

**Psychology 347C Seminar: Psychology of Environmental Problems**  
**Whitman College: Fall 2004**  
 4 Credits  
 Monday evenings, 6-9 p.m., Maxey Hall Rm. 142

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**Course Focus and Goals:** What will it take to build a sustainable world? Whatever else is required, one thing is certain: we'll need to have a lot change in current human behavior because right now, human beings are on a crash course. We simply cannot go on reproducing and simultaneously consuming resources at current rates, and expect to survive much longer.

How do we effect such massive behavioral change? If psychology is the scientific study of behavior, it should suggest some answers. Will it take better information and education? Moral injunctions? Government regulation? Mystical experience? Better incentives? Community organization? Technological advances? All of these? This seminar will address the fundamental question of human survival on planet earth, and what psychology can contribute to promoting it. This question has preoccupied me for over a decade and I am excited to share it with you. As the question is huge, it will require lots of intelligent, dedicated minds to answer it.

My goals for this course are to engage you in this crucial question about human survivability and behavioral change, sponsor your foundational knowledge, sophistication, and creativity in answering it, and enhance your writing, research, and group discussion skills as you do so. We will be reading the latest and most important literature addressing the psychology of environmental problems, as well as contributing new knowledge by conducting empirical research in small learning groups. We will experience the major methods of psychology, both phenomenological and research approaches, and compare the insights they produce. We will spend some time at the Johnston Wilderness Campus in order to appreciate the beauty of the natural world and how it provides therapeutic effects. We will participate in a community project to enhance environmentally responsible behaviors of homeowners along Yellow Hawk Creek, and we will spend at least part of each class session planning and analyzing this project. We will critique and compare various psychological theories about how to change environmentally relevant human behavior, and see how well they fare with our community based project. And we

will end the course with an integrative assignment that allows you to put your insights learned throughout the semester together in your own unique way.

**Course Texts:**

Gardner, G.T. & Stern, P.C. (1996). *Environmental problems and human behavior*, Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Winter, D.D. & Koger, S. (2004). *Psychology of environmental problems, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

**Articles on Reserve at Penrose:**

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000). Promoting sustainable behavior: An introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3), 543-554.

Sewell, L. (1995). The skill of ecological perception. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes & A.D. Kanner (Eds.) *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

**Course Calendar:**

September 6: Introductions to course, each other, and Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM)

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000). Promoting sustainable behavior.

September 13: Is our problem a spiritual or moral one? Johnston Wilderness Campus:

Experiencing silence outdoors: why and how

Sewell, L. (1995). The skill of ecological perception.

Gardner and Stern, Chapter 1-3

\*\* SAT September 18: 9 a.m. -5 p.m. Day at Ft. Walla Walla and Carlsens: Yellow Hawk Creek residents and their water-relevant behavior

September 20: Traditional approaches to changing human behavior

Gardner and Stern, Chapters 4-6; Work with maps of Yellow Hawk

\*SAT September 25, 4:30-6:30: Seeing the larger context. Ft. Walla Walla: Tribes and water Energy Fair at Whitman College

September 27: Evolutionary and cognitive processes; data collection

Gardner and Stern, Chapters 7-9

October 4: Behavioral solutions; data analysis  
Gardner and Stern, Chapters 10-12

October 13: Mid-Semester Break: Have a great one and spend some of it outdoors if you can.

October 18: Depth approaches; Data interpretation  
Winter and Koger, Chapters 1-2

October 25: Social and Behavioral approaches; PowerPoint guidelines  
Winter and Koger, Chapters 3-4

November 1: Cognitive and Physiological approaches; Small groups on parts of PowerPoint show  
Winter and Koger, Chapters 5-6

November 10: Holistic approaches; PowerPoint rehearsal  
Winter and Koger, Chapters 7-8

November 15: PowerPoint presentation to public

November 22: Thanksgiving Break: Practice gratitude in as many ways as you can.

November 29: Integration and instructions for final portfolio

December 6: Last class is a dinner party at Deborah's house; final course portfolio due.

