper will consist of several sections:

1. Introduction: Defining the topic and its significance to a social/environmental issue (1-2pgs)
2. A review of current research on the topic (5-7pgs.)
3. A critique of the literature (e.g., sample limitations) (3-4pgs)
4. Conclusion and recommendations for future research (1-2 pgs)
5. Reference section, in APA style

-One-page outline/ description of your paper topic on **Tuesday, Oct. 28.**

-Complete first draft of your research paper is due on **Tuesday, Nov. 18**

-This will allow you to benefit from my feedback before turning in a final draft at the end of the semester.

-Final draft of research paper is due on **Tuesday, Dec. 9**

-You will also turn in first draft with comments so I can look for growth and I improvement in your writing and incorporation of my feedback and suggestions.

FINAL GRADES

Your grade is based on your performance on the course assignments and participation, and will not be changed on the basis of special requests. If grades for the class as a whole are inordinately low, there could be a "curve" applied to final grades. However, this is not guaranteed, and students should assume that grades will remain unchanged at the conclusion of the semester.

As a general rule, Incomplete Requests or Extensions will be granted only in dire, unavoidable circumstances (e.g., serious illness or emergency) that are fully documented (e.g., with official correspondence from physician and/or Dean's office). If you believe that you are in these circumstances, then you must discuss the incomplete with me (in class or via email) prior to submitting an electronic incomplete request.

Grading Breakdown

Active Participation	30pts	30
Discussion Questions	3pts x 10	30
Seminar Presentation	40pts	40
Research Paper	100pts	100
Total:		190 points

Grading Scale

A+ = 98-100%	B = 83-86.9%	C- = 70-72.9%
A = 93-97.9%	B- = 80-82.9%	D+ = 67-69.9%
A- = 90-92.9%	C+ = 77-79.9%	D = 60-66.9%
B+ = 87-89.9%	C = 73-76.9%	F = Below 60%

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

All students are expected to hand in their own work for this course. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic grade of zero on the assignment in question. Further action may be taken and result in a final grade of an "F" for the course and/or recommendation for suspension.

Please read the Wesleyan Honor Code and abide by it closely (a copy is posted at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/honorboard/honorcode.html>). All assignments, papers, and presentations for this class must be original -- not reprinted, excerpted, or adapted from existing work (e.g., papers you wrote for other classes, books, articles, web sites). If you are unclear about how to reference something, please ask ☺

WRITING WORKSHOP

There are a variety of academic services available at Wesleyan, and many of you may find the tutors in the Writing Workshop helpful when working on the writing assignment for this course.

Drop-in hours are available for Sun-Thurs 7pm-11pm in Olin 106 (1st floor); and Sun-Weds 7pm-11pm in Bennet Hall 125 (Lounge floor). You may also schedule an appointment by click on the "Writing Workshop" link in the Academic Resources section of your E-Portfolio, or calling (860) 685-2440. Also see: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/index.html>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide

documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Also see:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/studentguide.html>

SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY

The following topic schedule and all accompanying information (i.e., assignments, topics, readings, etc.) should be viewed as tentative, and can be altered according to the needs of the course. If we fall behind during the course of the semester, alterations will be made. Students should listen for any announcements of changes in the schedule. Major changes (i.e., changes in assignment due dates, etc.) will be communicated in class and on the Moodle site.

If class is cancelled, any materials due during that class will be due during the following class period.

TENATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Sept 2 Introduction

Sept 9 Background & Risk-Perception

Koger, S. M., & Winter, D. D. (2010). What on Earth are we doing? *The psychology of environmental problems: Psychology for sustainability* (pp. 1-25). New York: Taylor & Francis

Slovic, P., & Peters, E. (2006). Risk perception and affect. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15, 322-325. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8721.2006.00461.x

Uzzell, D. L. (2000). The psycho-spatial dimension of global environmental problems. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20, 307-318. doi: 10.1006/jev.2000.0175

Sept 16 Values/Worldviews

Quinn, D. (1992). *Ishmael*. New York: Bantam Books. ISBN-10: 0553375407, ISBN-13: 978-0553375404

Sept 23 Consumerism

Thøgersen, J. (2014). Unsustainable consumption: Basic causes and implications for policy. *European Psychologist, 19*, 84-95. doi: 10.1027/1016-9040/a000176

Arndt, J., Solomon, S., Kasser, T., & Sheldon, K. M. (2004). The urge to splurge: A terror management account of materialism and consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14*, 198-212. doi: 10.1207/s15327663jcp1403_2

Thompson, S. (2012). The micro-ethics of everyday life: Ethics, ideology and anti-consumerism. *Cultural Studies, 26*, 895-921. doi: 10.1080/09502386.2012.704636

Sept 30 Rational & “Irrational” Responses to Environmental Issues

Haidt, J. (2006). The divided self. *The happiness hypothesis* (pp. 1-20). Cambridge, MA: Basic Books.

