

Course Code	HP3203
Course Title	Conservation Psychology
Pre-requisites	HP1000 Introduction to Psychology HP1100 Fundamentals of Social Science Research or ES1001 Environment and Society for ASE students
No of AUs	3

Course Aims

Designed for students interested in how social sciences apply to present-day environmental concerns, this course aims to examine our psychological relationship with the natural world, key characteristics of that relationship, and the underlying psychology behind our ecological impact. You will learn the important role psychology has for understanding human behavior towards the environment, and how to apply a social science perspective towards sustainability issues. You will learn how people respond to nature, various ways that people interact with the environment, why people behave unsustainably, and what kinds of approaches can help foster improved sustainable behavior. The course is relevant to key current issues and will provide useful background for a wide variety of careers working on social problems, management, and research.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you (as a student) should be able to:

1. Explain our relationship with the natural environment
2. Evaluate the psychology behind human-nature interactions
3. Recognize basic societal and ecological issues facing the sustainability of our future
4. Apply psychological theory to environmental problems
5. Review studies on the psychology of environmental issues
6. Explain the influence of natural environments on mental health and wellbeing
7. Design sustainability programs using social science models
8. Discuss the role of social sciences in solving environmental problems
9. Critically evaluate environment-related propaganda through psychology
10. Advise on behavioral solutions to sustainability issues
11. Build a public internet resource on the psychology of a sustainability issue

Course Content

Over time, it has become evident that human population and commerce are having a detrimental impact on the Earth. In the 1960's and 70's people began questioning our impact on the environment and rethinking our place in nature. At that time, Garret Hardin introduced the concept of "the tragedy of the commons", emphasizing that only social mechanisms could resolve these issues. Nowadays, a concern of our global impact has spread the world over, and is generally discussed as sustainable development, but with the same basic premise of the earlier environmentalists – human behavior requires adjustment in order for the Earth's ecosystem to remain productive. This change represents a major psychological shift in the way many people think about our relationship with natural ecosystems – a conservation psychology. In this course, we will look into this new relationship and mindset.

There are five sections in this class. First, you will be introduced to the problems, that is the factors contributing to the ecological crisis, the tragedy of the commons, and population issues. In the second section, the course examines approaches to conservation psychology. Here, you will cover the basis of our beliefs about nature and our place in it, attitudes and perceptions towards nature, how psychologists measure our relationship with nature, and how psychologists study risk

perception and response to catastrophe and environmental threats. In the next section on theory, the course will cover the evolutionary roots of human behavior and how that drives environmentally-destructive behavior. You will also learn theoretical aspects to human-nature relationships. In the fourth section, on humans in nature, we will learn how people interact with pets, plants, parks, gardens, wildlife and wild habitats. In the last section, application, you will see how social scientists have applied their work to solving environmental problems. You will look at programs and marketing approaches to promoting sustainable behavior, and how to design incentives to collectively garner sustainable efforts. We will assess community management programs, explore various perspectives on environmental education, and analyze programs that have been successful at reducing resource consumption. Lastly, the course will cover complexity models predicting dire environmental impacts, and here you will be asked to consider how these models affect our psychology and why we believe them. By the end of the course, you will come to see that psychology and the social sciences play a critical role in developing more sustainable societies, understanding human behavior, and solving our environmental dilemmas.

Assessment (Continuous Assessment)

Component	ILO Tested	Related Programme LO or Graduate Attributes	Weighting	Team/Individual
1. In-class tests: Communicate acquired knowledge and apply it to problems	1-10	Communication, Civic-mindedness, Creativity, Competence	40%	Individual
2. Essays: Convey experience and perspectives	1-3, 9-11	Communication, Creativity, Character, Civic-mindedness	20%	Individual
3. Project: Develop information resource	1-11	Communication, Character, Civic-mindedness, Creativity, Competence	40%	Individual
Total			100%	

Formative feedback

Feedback is central to this course, and all evaluation components are designed to give detailed feedback directly to you.

In-class tests: Tests are given in class, so that there is greater student-teacher interaction during them and also so that immediate feedback can be given. After taking a test, you will receive its evaluation with written feedback about 1 week later during a lecture period dedicated to covering the test and its answers. Here, I will cover all answers, point out common mistakes, reinforce correct answers, and provide you with an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues directly with me.

Essays: All essays are evaluated with written feedback and these are returned to you 1-2 weeks after the assignment is turned in. Evaluation makes suggestions for improvement, and focuses on emphasizing what you did well.

Project: All students will receive a detailed and personalized evaluation report on their class project within 2-3 weeks after the last day of class. Here, I will write about the strengths and weaknesses of your project, give recommendations for improvement, and reinforce aspects that were well done. These reports provide a complete discussion of how your project was evaluated, and will help you better understand your performance and areas needed for improvement.

