

Psyc 405: Environmental Psychology & The Wilderness Experience

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Required texts: (Be sure to purchase the correct edition.)

Gifford, R. (2002). *Environmental psychology: Principles and practice* (3rd ed.). Colville, WA: Optimal Books. ISBN: 0-9688543-0-3

Gardner, G., & Stern, P. (2002). *Environmental problems and human behavior* (2nd ed.). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing. ISBN: 0-536-68633-5

Additional Readings (excerpts to be placed on the instructor's web site):

Selections from The Biophilia Hypothesis, Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind, and The Wilderness Psychology Group newsletter & proceedings.

Course Objective:

- To explore the nature of our relationship with the environment (both natural and human-made) through a review of relevant research from the behavioral and social sciences.

Course Overview: COURSE DESCRIPTION TO BE REVISED FOR FALL 2006

Psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and experience. While it is obvious that all behavior has to occur somewhere, the importance of setting often gets limited attention in psychology courses. After all, psychology's primary concern is with the person, not the place. In this course, we adopt a different viewpoint: we start with the mindset that *where* behavior takes place is not trivial. In fact, no explanation of behavior and experience is complete without explicit attention to the environmental context. We will take an ecological approach in addressing human experience and move towards the development of a behavioral ecology.

During the first part of the course, we discuss ideas concerning the experience of wilderness. We will examine readings that explore our relationship with the natural environment from the perspectives of radical feminism, psychotherapy, developmental psychology and evolution. We will debate whether the natural world is just a context for our behavior or whether we have deep "eco-connections" (in a Jungian sense).

Next, we adopt a more traditional scientific outlook as we explore the significance of the social environment. We will inquire into the meaning of personal space, territoriality, crowding, and privacy. Review of the relevant research literature will be combined with mini-research projects for this part of the course.

In the final segment of the course, we shift our focus to the built environment and examine the behavioral basis of environmental design. Architects say, "Form follows function." We'll discuss how well their constructed forms actually function and what they mean to us, the human occupants. We will review psychological assessments of environments intended for living, learning, working, and playing. You will have the opportunity to prepare a post-occupancy evaluation of a built environment of your choice.

Course Procedure:

Class sessions will typically involve a mix of lecture, discussion, and student presentations. You are encouraged to actively engage with the assigned reading. Come to class prepared with notes on your ideas, reactions, and questions so that you can contribute to the review and discussion.

Grading:

The instructor will provide study questions on your reading assignment. Write out your answers and reactions as you read and be ready to hand these in as homework at the end of class. These can be handwritten, but it is important to complete them *before* class. Your responses to the study questions will count 15% of your grade. Complete all adequately for an "A." Each uncompleted assignment "costs" one letter grade.

Several "laboratory" or homework projects will be assigned. Some will require teamwork but others may be individual tasks. Taken together, these assignments count 15% of your grade.

The midterm contributes 25% to your course grade, and the final exam counts 30%.

A term paper with oral presentation is required. This is a team project evaluating a built environment of your choice. This project counts 15% of your grade. While the oral presentation is done as a team, each student provides their own write-up of the work including background material, relevant literature, application of content from the Gifford text, etc.

NOTE: The above percentages indicate the approximate weighting of each component of the course. Your actual grade will reflect the instructor's evaluation of the quantity and quality of your total contribution in all components of this course. Since class discussion is a central activity in a seminar, your course grade may be revised upward or downward depending on your oral contribution (both quantity and quality of input considered).

Student Responsibilities:

Both students and instructor will approach this course in a constructive and mature manner. We will take care to maintain an open, yet critical, mindset regarding issues of environment and behavior. It is expected that you will attend almost all class sessions and will participate fully in the class activities. If you will have to miss a class or must turn in an assignment late, advise the instructor in advance (e-mail is convenient).

Schedule of Topics **NOTE: THESE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE REVISED FOR FALL 2006**

Aug 27 Orientation

Sept 3 Ecopsychology, Technology, & Consumerism

In *Ecopsychology* text, read Forward by Lester Brown (p. xiii), then read articles on pp. 1-91. Prepare responses to discussion questions.

Sept 10 Child Development & Ecofeminism

Read articles pp. 92-145, then *Lengthy Reminiscence* and *Theory and Research* on our web site. Prepare responses.

Sept 17 Ecological Therapy and The Wilderness Experience

Read articles pp. 149-239 (but skip Sewall's article on p. 201), then *Biophilia* and *Wilderness Vision Quest* on our web site. Prepare responses.

Sept 24 Ecopsychology and Cultural Diversity

Read articles pp. 240-315 and *Searching for the Lost Arrow* on our web site. Prepare responses.

Oct 1 **Midterm Exam** over Ecopsychology text

Oct 8 Environmental Perception and Cognition
of Ch 2

Gifford text: read pp. 1-7 of Ch 1 & all

Oct 15 Environmental Attitudes and Appraisals
Cognitive Mapping Exercise due

Ch 3 all; Ch 4 T&J, 111-113

Oct 22 Personal Space; Territoriality	Ch 5 T&J, 133-136; Ch 6 all
Oct 29 Crowding; Privacy	Ch 7 T&J, 189-192; Ch 8 all
Nov 5 Residential & Community Environments 280,283 Residential Satisfaction Survey due	Ch 9 all; Ch 10 T&J, 266,275-
Nov 12 Environments for Education & Work 18,328-9; Ch 12 all	Ch 11 296-9,300,304-5,310-11,316-
Nov 19 Nature; Managing Limited Resources 441 plus your choice of sections on air pollution, energy conservation, & recycling	Ch 13 381-390, 409-411; Ch 14 421-
Nov 26 VACATION	--
Dec 3 Designing More Fitting Environments	Chap 15
Dec 10 Student Project Presentations POE Write-Up due	Epilog
Dec 17 Final Exam	