### Course Activities and Assignments

1. Attendance and Discussion: 30%
  2. Research Group Evaluation: 25%
  3. 4 papers (3-4 pages): 25%
  4. Final Portfolio: 20%
- Total: 100%

#### 1. Attendance and Discussion 30%:

Any class depends on student participation and presence, but seminars especially do; in this course, the largest part of your grade will be based on your attendance and discussion. To seriously prepare for, initiate, listen to, and respond to our group learning is crucial for your own learning. Remember, effective discussion skills maximize group functioning and learning.

As part of your preparation for our class discussion, please turn in three 3-5 index cards under my door by Sunday midnight (Monday 12:01 a.m.). Put your name on the back of each card, and a thoughtful question or observation about the reading, with page number and, if

appropriate, quotation from the text on the other side. I will shuffle and sort your questions/responses so that we can use them to run the discussion on Monday evenings. (Note: a response that says that a particular point is interesting, isn't! If you'd like to know what other people in the class think about your thought, please ask. My intention is to get students talking to each other, so think of questions that you would really like to hear other people's thoughts about.)

After several weeks of our meetings, I will give you some feedback on your discussion and preparation (questions asking) skills. My feedback is intended to be helpful in pointing to areas that you might work in order to maximize your aural learning in this course.

Here is a list of discussion behaviors that enhance group learning:

- Initiate ideas or questions
- Ask for or give information
- Give reactions or opinions
- Ask for reactions or opinions
- Clarify the reasoning of another member
- Ask for clarification
- Comment on the group's movement
- Demonstrate respect for others
- Be tough on ideas; soft on people
- Build on what other class members said
- Provide counter-arguments to strengthen ideas
- Express uncertainty about weak propositions
- Support, encourage, or help someone else
- Suggest a standard for evaluating an argument
- Relieve group tension with humor
- Make suggestions about procedure, use of time

Other (write-in contributions not mentioned above)

Here are some behaviors that detract from group learning:

- Show up late or not at all
- Wait for others to jump in
- Speak too often, or respond too quickly, so you keep others out
- Zone out, doodle, appear inattentive
- Express hostility
- Use humor too often as a distraction
- Offer irrelevant points
- Repeat points that do not move the discussion along
- Interrupt rudely (occasionally polite interruptions can be effective)
- Insist on your point of view
- Talk just for the sake of saying something
- Ignore others who do not speak (instead of help find ways to include them)
- Others:

I will phrase my feedback and evaluation on the basis of these lists, and I will ask you to evaluate yourself as well.

## **2. Research Group Presentation and Evaluation 25%:**

Group learning requires all the above skills, plus follow through on commitments. Your Research Group work will be evaluated by you, your team, and me, using the attached Research Group Evaluation form (see page 6-7). You will meet frequently with your group, both in and outside of our Monday night sessions.

## **3. Weekly Short Papers 25%:**

To help you confront and think about the readings and discussions, I would like you to write 4 papers (3-4 pages) that briefly summarizes and comment on the material. Spend the first 2 pages writing a coherent and rigorous discussion (with page citations) of the reading material assigned, and another page or two commenting on a major claim, issue, question, or problem. These papers should give you a chance to systematically respond to the course reading, practice good writing skills, and create a log of course learning that will be helpful as you compose your final portfolio for the course. I will grade these papers on the basis of both quality of thought as well as writing (the two aren't separable in my view), using the feedback sheet attached to the syllabus (see page 12). Please follow the Writing Guidelines in this syllabus carefully (see pages 8-11). These guidelines are based on the Psychology Department Writing Guidelines, in the Psychology Majors' Handbook, available on the web at <http://www.whitman.edu/psychology/Academics/handbook2002.pdf>.

## **4. Final Course Portfolio 20%:**

The final in this seminar will consist of a course portfolio, with a short (3-5 page) synopsis of what you learned, how this course has changed your environmentally relevant attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, feelings, and defenses. Please save all handouts and written work, drawings, feedback sheets, etc. for possible inclusion in the portfolio. I will ask you to organize the portfolio in a way that you believe would be interesting or useful to you to examine in 10 years. I welcome creative expressions of your learnings, including poetry, drawings, songs, collages, etc. for possible inclusion in your portfolio. I will grade your portfolio using the feedback sheet on page 12, and addressing your collected materials as evidence of your creativity and insight.

