

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

Macalester College, Fall 2017  
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, Wednesday 2:00 – 3:30

**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 weeks), a community-based collaborative project (6 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 are available on Moodle.

### **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 10%
8. Communication project in-class presentation 5%
9. Portfolio final (collection of in-class assignments) 15%

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 p.m. for Tuesday's class, Wednesday at 9 p.m. 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* 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).
- *Prepare for discussion* by carefully and critically reading the class readings and completing the required Moodle response posting.
- *Actively participate* in class by regular, thoughtful and substantive contributions to the discussion, the brainstorming, and the in-class assignments.
- *Support 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 p.m. 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. [www.macalester.edu/academics/environmentalstudies/envirothursday/](http://www.macalester.edu/academics/environmentalstudies/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 (10%):**

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) (15%):**

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. 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. [www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/](http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/)

## **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 Office of Student Affairs.

### ***Accommodations***

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course, and I urge you to speak with me about unique learning needs or accommodations. Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Director of Disability Services, Allie Quinn ([aquinn2@macalester.edu](mailto:aquinn2@macalester.edu)), who coordinates accommodations. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place so that you can begin the semester with greatest chance for success.

If you are working with Allie, or someone else in the Office of Student Affairs, and need accommodations for this class, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester so that we can discuss arrangements. 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/)

Day	Date	Topic	Readings	Notes and deadlines
T	5-Sep	Course Intro		
R	7-Sep	The state of things	Text: Ch. 1 & 2	Introduce self-change project
T	12-Sep	Ecological worldview	Text: Ch. 3 & 4	Begin self-change project
R	14-Sep	HERC field trip	No readings	
T	19-Sep	Context	Text: Ch. 5	Self-change check-in
R	21-Sep	Social context	Cialdini Ch. 1, 3, 4	Self-change project ends
T	26-Sep	Habits and context	Articles on Moodle	
R	28-Sep	Privilege and sustainability	Articles on Moodle	Introduce community project
T	3-Oct	Privilege and sustainability	No readings	Self-change write-up due
R	5-Oct	Identity	Text: Ch. 7	
T	10-Oct	Race, privilege, justice	Articles on Moodle	
R	12-Oct	Identity politics	Articles and link on Moodle	
T	17-Oct	Goup project work day		CHRISTIE AT CONFERENCE
R	19-Oct	Motivation	Text Ch. 8	
T	24-Oct	Motivation	Articles on Moodle	
R	26-Oct	(no class meeting)		FALL BREAK
T	31-Oct	Cognition	Text Ch. 6	
R	2-Nov	Systems thinking	Articles on Moodle	
T	7-Nov	Emotion and coping	Articles and links on Moodle	
R	9-Nov	Psychological distance	Articles on Moodle	
T	14-Nov	Presentations (evening)	No readings	Evening project presentations
R	16-Nov	Health and sustainability	Text Ch. 9	Introduce communication project
T	21-Nov	Reconnecting to nature	Text Ch. 10	Group project report due
R	23-Nov	(no class meeting)		THANKSGIVING
T	28-Nov	Reconnecting to nature	Articles on Moodle	special class activity
R	30-Nov	Bringing it all together	Text Ch. 11	
T	5-Dec	Group project work day		
R	7-Dec	Class reflections		
T	12-Dec	Presentations (during class)		Communication project report due
T	16-Dec			Portfolio due by 10:30 a.m.