

**ENVI/PSYC 270**  
**Psychology of Sustainable Behavior**

Macalester College, Fall 2016  
Olin-Rice 270, TR 9:40 – 11:10 a.m.  
Prof. Christie Manning



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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:15 – 12:00  
(or by appointment on Wednesdays)

**Course Description:**

This course is built around the argument that “environmental problems” do not exist; they are in fact human behavior problems. Thus, if we want to craft effective solutions to issues such as ocean acidification, air pollution, or climate change, we must start with the human behaviors that lead to them. We will cover psychological principles, theories, and methods and explore the complex web of factors underlying environmentally sustainable and unsustainable actions. A strong theme throughout the semester is the intersection of identity – personal, social, and cultural - and environmentalism. We will explore questions such as, “Why do some groups of people feel a part of the sustainability movement while others feel alienated from it or skeptical of it?”; “Who takes action on behalf of the natural environment, under what circumstances, and why?”; and “How can we create contexts that promote true sustainability?”

Psychology of Sustainability is a project-based class with a strong civic engagement component. Students will participate in three class projects: a self-change project (2.5 weeks), a community-based collaborative project (5 weeks), and a communication/education project (3 weeks).

**Course Goals:**

The course will provide an overview of the basic knowledge, theories, and research methods that characterize the field of Psychology as it pertains to sustainability. Course goals include:

- Introduce students to psychological perspectives on global environmental issues, particularly climate change

- Familiarize students with the psychological, social, and real-world factors that lead people to engage in sustainable behavior
- Explore the varying perspectives on sustainability held by different US social groups and identities
- Develop and enhance student analytical skills through critical reading and discussion
- Demonstrate the practical implications and limitations of psychological theory with real-world testing and application of course material
- Encourage students to reflect upon their personal values and lifestyle choices

### **Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain how psychological theories, findings, and methods have been and can be applied to problems of environmental sustainability
- Identify advantages and shortcomings of sustainability analyses and responses that ignore/include individual-level considerations
- Describe how social group and social identity shape a person's response to sustainability
- Connect psychological theory to (sustainable) behavior in the real world
- Design and implement strategies to address specific communication and action goals
- Collaborate with a group to define a problem, make observations, devise a strategy, and evaluate a solution

### **Course Materials:**

#### **Book**

Scott, B.A., Amel, E.L., Koger, S.M. and Manning, C.M. (2016). *Psychology for Sustainability*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

#### **Other Readings:**

All other readings listed in the Readings Schedule are available through the course's Moodle website (ENVI/PSYC 270).

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Final grades for the course will be based on the following:

1. Completion of weekly reading preparation 10%
2. Engagement and attendance 15%
3. Attendance at and one-paragraph summary of **two** EnviroThursday presentations (required) 5%
4. Self-change project 15%
5. Community project 20%
6. Community project in-class group presentation 5%
7. Communication project 15%
8. Communication project in-class presentation 5%
9. Portfolio final (collection of in-class assignments) 10%

Late policy: If you submit any of the above assignments late, you will be graded down one full grade for each day beyond the deadline. That is, if an assignment that was due on Tuesday is turned in on Wednesday, the highest grade it can receive is a B+.

#### **Final Grade Scale:**

A (95 – 100), A- (91 – 94), B+ (88 – 90), B (84 – 87), B- (81 – 83). Similar ranges apply for C grades and D grades. Below 60 is a failing grade.

### **Assignments:**

#### **Reading preparation (10%):**

You will post a short response to each reading assignment. The intention of this requirement is that we all come to class familiar enough with the material that we can spend a significant amount of time applying it rather than

explaining it. For each reading, I will post the format of your reading response on moodle.

Response postings are due by 9 p.m. on the evening before class (Monday at 9 pm for Tuesday's class, Wednesday at 9 pm for Thursday's class). Be concise - the best responses are short and to the point. Writing thoughtfully and thoroughly within a word limit is an important academic skill that this assignment will help you master.

After you have posted your response, Moodle will allow you to read the responses from the other students who have already posted theirs. Please take a few minutes at some point during the evening or morning before class to look through the reading responses from your peers.

You must upload your assignment to the Moodle site for that date. NOTE: The Moodle clock does not always correspond to yours – Moodle will timeout at 9 p.m. so don't wait until the last minute. DO NOT e-mail reading responses to me. I cannot accept late reading responses.

Your reading responses will be evaluated on a 0 (no credit = F), 1 (needs work = C), 2 (satisfactory = B/B-), 3 (good = B+), 4 (very good = A-), 5 (truly outstanding = A) basis. Average reading response grade is a 3 (good/B+).