## **5. Dyad Appointments:**

Even though they're ungraded, an important element of this course is your meeting with each member of the class individually for an hour, in order to maximize trust and group comfort. Please make appointments with two members of the class each week, and have them sign the Dyad Sheet (to be handed out next week). You can spend your hour in any way you'd like—a walk in the park, a coffee or beer, a meal, a visit to one another's residence, etc.--just as long as you have some conversation time to get to know each other. Many students have found this an ideal time to run ideas past each other about the reading and class material, since this is informal and unpressured time together. You might try helping each other frame questions for the week's discussion if your session is timed appropriately.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Small Group Project Evaluations

Please give a score from 1 (poor) to 10 (fabulous) for each of your teammates, as well as yourself, and WRITE A ONE SENTENCE EXPLANATION FOR EACH SCORE.

Yourself: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Preparation and attendance at meetings

\_\_\_\_\_ Initiation of ideas; quality of conceptual contribution

\_\_\_\_\_ Initiation of group process; quality of group membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Follow-through with promises and commitments

\_\_\_\_\_ Performance during class (Delivery, Visual Aids, Rigor, Clarity, Creativity, Speaking vs. Reading)

Person #2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Preparation and attendance at meetings

\_\_\_\_\_ Initiation of ideas; quality of conceptual contribution

\_\_\_\_\_ Initiation of group process; quality of group membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Follow-through with promises and commitments

\_\_\_\_\_ Performance during class (Delivery, Visual Aids, Rigor, Clarity, Creativity, Speaking vs. Reading)

Person #3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Preparation and attendance at meetings

\_\_\_\_\_Initiation of ideas; quality of conceptual contribution

\_\_\_\_\_Initiation of group process; quality of group membership

\_\_\_\_\_Follow-through with promises and commitments

\_\_\_\_\_Performance during class (Delivery, Visual Aids, Rigor, Clarity, Creativity, Speaking vs. Reading)

Person #4\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Preparation and attendance at meetings

\_\_\_\_\_Initiation of ideas; quality of conceptual contribution

\_\_\_\_\_Initiation of group process; quality of group membership

\_\_\_\_\_Follow-through with promises and commitments

\_\_\_\_\_Performance during class (Delivery, Visual Aids, Rigor, Clarity, Creativity, Speaking vs. Reading)

Person #5\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Preparation and attendance at meetings

\_\_\_\_\_Initiation of ideas; quality of conceptual contribution

\_\_\_\_\_Initiation of group process; quality of group membership

\_\_\_\_\_Follow-through with promises and commitments

\_\_\_\_\_Performance during class (Delivery, Visual Aids, Rigor, Clarity, Creativity, Speaking vs. Reading)

**Guidelines for Writing**  
**(based on Psychology Department Handbook)**  
**Fall 2004**

Writing is easy; all you do is sit staring in front of your keyboard or a blank sheet of paper until little drops of blood form on your forehead.

attributed to both Gene Fowler and Red Smith

It's easier if you believe in God, but not impossible if you don't. If you believe, then this God of yours might be capable of relieving you of some of [your] perfectionism. Still, one of the most annoying things about God is that he never just touches you with his magic wand, like Glinda the Good, and gives you what you want. Like it would be so much skin off his nose. But he might give you the courage or the stamina to write lots and lots of terrible first drafts, and then you'd learn that good second drafts can spring from these, and you'd see that big sloppy imperfect messes have value.

Anne Lamont, Bird by Bird

The Whitman College Psychology Department is committed to teaching and expecting good writing. Writing is often hard work, but it is also richly rewarding and greatly empowering. Below are the Department's guidelines for defining good writing. In addition, each faculty member has particular goals and strategies for specific papers and assignments. Our Department guidelines apply to all courses in psychology, but we designed them so that professors can supplement them for particular assignments.

**General Principles:**

1. Unless otherwise notified, **use APA format** in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001). I don't expect you to own a copy of this manual, so use the library's copy (Reference, REFERENCE DESK; BF76.7 .P83 2001). I will review key format conventions with you before your paper is due.
2. **Good writing is continuous with good thinking.** Ideas are inseparable from the language used to express them. It is simply not true that your ideas are clear if your writing is not. As your thinking gets clearer, so will your writing.
3. **Good writing is actually good re-writing.** As John Updike said, "Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying." Very few people can put out a good first draft. Most of us have to get our ideas down and then cut, paste, restructure, elaborate, drop, reorganize, and rewrite several times before a draft is strong.

