

PSYC 394
Psychology and Climate Change
Macalester College, Fall 2017
Olin-Rice 300, TR 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Prof. Christie Manning

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:15 – 12:00, Wednesday 2:00 – 3:30

Course Description:

Climate change is no longer a distant, hypothetical threat. Yet, though nearly half of Americans are “concerned” or “alarmed” about global warming, few are taking significant personal action in response, and only a small minority are involved in civic action to address the issue.

This course will take a broad psychological perspective on the question, “Why are we not doing enough to address global climate change?” The class will begin with the lens of evolutionary psychology to understand why historically adaptive behaviors are problematic in the face of climate change. We will then turn to cognitive psychology to describe the mental and emotional processes that underlie the judgments and decisions we make when faced with data vs. personal experience. We will also explore social psychological theories and studies that help explain why people deny climate change even in places where its impacts are likely to be severe. Toward the end of the semester, we will touch on emerging topics such as the psychology of community action, the psychological perspective on environmental justice, and the fundamental importance of reconnecting our urban, technology-addicted society to the natural world.

Course Goals:

This course will survey current psychological research relevant to the issue of global climate change. Course goals include:

- Encounter psychological perspectives on the issue of global climate change
- Examine original research through journal articles and chapters
- Connect psychological research to the real world through field trips, activities, and interviews
- Develop research skills through reviewing psychological literature and proposing a research study
- Enhance analytical skills through critical reading and discussion

By the end of the course, students will be able to discuss how psychologists from diverse subfields are contributing to perceiving, communicating, mitigating, and adapting to global climate change. They will have carefully and critically read and discussed current psychological research, written a literature review on a topic of their choice, and proposed a psychological research study. They will also have collaborated with their peers. Students will leave the class able to use evidence from psychology to explain to others why individuals respond to climate change in certain ways. They will also be able to suggest better approaches to engaging people in efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Course Materials:

Books

Clayton, S. and Manning, C.M. (2017). *Psychology and Climate Change*. (all chapters available on Moodle)

Stoknes, P.E. (2015). *What we think about when we try not to think about global warming: Toward a new psychology of climate action*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Other Readings:

All other readings are available through the course’s Moodle website (PSYC 394).

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. Three conversation/interview write-ups 30%
4. Literature review 20%
5. Research proposal 10%
6. Research proposal presentation 5%
7. Final reflection 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 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.****

Conversation and interview write-ups (3 x 10%)

To connect material from class with the real world, I will ask you to conduct several sets of conversations with people about climate change outside of class. You can have these conversations on your own, or in collaboration with a peer from class. During class time, we will develop conversation catalysts and interview questions. I will provide you with contacts and opportunities for these conversations. A detailed description of the assignment will be available during the second week of class.

Literature review (20%):

You will complete a literature review on one of the “dragons of inaction” that we will read about and discuss in class. A detailed description of the assignment will be available during the third week of class.

Research proposal (and revised literature review) (10%):

The research proposal assignment is your opportunity to explore the questions that arose from your literature review. For this assignment, you will develop a hypothesis connected to your literature review and propose a psychological experiment to test that hypothesis. A detailed description of the research proposal assignment (and revised literature review) will be available during the third week of class.

Research proposal presentation (5%):

You will present your research proposal to your peers and to students from Earth's Climate System. Details about the presentations will be available after fall break.

Final reflection (10%):

A detailed description of this assignment will be available after Thanksgiving.

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/

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), 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/

Day	Date	Topic	Readings	Notes and deadlines
T	5-Sep	Course Intro		
R	7-Sep	Climate science	Text: Ch. 1 (Introduction); APA pp 6-20, 29-41	
T	12-Sep	Perceptions	Text: Ch. 2; Stoknes Ch. 4	
R	14-Sep	Communication	Text: Ch. 3	
T	19-Sep	Fear appeals	Stoknes Ch. 2, 5 & 10; Article on Moodle	
R	21-Sep	Social context	Text: Ch. 4; Stoknes Ch. 9	
T	26-Sep	Knowledge	Articles on Moodle	
R	28-Sep	Knowledge	no readings	FIELD TRIP; 1st interview write-up
T	3-Oct	Diversity	Text: Ch. 5	
R	5-Oct	Diversity	Articles on Moodle	
T	10-Oct	Dragons of inaction	Text: Ch. 6; Stoknes Ch. 7	
R	12-Oct	Psychological distance	Articles on Moodle	Christie practices her talk
T	17-Oct	(no class meeting)		CHRISTIE AT CONFERENCE
R	19-Oct	Dragons of inaction	Articles on Moodle	
T	24-Oct	Dragons of inaction	Articles on Moodle	
R	26-Oct	(no class meeting)		FALL BREAK
T	31-Oct	Denial & identity	no readings	CLASS VISITOR; 2nd interview write-up
R	2-Nov	Denial & identity	Article on Moodle; Stoknes Ch. 2 & 6	
T	7-Nov	Personal action	Text Ch. 7; Stoknes Ch. 11	outline of literature review
R	9-Nov	Personal action	Articles on Moodle	
T	14-Nov	Social change	Text Ch. 8	
R	16-Nov	Mental health impacts	Text Ch. 9	
T	21-Nov	Mental health impacts	no readings	CLASS VISITOR; literature review
R	23-Nov	(no class meeting)		THANKSGIVING
T	28-Nov	Mental health impacts	Text Ch. 10	3rd interview write-up
R	30-Nov	Resilience	Text Ch. 11	
T	5-Dec	Resilience	Stoknes Ch. 12, 13, 15-18; Article on Moodle	
R	7-Dec	Presentations		
T	12-Dec	Class reflections		final reflection
T	19-Dec			research proposal due by 1:30 pm