Note: I understand that sometimes life gets stressful and class readings are the last on your priority list. Therefore, you can skip readings **twice** during the semester with no penalty. To do this, simply type "SKIP" into the Moodle response forum for that day's response. You must type in "SKIP" for there to be no grade penalty.

### **Engagement and attendance (15%):**

The quality of the course, and value of the experience for all of us, depends on careful preparation for class by everyone. Thus it is critical that you read the readings carefully and on time and be prepared to discuss them and apply them to in-class assignments. Your attendance and full engagement during class discussions are required for the entire session of each class. Great engagement has four foundations:

- *Regular attendance.* Regular attendance is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments. More than two unexcused absences results in no evaluation (0).
- *Preparation for discussion* by carefully and critically reading the class readings and completing the required Moodle response posting.
- *Active participation* in class demonstrated by regular, thoughtful and substantive contributions to the discussion, the brainstorming, and the in-class assignments.
- *Supporting others' contributions* through attentive and respectful listening, offering responses that refer to others' contributions, not dominating the discussion and allowing/encouraging others to share their ideas.

For those who are less comfortable speaking in class, remember that asking a good question is also a valuable way to contribute to the discussion. If you are having serious difficulties with any part of my expectations for engagement, please talk to me outside of class so that we can work together to develop a strategy.

**\*\*Laptops are not allowed during class discussions.\*\***

### **Attendance at and summary of two EnviroThursday presentations (required) (5%)**

On Thursdays the Environmental Studies department sponsors a speaker from 12:00 to 1:00 in OLRI 250. You are required to attend two of these presentations and to write a one-paragraph summary of each. The summaries are due on the last day of class (or email them to me soon after you've attended two presentations). By the way, food is always served at EnviroThursday.

### **Self-change project (15%)**

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 undertake a quest to produce no garbage for ten days. A detailed description of the assignment will be available on Moodle.

### **Community project (20%):**

Does this psychology stuff really work? For this project you will work with a small group of your peers in class to help a community partner organization create the conditions for a desired "sustainable" behavior. Your group will

make observations, interview community members to understand their vision and understanding of sustainability, and develop a strategy to foster change (based on course materials). Ideally, you will also pilot test your strategy and evaluate the results. Your grade will not only reflect the final results of your project and the quality of your written report, but also how well your group functioned. A description of the assignment will be available on Moodle.

### **Community project EVENING group presentation (5%):**

With your project group, you will make a 15 minute *formal* presentation to the class and to the partner organization, describing your project and its results. All students are required to attend and be a part of the group presentation.

### **Communication project (15%):**

An important step in any social change is raising awareness of an issue. Your assignment is to develop a display/demonstration for the Eco-Experience building at the Minnesota State Fair – details will be available toward the final third of the semester. We will be working with the group at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) that organizes the Eco-Experience. A detailed description of the assignment will be available on Moodle.

### **Communication project in-class presentation (5%):**

You will make a 5 minute formal presentation to the class and to representatives from the MPCA planning team, explaining your demonstration/display.

### **Portfolio final (compilation and analysis of in-class assignments) (10%):**

Instead of a final exam, I would like you to turn in a set of the in-class brainstorming, analysis, and application assignments that you have completed through the semester. Along with copies of these assignments, include a brief paragraph describing the psychological theory or principle that you based your ideas upon, your own evaluation of your work, and ideas of how you might use this work and/or improve it. Further information will be available in the fourth week of class.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students will be required to abide by the Macalester College academic integrity guidelines found at <http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/integrity.html>. Instances of suspected academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, and using the same paper in more than one course) will be handled as outlined in the guidelines.

## **Accommodations**

### **Academic Support**

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center (x6121; Kagin Commons) is here to help you do your best at Macalester in meeting your own goals and highest standards. Through academic enrichment and support services, ranging from workshops to individual assistance, the MAX Center can help you excel in your academics.

Professional counselors and peer tutors in writing, mathematics, science, and study skills provide personal assistance in:

- Writing for any college course, from brainstorming through final editing
- Content areas such as calculus, statistics, organic chemistry, or cellular biology
- Sharpening study and time management skills

General hours are 9:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M., M-F and 7 P.M. – 10 P.M., S-Th. Peer tutors are usually available in all areas during the evening, but as schedules vary during the day, it is useful to call x6121 (daytime) or x6193 during evening hours to schedule an appointment.

The MAX Center also provides testing accommodations. Students must verify the need for accommodations through the Dean of Students Office.