Kahan, D. M., Peters, E., Wittlin, M., Slovic, P., Ouellette, L. L., Braman, D., & Mandel, G. (2012). The polarizing impact of science literacy and numeracy on perceived climate change risks. *Nature Climate Change, 2*, 732-735. doi: 10.1038/nclimate1547

Potts, A., & Parry, J. (2010). Vegan sexuality: Challenging heteronormative masculinity through meat-free sex. *Feminism & Psychology, 20*, 53-72. doi: 10.1177/0959353509351181

Oct 7 Connection to the Environment

Nisbet, E. K., & Zelenski, J. M. (2011). Underestimating nearby nature: Affective forecasting errors obscure the happy path to sustainability. *Psychological Science, 22*, 1101-1106. doi:10.1177/0956797611418527

Hinds, J., & Sparks, P. (2011). The affective quality of human-natural environment relationships. *Evolutionary Psychology, 9*, 451-469.

Cheng, A. S., Kruger, L. E., & Daniels, S. E. (2003). "Place" as an integrating concept in natural resource politics: Propositions for a social science research agenda. *Society & Natural Resources, 16*, 87-104. doi:10.1080/08941920309199

Oct 14 Promoting Green Behaviors

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2013). *Fostering sustainable behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing*, Third Edition. Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers. ISBN-10: 0865716420, ISBN-13: 978-0865716421

Fri., Oct 17 *Must meet to discuss paper topic by this date*

Oct 21 FALL BREAK! No Class!

Oct 28 Examining the Usefulness of Promoting Green Behaviors

Due: One-page outline/ description of your paper topic

Useful:

Van der Werff, E., Steg, L., & Keizer, K. (2013). I am what I am, by looking past the present: The influence of biospheric values and past behavior on environmental self-identity. *Environment and Behavior, 46*, 626-657. doi: 10.1177/0013916512475209

Thøgersen, J., & Noblet, C. (2012). Does green consumerism increase the acceptance of wind power? *Energy Policy, 51*, 854-862. doi: 10.1016/j.bbr.2011.03.031

Not useful:

Thøgersen, J., & Crompton, T. (2009). Simple and painless? The limitations of spillover in environmental campaigning. *Journal of Consumer Policy, 32*(2), 141-163.

Merritt, A. C., Effron, D. A., & Monin, B. (2010). Moral self-licensing: When being good frees us to be bad. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 4*, 344-357. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00263.x

Nov 4 Emotional Experiences

Knight, A. J. (2008). "Bats, snakes and spiders, Oh my!" How aesthetic and negativistic attitudes, and other concepts predict support for species protection. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 28*, 94-103. doi:10.1016/j.jenvp.2007.10.001

McDonald, M. G., Wearing, S., & Ponting, J. (2009). The nature of peak experience in wilderness. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 37*, 370-385. doi: 10.1080/08873260701828912

Macy, J. (1995). Working through environmental despair. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, & A. D. Canner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, healing the mind* (pp. 240-262). New York: Crown Publishers.

Nov 11 Health & Environment

Bullinger, M. (1989). Psychological effects of air pollution on healthy resident: A time-series approach. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 9*, 103-118.

Rubin, G. J., Burns, M., & Wessely, S. (2014). Possible psychological mechanisms for "wind turbine syndrome". On the windmills of your mind. *Noise and Health, 16*, 116-122. doi: 10.4103/1463-1741.132099

Mayer, F. S., Frantz, C. M., Bruehlman-Senecal, E., & Dolliver, K. (2009). Why is nature beneficial? The role of connectedness to nature. *Environment and Behavior, 14*, 607-643. doi: 10.1177/0013916508319745

Nov 18 Group Processes & Conflicts*Due: First Draft*

Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, *162*, 1243-1248.

Du Nann Winter, D., & Cava, M. M. (2006). The psycho-ecology of armed conflict. *Journal of Social Issues*, *62*, 19-40.

Pires, S. F., & Moreto, W. D. (2011). Preventing wildlife crimes: Solutions that can overcome the 'Tragedy of the Commons'. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, *17*, 101-123. 10.1007/s10610-011-9141-3

Nov 25 Media Messaging

Feinberg, M., & Willer, R. (2011). Apocalypse soon? Dire messages reduce belief in global warming by contradicting just-world beliefs. *Psychological Science*, *22*, 34-38. doi: 10.1177/0956797610391911

Höjjer, B. (2010). Emotional anchoring and objectification in the media reporting on climate change. *Public Understanding of Science*, *19*, 717-731. doi: 10.1177/0963662509348863

Cialdini, R. B. (2003). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *12*, 105-109. doi: 10.1111/1467-8721.01242

Dec 2 Social Movements

Stern, P. C., Dietz, T., Abel, T., Guagnano, G. A., & Kalof, L. (1999). A value-belief-norm theory of support for social movements: The case of environmentalism. *Human Ecology Review*, *6*, 81-98.

Hestres, L. E. (2014). Preaching to the choir: Internet-mediated advocacy, issue public mobilization, and climate change. *New Media & Society*, *16*, 323-339. doi: 10.1177/1461444813480361

Cotera, M. E. (Interviewer) & Smith, A. L. (Interviewee). (2003). Andrea L. Smith [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from Global Feminisms: Comparative Case Studies of Womens Activism and Scholarship, Interview Transcripts: United States. Web site: <http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem/us.html>

Dec 9 *Due by 11:59pm: Final paper*