**Common Errors to Avoid:**

1. Do not use **sexist** (and other forms of **discriminatory**) **language**. See pp. 50-60 in the APA manual. Use [sic] to indicate the problem when quoting, as in "Man [sic] and Nature". In general, avoid sexist referents by switching to plural forms. For example, avoid "A scientist should be aware of his assumptions". Although "A scientist should be aware of his or her assumptions" is technically correct, a more elegant phrasing is "Scientists should be aware of their assumptions."



2. Watch **agreement problems** such as "one should argue their own ideas." By the way, "data" is the plural form of "datum." To say "the data is good" is an agreement problem.
3. Get the distinction between it's (a contraction of it and is) vs. its (possessive) and don't use an apostrophe for the possessive.
4. Get the distinction between **affect and effect**. As nouns, affect is a feeling, effect is the result of a cause. As verbs, to affect is to partially influence and to effect is to create.
5. Avoid **passive language** such as "It is thought that. . ." Who thinks it? Active constructions are much more accurate and powerful forms of phrasing.
6. Be careful about **semi-colons vs. colons**: use colons to introduce an oncoming phrase; semi-colons to separate two complete thoughts.
7. Avoid **non-sequiturs**, which we will denote with "NS". A non sequitur occurs when a thought doesn't follow logically from another. An example would be, "*Because psychology is becoming more diversified, it has always embraced science.*" The thought about science doesn't follow logically from diversification.
8. Be careful about **indefinite referents**, especially starting sentences with "This." Always clarify what "this" refers to by adding a noun clause such as "This quality," or "This increasing trend" or "This new idea." Add clarity to your prose by either avoiding "this" altogether, or immediately clarifying what "this" refers to by adding a noun immediately after the referent.
9. In general, avoid using **second person** pronoun as in "Psychology makes you aware of complicated environments." Second person works well when giving instructions, as in this manual. If you want to make more general statements, a better construction is "Psychology makes one aware" or "psychology makes me aware."

#### **More Tips on Producing Lucid Prose:**

1. Use as few words as possible. Achieve lucidity by dropping unnecessary words from subsequent drafts.
2. Find transitional phrases and connecting thoughts between ideas. Your thinking ought to proceed logically from one idea to the next. Avoid lists. Avoid the phrases *another point*, and *also relevant*, which make your thinking read like a grocery list, rather than a coherent discussion.
3. Avoid repeating words and phrases, especially in the same paragraph.
4. Don't tell the reader what you are going to tell the reader. Just say it!
5. Don't use the word *feel* when you mean *think*, *believe*, or *assume*. Incorrect use of the word *feel* is common, and promotes a confusion between thoughts and feelings.
6. In general, avoid paragraphs of less than two sentences and more than a page.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Cronin, T.E. (1993). The write stuff: Writing as a performing and political art. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Lamott, A. (1994). Bird by bird: Some instruction on writing and life. New York: Bantam.

#### **A few more thoughts about writing:**

Good writing is specific to a discourse community. Writing which works well in the humanities may be problematic in psychology, which most psychologists consider to be a scientific discipline. Good writing in one psychology course may not be considered to be as strong in another, and differing evaluations by

different professors are usually more than "subjective" opinions, though they are certainly always that, too. Just as psychology is a discourse community, so are various sub-fields in psychology.

Learning to write well is like to learning to speak a foreign language. Applying certain rules will help, but like language and culture, writing involves many tacit understandings. Consequently, it is not always easy to articulate a specific rule that might help you improve your writing, although often I can suggest rewording to remedy a particular problem. Please do not feel insulted or disempowered by any suggestions. Learning to write well, and learning to teach others to write well, is a long-term process which I look forward to sharing with you.