### **Accommodations**

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact Robin Hart Ruthenbeck, the Assistant Dean of Students (696-6874) or Lisa Landreman, the Associate Dean of Students (696-6220) to make an appointment. Students are encouraged to address any learning needs or accommodations with me as soon as possible. Additional information regarding the accommodations process for students with disabilities can be found at: [www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices/](http://www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices/)

### **Moodle:**

Our course Moodle website duplicates much of the information in this syllabus, including the reading schedule and assignment due dates. It also serves as the distribution system for paper prompts, and provides a direct link to our course's e-reserves. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your Macalester username and password. After logging in, click on the link to Psychology of Sustainable Behavior in the My Courses section. Anything posted to the forums will automatically be emailed to everyone registered for the course. Click on each assignment to get the description. There will also be an option on Moodle to submit your projects to me in electronic form.



## Summary of Topics and Deadlines

### Week 1

#### Thursday, September 1 - Why are we here?

Syllabus review, student introductions, introduction to the course.

### Week 2

#### Tuesday, September 6 - Human impacts – individual and aggregate

##### Readings:

Scott, Amel, Koger & Manning (2016), Chapter 1 (There are no *environmental* problems)

In-class: Introduction to the self-change project (Due Tuesday, October 4)

To do: Fill out one of these online eco-footprint calculators and play around with the settings

Carbon footprint: <http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/index.htm>

Ecological footprint: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>

2<sup>nd</sup> ecological footprint: <http://ecologicalfootprint.com/>

#### Thursday, September 8 – How did this happen?

##### Readings:

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 2 (How did we get here? From Western thought to “Wise Use”)

In class: DSP vs ECO activity

To do: Bring an image (ad or other media example) that captures an element of the DSP

### Week 3

#### Tuesday, September 13 - How did we get here?

##### Readings:

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 3 (Where do we go from here? Developing an ecological worldview)

In class: Make a public commitment to the self-change project (Due Tuesday, October 4)

Systems activity

Ecological Principles Activity

To do: Prepare your commitment to the self-change project, using the material we have discussed and experienced so far.

#### Thursday, September 15 – What’s Psych got to do with it?

##### Readings:

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 4 (Psychology can help save the planet)

##### To do:

Bring to class: one insight for your self-change project that you gleaned from this chapter. For example, you could suggest a method you could use to make empirically sound observations of your own garbage habits, or you could define the type of study we are doing as part of this project, and why.

### Week 4

#### Tuesday, September 20 - Contexts of sustainability and unsustainability

##### Readings:

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 5 (The power of the (unsustainable) situation)

**To do:**

Prepare a sketch (yes, draw something!) of the contextual factors that lead you to (unintentionally) create trash. We will not judge anyone's artistic skills.

**Thursday, September 22 - Contexts, continued: Social proof and other "weapons of influence"**

**Readings:**

Cialdini (2009) *Influence*, chapters 1 and 4

Maybe: Sussman, Greeno, Gifford, & Scannell, (2013) The effectiveness of models and prompts on waste diversion: a field experiment on composting by cafeteria patrons

**In-class:** Self-change project check-in. Discussion and activity to improve eco pledges.

**To do:** Check out the Northwest Earth Institute's Eco Challenge (<http://2016.ecochallenge.org/>) and Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton's Minnesota Water Pledge (<http://mn.gov/governor/issues/wateraction/>)

**Week 5:**

**Tuesday, September 27 – Habits and context changes**

**Readings:**

TBD, but probably:

Neal, Wood, & Quinn (2008) Habits – A Repeat Performance

Verplanken, et al (2008) Context Change and Travel Mode Choice

**To do:** Identify three habits you engage in AND the main (unconscious?) context cues that prompt those habits. The habits you name could be positive, negative, or neutral.

**In class:** A surprise activity that depends upon each of you thoughtfully completing the to-do described above

**Thursday, September 29 – The privilege, positionality, and cultural politics of sustainability**

**Readings:**

TBD, but probably:

Guthman (2008) Bringing good food to others: investigating the subjects of alternative food practice

**In-class:**

FINAL self-change project check-in

**To do after class:** Attend an IRT session! See schedule here:

<http://www.macalester.edu/igc/opportunities/internationalroundtable/2016/schedule/>

Most essential:

Thursday, 4:45 - 6:15 P.M. Plenary Speaker Julian Agyeman, "Just sustainabilities: Re-imagining equality, living within limits"

**Week 6:**



**Tuesday, October 4- FIELD TRIP to Fort Snelling State Park**

**Readings:**

No readings

**In class:** Self-change project report due on moodle (by 11:55 pm)

Introduce community project (Due Tuesday, November 15)

Field trip to Fort Snelling State Park

**Thursday, October 6 – Identity, and sustainability, privilege, and social justice, continued**

**Readings:**

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 7 (Putting the “I” in environment)

**In-class:**

Sustainability and privilege activity

Assign groups and partners for the community project

**Week 7:**

**Tuesday, October 11 – Why is the enviro movement so white? Race, privilege, and justice.**

**Readings (tentative):**

Selections from Brentin Mock (links on moodle)

Taylor (2014) The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies – Executive Summary

**Thursday, October 13 - Identity politics**

**Readings:**

Kahan et al – Polarizing influence of science literacy (2012)

Dunlap, McCright & Yarosh (2016) The Political Divide on Climate Change: Partisan Polarization Widens in the U.S.

