

SOSC3540 Environmental Psychology
Spring 2021
Course Outline

Aim

This course examines the transactions between humans and physical environments from a psychological perspective. It discusses how human behavior is affected by, and affects, their natural and built surroundings. It also explores the human dimension of environmental issues.

Intended learning outcomes

On completion of this course, you are expected to be able to (1) recognize and explain the transactions between humans and physical environments and explain them with reference to theories in psychology and other social sciences; (2) analyze the human dimension of environmental issues from psychological and behavioral perspectives; (3) analyze your own experience and everyday encounters regarding physical environments; and (4) understand, explain, and evaluate research studies that examine human-environment relationships.

Teaching team

Kevin Tam, kevintam@ust.hk

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Communication platform

<http://canvas.ust.hk>

Learning activities

1. *Lectures*. The lectures form the foundation of your learning in this course. Each lecture will introduce the essential theoretical and methodological tools that scientists use to understand a certain aspect of the transactions between humans and physical environments. There will be a lot of group discussions and a wide range of activities (e.g., polling, music).
2. *Reading list*. For each topic, a reading list will be provided. You can find various kinds of resources that guide you to different corners of the world to observe how humans interact with their physical surroundings and the behavioral processes behind. There will be scientific reports, magazine articles, websites, documentaries, movies, music, paintings, and so on. You will find a lot of inspiration and fun in these resources.
3. *Seminar 1 (10 point) and Seminar 2 (15 points)*. The two seminars present an opportunity for you to apply what you have learned to address specific real-world problems. Active participation and collaboration with your peers are expected. For each seminar, you will receive some learning materials and guiding questions two weeks prior. You have to read the materials and document your ideas in response to the guiding questions in a pre-seminar note to be submitted the day before the seminar. During the seminar, you will do a group discussion and a presentation. After the seminar, based on your exposure to the exchange and discussion, you have to critically evaluate your original ideas, revise them, and explain your revision in a post-seminar note to be submitted within one week.

Seminar dates: 3 Mar (Seminar 1), 7 May (Seminar 2) *Attendance is mandatory

4. *Essay 1 (12 points + 3 points + 3 points) and Essay 2 (20 points)*. You will be given some questions on selected topics. Each question will lead you to analyze human-environment relationships with regard to the topic; some literature search and review will be required. You have to select the question of your interest and document your analysis in writing (700 to 1,000 words for Essay 1, and 800 to 1,200 words for Essay 2). Additionally, for Essay 1, you will be randomly assigned to evaluate an essay by a peer (with identity masked); you also have an option of revising and resubmitting your essays based on the feedback from your peer and the teaching team to receive some bonus points.

Submission deadlines: 5:00 pm, 18 March (Essay 1), 22 April (Essay 2)

5. *Learning reflection (10 points)*. At the end of the course, you have to write up a reflection (in 500 to 800 words) to recognize and clarify the connections between your pre-existing knowledge and life experiences and what you have learned in the course. Your reflection will be graded on a pass/fail basis; for failed cases, you will receive comments and have a chance to rewrite and resubmit it with a two-point deduction.

Submission deadline: 5:00 pm, 18 May.

(Highest total points = 73 points; detailed guidelines will be released in due course)

Suggested references

- Clayton, S. (Ed.). (2012). *The Oxford handbook of environmental and conservation psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (on library course reserve)

- Clayton, S., & Manning, C. (Eds.). (2018). *Psychology and climate change: Human perceptions, impacts, and responses*. London, UK: Academic Press. (e-copy available in library)
- Gifford, R. (Ed.). (2016). *Research methods for environmental psychology*. UK: John Wiley & Sons. (e-copy available in library)
- Kopec, D. (2018). *Environmental psychology for design*. Fairchild Books. (on library course reserve)
- Steg, L., van den Berg, A. E., & de Groot, J. I. M. (Eds.). (2019). *Environmental psychology: An introduction (2nd Edition)*. UK: John Wiley & Sons. (e-copy available in library)

Schedule (subject to minor changes)

13:30 – 14:50, every Wednesday and Friday, Zoom

3 Feb Overview

5 Feb Research Methods

Theme 1: Humans and Natural Environments

10 Feb #01 Nature and Physical Health

12 Feb (no lecture)

17 Feb #02 Nature and Mental Health

19 Feb #03 Ecosystem Services

24 Feb #04 Biophilia and Biophobia

26 Feb #05 Geographical Psychology

3 Mar Seminar 1

Theme 2: Humans and Built Environments

5 Mar #06 Environmental Stressors

10 Mar #07 Environment and Crime

12 Mar #08 Socioecological Psychology

17 Mar #09 Urban Design

19 Mar #10 Sense of Place

24 Mar #11 Placemaking

26 Mar #12 Agentic Perspectives

31 Mar (no lecture)

2 Apr (no lecture)

Theme 3: Humans and Global Environmental Change

7 Apr #13 Impacts of Environmental Change

9 Apr #14 Public Understanding of Climate Change

14 Apr #15 Climate Action

16 Apr #16 Explaining Action and Inaction: Major Theories

21 Apr #17 Explaining Action and Inaction: Recent Perspectives

23 Apr #18 Behavioral Interventions

28 Apr #19 Other Interventions

30 Apr #20 Socio-Political Changes

5 May (no lecture)

7 May Seminar 2

Points to note

1. *Learning attitude*. We emphasize active learning, collaborative learning, and self-improvement. Learn by actively take part in the lecture activities. Your participation will not only help yourself and your peers learn more but also enable the teaching team to teach better! Also, take feedback from your peers and scores and comments from us seriously to find out how much and how well you have learned and how you can improve!
2. *Lecture slides*. The lecture slides will be available on Canvas before each lecture. Note that some contents (mainly examples) will be excluded from this version; this is to encourage you to take your own notes and generate your own examples. Research has shown that personal notetaking and example generation improve learning and course performance!
3. *Penalties*. Penalties apply to assignments that are submitted late or under or over the word limit. Find the details in the respective guidelines.
4. *Academic integrity*. We will investigate every suspect case of cheating or plagiarism. We will heavily penalize confirmed cases and report them to the Head of the Division of Social Science for further review or action. Read <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/index.html>. Make sure you understand what constitute academic honesty.