Learning and Teaching approach

Approach	How does this approach support you in achieving the learning outcomes?
Lecture	All course material will be covered during lectures. Material is drawn from the text books, primary literature, lecturer’s research and experience, experts in the field, and other sources. The goal is to provide you with a broad perspective about the field, and to direct you into the topics. Lecture is taught in a way that is engaging, and provides relevant examples and opportunities for discussion to keep class interesting. Lecture is meant to augment and direct course reading, not replace it.
Discussion	From time to time, discussion will be held during lecture slots. These discussions will be on course topics, particularly related to the essay assignments and experience components. Here, you are all given an opportunity to present your ideas into a class-wide discussion on the announced topic. Discussion will be announced ahead of time so you can prepare in advance.
Experience	This class involves out of lecture experiences. Each semester we visit the zoo and interact with the zoo’s education department in a program to assess the role that zoos play in shaping our relationship with the non-human world. The course usually provides other experiences as well, such as visiting nature parks, reserves, museums, etc. These are meant to provide you with direct and more impactful experiences. Other course experiences include guest lectures and speakers who are active in environmental issues in Singapore, which can include people from NParks and other organizations. Lastly, you will have the opportunity to watch films associated to course topics, giving you more direct audiovisual experience than lecture and reading. These experiences go along with essay assignments so you will have the opportunity to contemplate and articulate the experiences you had.
Reading	In the course, you will need to read the course text books. You are required to purchase the main text in a legally permissible manner. You must also access supplementary text provided to you via our course web portal or on reserve in the library. Reading gives you better detail than lecture, while lecture gives you easier access to the basics of the material. To fully master the material, you need to experience both the lecture on the topic and the readings associated with it. Additional non-required readings will also be made available for the more ambitious students, and those wishing to specialize in related fields. Research tools, such as relevant questionnaires used by psychologists, will be made available as well.

Project	Immersion in a project is one of the best ways to learn. In this course, you will have the opportunity over the entire course to develop a public information project. Generally, in the form of a blog, you will develop an internet resource on a relevant topic in the field. From this, you will gain intellectual, public communication, and technical experience.
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Reading and References

Clayton S. & Myers G. (2015). Conservation Psychology: Understanding and Promoting Human Care for Nature. 2nd Edition. Oxford, UK. Wiley-Blackwell. (main text, for purchase) (reading code C)

Gardner G.T. & Stern P.C. (2002). Environmental Problems and Human Behavior. Boston, MA. Pearson. (supplemental text, supported by library) (reading code G)

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

Lecture Attendance: All absences must be approved by the university protocol.

Activity Attendance: Attendance during activities, i.e., tests, discussions, project presentations, and other required activities can only be excused with formal school-certified leave provided by you. Make-up assignments for such activities are devised case-by-case. Notification of intent to miss the activity must be provided before the start of the activity, except for genuine emergency situations.

Academic Integrity

You must have read and be familiar with the [academic integrity website](#) prior to the start of the course. You are responsible to adhere to these guidelines. Failure to do so for any aspect of the course, will be subject to relevant University procedures regarding breaches in Academic Integrity.

Planned Weekly Schedule

Week	Lecture #	Topic	ILO	Readings/ Activities
1	Lecture 1	Environmental Problems	3	G1
2	Lecture 2	The Tragedy of the Commons	2,3,4	G2, Hardin 1968
2	Lecture 3	Singapore's Population Dilemmas	3	Wong & Yeoh, 2003
3	Lecture 4	Introduction to Conservation Psychology	1,2,4,5	C1, C5
4	Lecture 5	Environmental Worldviews and Beliefs	1,2,5	C7, G3
4	Lecture 6	Psychology of Environmental Identity	1,2,5,6	C8
5	Lecture 7	Human Perceptions of Risk	1,2,4,5	G9, C6
6	Lecture 8	Implications of Evolutionary Theory	4,5	G8, C5
6	Lecture 9	Human Responses to Nature	4,5	G8, C5
7	Lecture 10	Nature in the House: Pets and Plants	1,2,5,6	C2
7	Lecture 11	Managed Nature: Parks and Gardens	1,2,5,6	C3
8	Lecture 12	Wild Nature: Wilderness and Wildlife	1,2,5,6	C4
8	Lecture 13	Promoting Sustainable Behavior	7,8,10	C9
9	Lecture 14	Incentives for Sustainable Behavior	7,8,10	G5
10	Lecture 15	Community Management of Nature	5,7,8,10	C10, G6

11	Lecture 16	Environmental Education Programs	6,7,8,10	C11, G4
12	Lecture 17	Understanding Complexity Models and Successful Sustainability Programs	5,7,8,9,10	C12, G12, G7
13	Presentations	Project Presentations	1-11	---