Maybe: Gromet, Hunreuther & Larrick (2013) Political ideology affects energy efficiency attitudes and choices

**To do:** Appreciate different moral perspectives: Watch Jonathan Haidt’s TED video

([http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan\\_haidt\\_on\\_the\\_moral\\_mind.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind.html))

**Week 8:**

**Tuesday, October 18 – Motivation, an introduction**

**Readings:**

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 8 (To be “green” or not to be “green”... it’s a question of motivation)

**In class:** Motivation scenarios exercise

**To do:** Review the “Theories overview” document posted on moodle. Be ready to apply the theories in class.

**Thursday, October 20 - HAPPY FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**

**Week 9:**

**Tuesday, October 25 – HERC field trip**

**Readings:**

No readings

**In class:** FIELD TRIP to the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC)

**To do:** Do some research on solid waste, landfills, and incinerators. Christie will create a google doc and invite everyone in the class to contribute one interesting piece of information about our human garbage habits.

**Thursday, October 27 – Intrinsic Motivation**

**Readings:**

Deci & Ryan (2000) Self Determination Theory

**In class:** Intrinsic motivation activity

**Week 10:**

**Tuesday, November 1 – Conspicuous conservation**

**Readings:**

Griskevicius et al (2010) Going Green to be Seen

**In class:** Sell sustainability! Ad development.

**To do:** Find a great example of “conspicuous conservation” in our consumer world. Bring an image to class to share.

**Thursday, November 3 – The cognitive connection**

**Readings:**

Scott et al (2015) Chapter 6 (It’s not easy thinking green)

**Week 11:**

**Tuesday, November 8 – Affect, emotion, and coping, and efficacy**

**Readings:**

Moser (2007) More bad news: The risk of neglecting emotional responses to climate change information

Another brief reading TBA

**To do:** View a few bleak climate commercials and note your coping reaction (Suggestions: “Bedtime stories”, “Train”, “Greenpeace global warming ad” (baby in bathtub), “Don’t give up”, “Polar bears falling from the sky”, “Tick” – NYC Global Warming ad) (Please send me other youtube suggestions!)

**In addition:** Watch the “Fun theory” videos (<http://www.thefuntheory.com/>)

**Thursday, November 10 – Psychological distance**

**Readings:**

Likely: McDonald, Chai & Newell (2015). Personal experience and the ‘psychological distance’ of climate change: An integrative review

**To do:** Psychological distance exercise

**Week 12:**

**Tuesday, November 15 – EVENING group project presentations (6:00 – 8:00 pm)**

**No readings**

**In class:** No formal morning class meeting, but Christie will be available to answer project or presentation questions.

Turn in your community change group project group report

**Thursday, November 17 – Unsustainability and individual health**

**Readings:**

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 9 (Making ourselves sick: Health costs of unsustainable living)

**In class:** Introduce the communication/education project (Due Thursday, Dec. 8)

Share ideas for places for the urban vs. natural space reflection time over the weekend.

**Week 13:**

**Tuesday, November 22 – Reconnecting to nature**

**Readings:**

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 10 (Healing the split between planet and self: We all need to walk on the wild side)

**To do:** Sometime over the weekend, or Monday, spend 30 minutes in an urban space and then 30 minutes in a natural space. Write a brief reflection on the differences you note in your own state of being during and after both experiences.

**Thursday, November 24 - HAPPY THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS**

**Week 14:**

**Tuesday, November 29 – Sharing our ideas: framing, and social network analysis – hot off the presses research!**

**Readings:**

TBA

**In class:** Workshop communication project ideas

**Thursday, December 1 – The final chapter**

**Readings:**

Scott et al (2016) Chapter 11 (Getting psyched for sustainability)

**In class:** Planning the way forward

**To do:** TBA

**Week 15:**

**Tuesday, December 6 – Class reflections**

**Thursday, December 8 – Communication Project Presentations**

**In class:** Presentations to EcoExperience Team from MPCA

Turn in communication project report

**\*\* Portfolio of in-class assignments due on moodle or to my office on Wednesday, December 14, by 10:30 a.m. \*\***

