NRE 661 - CONSERVATION BEHAVIOR SEMINAR

INSTRUCTOR

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PREMISE

Responding to climate disruption, resource limits and energy descent will require behavior change on a massive scale and over a long period of time. One implication of this new bio-physical reality is the need for each one of us to become behavioral entrepreneurs. Many new, and newly re-learned skills and behaviors will be needed in order for us to respond well to the coming downshift. But none are more central than the abilities to cleverly problem-solve, to plan and manage our behavior, to be resourceful, to be supportive of others, and to cope with the emotions resulting from our losing either an affluent lifestyle or the hope that perpetual growth will one day provide us all with material affluence.

OBJECTIVES

The behavioral transitions needed, urgent as they may well be, will be difficult. One task of this seminar is to help:

1) people cope with what may be dramatic, and at times unnerving, behavior change,
2) people plan for, motivate and maintain behavioral resilience, and
3) communities pre-familiarize themselves with living well within the limits of local ecosystems.

The seminar will discuss existing research and formulate strategies for promoting behavioral entrepreneurship among citizens. Readings are from empirical and theoretical work reflecting diverse perspectives on human nature.

CLASS FORMAT

The sessions are a participative, high-interaction experience. Sessions explore the implications of the week's readings for researchers and practitioners. Session leaders select topics that will be covered; identify, pre-read, select from and organize readings; distribute and introduce readings to other members; plan and manage the seminar discussion; and distribute a post-session summary.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Participation (30%)
   a) Topic Leader: Craft topic, prepare introductory materials (e.g., bibliography, intro paragraphs, pre-class questions), manage discussion, prepare post-class summary.
   b) Seminar Member: Read, digest, prepare short principle (see below) and discuss.

2. Two research papers
   a) Paper 1  (15%)  Due October 11  Five pages plus one page for citations, tables
   b) Paper 2  (25%)  Due November 29  Eight pages plus one page for citations, tables

3. Peer-reviews – Complete thorough review of other member’s research papers.
   a) Paper 1  (5%)  Due October 18
   b) Paper 2  (5%)  Due December 6

4. Author’s response to peer-reviews
   a) Paper 1  (10%)  Due October 25
   b) Paper 2  (10%)  Due December 13
INDIVIDUAL PRINCIPLES

The readings are selected to stimulate thought about behavior change, in individuals and in small groups. No single paper or combination of readings is definitive. Yet together they may offer a perspective or frame for understanding behavior change. It is a major task of the seminar to distill the insights from across a variety of authors. Thus, for each week’s readings, each member of the seminar will write at least one principle (e.g., guideline, rule of thumb, proposition) based on that week’s readings.

These principles take the form of general causal statements; they are not descriptive summaries. The objective is not to be right, but to be exploratory and synthetic. The broader, long-term goal is to advance a conceptual framework for promoting deep and lasting behavior change and to offer guidelines for practitioners. The readings contain many possibilities for such principles. Sometimes the authors make them explicitly, but more often, only implicitly. Sometimes, we infer them.

A few carefully crafted sentences will generally suffice for each principle. The goal is to craft a well-written single paragraph that is easy to read yet insightful. This will be hard. It is useful to indicate where in the readings the principle originated (e.g., page number, a short quote). If seminar feedback is desired, it is the responsibility of the member to ask. Otherwise, in each class session a few volunteers will share their principles. This will be one basis for class discussion.

The principles are to be physically posted on the classroom board for everyone to read at the beginning of class. Afterwards, they will be collected and kept in the EPLab.

- **By 6:00 pm – Everyone posts** their principle on the board in the meeting room.
- **From 6:00 to 6:10 pm – Everyone will read and take notes** on the posted principles.
- **At 6:15 pm – Discussion** of selected principles will begin.

RESOURCES

CTools (ctools.umich.edu)

SCHEDULE

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SEPTEMBER 3 – ORIENTATION and INTENTIONS AND CONCERNS

Orientation


Topic


SEPTEMBER 10 – INTENTIONS AND CONCERNS


SOME POSSIBLE TOPICS

1. These are only starting points. There are many other worthy topics.

2. Each needs a tighter link to the notion of behavioral entrepreneurship.

3. Many options are available for finding new work, including past NRE 661 seminar materials, bibliographies and literature reviews (in the EPLab) and the many fine UM Library tools.

   Attention restoration theory
   Common property
   Communications and discourse
   Consumerism and materialism
   Culture
   Leadership
   Limits of individualism
   Psychological well-being

   Role models and behavior modeling
   Positive psychology
   Self-interest
   Spirituality and religion
   Values and concerns
   Voluntary simplicity
   Voluntary stewardship

SOME PREVIOUS TOPICS

Below are topics of interest to past participants with some relevant citations. These are topics only if you want them to be. Most articles listed are older – more recent work must be found. Note that these articles are excellent source material for a citation index search.
Intrinsic motivation

Nature and well-being

Motive of self-interest
**Psychological well-being and positive psychology**


**Mind-body medicine (MBM)**

**General introduction**


**Mindfulness meditation**