### Formatting and Procedures

1. Always number your pages at the top right corner, and make sure you staple them in correct order.
2. Use ragged right margins (do not justify).
3. Always retain a computer or photocopy of whatever you turn in. Remember, we have many papers coming in at many times during the semester.
4. Use good paper and make sure your printer ribbon is dark.
5. If possible, print your paper on recycled paper, using both sides of the sheet.
6. Use double sides if you can. If you wish to use used paper, please do, but attach a note on top warning me. If your printer is too dark to make clear double sides, please use only single sides.
7. Do not go over the page limit and do not use anything less than 12 pt. font and double line spacing.
8. Staple, rather than paper clip, your pages and make sure they are in the right order.
9. Put your name on the BACK of each paper and place the most recent paper on top, putting your next most recent paper behind it, etc.
10. Make sure you have your peer reader sign your paper on the feedback sheet and attach it at the back. Fill in the title of the paper, but do not add your own name. I will do this after I grade it.
11. Turn in all your written work in a file folder which I will give you, and turn in all of your written work each time (with your papers arranged in chronological order) so that I can see how you are progressing with your writing throughout the course.

### Guidelines for content:

1. Title your paper with an elegant phrase that illuminates your position. You will probably find your best title after the paper is written.
2. Open your paper clear statements describing the week's reading, continuously backing up your claims with citations. Writing short and concise summaries of material that are both rigorous and well organized is a challenging intellectual task. Do not waste space introducing an "interesting question," repeating any points, or summarizing your paper's main points at the end. These assignments are too short to waste any space anywhere. "Hit the ground running" by immediately addressing the material. Craft a lucid summary sentence that capitulates or closes your argument, but does not repeat it.
3. After stating your opinion, demonstrate sophistication by handling counter-arguments and ideas not immediately discussed in class or the reading. Develop your own points from other material and/or your logic or personal experience. Go beyond the given.
4. Use first person throughout. You think this, question that, etc., so say so.
5. Quote material if and when the author's phrasing adds an important idea and/or turn of phrase. Do not quote simply to quote, and do not repeat your own thinking with quotes. Graft the quoted material into a smooth flow in your own prose. Use the author's words, but make the thinking your own. A good strategy is to pick up the author's phrase in the middle of your own, as in:

Like Bevan, I worry about "the balkanization of psychology."

Rather than

Bevan states, "I worry about the possible consequences of what I see as the balkanization of psychology." This statement is true.

The first construction flows much more smoothly, gives you ownership of the idea, and uses fewer words to do so.

6. Referencing: use APA format with the following exceptions:
  - Use footnotes to discuss asides, if appropriate.
  - Use first person. Put your own voice in high profile.
  - Avoid hedge words, unless they illuminate a complicated point that you will address.
  - Let distinctive metaphors and colorful word choices aid your communication and consider them, in particular, for your title.
  - Use a reference page only if you cite materials outside our course reader (which you are encouraged to do).
7. **Append an Author's Note.** Tell me how the paper went for you, how you regard the quality of this paper, and on what dimensions, in particular, you would like my feedback.
8. Make sure you fill in the feedback sheet and have your peer reader sign it. Attach a blank feedback sheet behind it (which I will fill out). Proofread your paper several times before submitting it, and ask your peer reader to do so as well. Trading papers is a good way to improve your effectiveness as a writer because you get help on your paper, as well as become sensitized to the role of the reader.

## Feedback on Papers

Title of Paper \_\_\_\_\_ Author of Paper \_\_\_\_\_

Paper # \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Reader \_\_\_\_\_ (do not fill this line in)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Have reader sign here

\_\_\_\_\_1. Mechanics: including spelling, syntax, grammar, and typos.

\_\_\_\_\_2. Clear line of thought: appropriate paragraphing, clear links between thoughts and ideas, well-organized arguments; appropriate, and if possible, clever title.

\_\_\_\_\_3. Rigorous and accurate documentation of points: **accurate** comprehension of course text material; claims frequently backed up by references to reading, using APA format (author, year, p.#). Material from outside class cited in text and reference section (otherwise text citations suffice). **Judicious and appropriate** use of quoted text to make points succinctly and insightfully.

\_\_\_\_\_4. Well-crafted and lucid prose: no unclear referents, no repeating words or phrases, no passive sentence constructions, no unnecessary words.

\_\_\_\_\_5. Insight and creativity: analysis moves beyond what has been said in class and course texts; uses original examples and/or makes original points; articulates personal insights.

\_\_\_\_\_Author's Note included

\_\_\_\_\_Paper submitted in file folder according to requested procedure