

SOSC3540 Environmental Psychology (3 credits)
Fall 2024
Course Outline

Course description

This course examines the interactions 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 (ILOs)

On successful completion of the course, you will be able to

- (1) recognize the interactions 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 their own experience and everyday encounters regarding physical environments;
- (4) understand, explain, and evaluate research studies that examine human-environment relationships.

Emphases

- *Place-based learning:* We encourage you to spend time in the real world and make observations and interpretations in relevant locales (e.g., forests, seafronts, shopping malls, busy streets). We also encourage you to use any combination of the senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, movement, and taste as your learning tools. We will give you opportunities to achieve these throughout the course.
- *Collaborative learning:* We believe that the process of teaching and learning takes place not only between a teacher and students but also among students themselves. You may share the learning resources you have found with each other, or you may discuss assignments ideas together. We want to create a non-competitive learning environment in this course, wherein you will enjoy a lot of opportunities for you to learn from each other.
- *Learning reflection:* We are a strong believer in the importance of self-reflection in learning. It is insufficient to just have an experience (e.g., taking a class, completing an assignment) to learn; students must reflect on the experience itself, or else the experience will be quickly forgotten, and its full learning potential will not realize. You will exit this course by working on a reflective writing with our guidance.
- *Learning support:* We understand that you need support for your learning. Please be assured that you will receive plenty of support from us.

Instructor

Kim-Pong Tam, kevintam@ust.hk
Vivien Pong, vivienpong@ust.hk (TA)

* Emails will be responded as soon as we can. When contacting us by email, always prefix the subject line of your message with the course code (e.g., "SOSC3540 | exam"). Use your university email account only. Tell us who you are in the email; emails with no identity revealed will not be responded to. Do not send messages via Canvas.

Prerequisite

SOSC1960 or SOSC1969 or SOSC1980

Learning activities

- * Detailed information regarding the assessed activities can be found in separate documents.
 - * Assessment will be made using criterion-referencing; scores and grades will NOT be assigned on a curve.
1. *Lectures*. As the foundation of your learning in this course, the lectures introduce the essential theoretical and methodological tools that psychologists use to understand the interactions between humans and their physical environments. (ILOs #1 to 4)
 - * Lectures will NOT be recorded.
 2. *Readings*. For each topic, a reading list is provided. These readings are optional; they complement the lectures and are recommended for students who want to further explore a topic. (ILOs #1 to 4)
 - * All readings can be found on Canvas.
 3. *Participation (10%)*. Active participation in class helps you and your peers learn more effectively. Each lecture includes some learning activities, for which your participation is expected. For a random selection of 5 lectures (you won't know which ones in advance), you need to submit the output of your participation; depending on its quality, each submission will contribute either 0%, 1% or 2% to your course grade.
 4. *Investigative Project 1 (20%)*. This investigative project presents an opportunity for you to develop the ability to understand a real-world phenomenon or address a real-world problem through self-directed investigation. The project starts with some assigned learning materials and guiding questions. You will work as a team and have a chance to share and discuss your ideas with other teams and receive comments from the instructor. In the end, you will submit a video report. (ILOs #1 and #3)
 - * Seminar date: 8 Oct
 - * Submission deadline: 17:00, 25 Oct
 5. *Investigative Project 2 (20%)*. The aim of this project is similar to that of Investigative Project 1, but for this project, you will work alone and produce a written report instead. (ILOs #1 and #3)
 - * Seminar date: 7 Nov
 - * Submission deadline: 17:00, 25 Nov
 6. *Learning reflection (10%)*. Near the end of the course, you will be guided to reflect on how your learning experience has transformed your knowledge and yourself as a person. (ILOs #2 and #4)
 - * Submission deadline: 17:00, 5 Dec
 7. *Exams (20% + 20%)*. The exams assess your conceptual understanding with multiple-choice questions and short essay questions. Exam 1 covers the first two modules, and Exam 2 covers the last two modules. (ILOs #1 to #4)
 - * Exam 1 date: 15 Oct (tentative); venue to be announced
 - * Exam 2 date: December; date, time and venue to be announced by the university

Communication and feedback

Scores and comments for assessed activities will be communicated via Canvas within two to four weeks of submission. Feedback will include strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback should consult us within five working days after the feedback is received.

Final grade descriptors

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration
A	Excellent Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates comprehensive grasp of course materials exhibits a high capacity for scholarship, going beyond requirements shows originality in works submitted shows an extraordinary level of motivation to learn displays eagerness to apply materials learned and collaborate with others
B	Good Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates good understanding of course materials exhibits a good capacity for scholarship within course requirements shows a high level of motivation to learn displays interest to apply materials learned and collaborate with others
C	Satisfactory Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates adequate understanding of course materials exhibits some ability to think critically and analytically fulfils all course requirements satisfactorily displays moderate motivation to learn, apply materials learned, and work with others
D	Marginal Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates poor understanding of course materials fails to think critically and analytically barely fulfils all course requirements displays weak motivation to learn, apply materials learned, and work with others
F	Fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to adequately understand course materials fails to fulfil all course requirements shows minimal motivation to learn, apply materials learned, and work with others

Policies

- Learning attitude.* Your active participation not only helps you and your peers learn more effectively but also enables us to teach better. Think about what you want to learn and how you are going to learn it. Use grades, scores, and comments from us to understand how much and how well you have learned and how you can improve.
- Lecture slides.* A condensed version of the lecture slides will be available on Canvas before each lecture. Note that some contents (mainly examples and activities) will be removed from this version. You are encouraged to take your own notes and generate your own examples. Research has shown that personal notetaking and example generation improve learning and course performance.
- Academic integrity.* Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.
- Submission policy.* We have a grace period policy that allows for submissions to be accepted up to 5 hours late without penalty. Penalties apply to submissions late for more than 5 hours.
- AI policy.* The use of generative AI to assist your own learning is permitted under the conditions that proper acknowledgement is provided, and the use does not replace your own work.
- Make-up exam.* Please refrain from scheduling any trips, job interviews, or other activities on the exam date, as no make-up exam will be arranged in these cases. A make-up exam will only be arranged for medical reasons. If you have to miss an exam due to an acute medical situation, you must contact us within three days after the exam and present medical proof; otherwise, your entitlement will be forfeited. The make-up exam will consist of essay questions only.

Class calendar

* Subject to minor changes

* Meeting time and venue: 09:00 – 10:20, every Tuesday and Thursday, Room 1527

Introduction: Why and how do psychologists study human-environment interactions

3 Sep	Overview
5 Sep	Research methods

Module 1: Humans and Nature

10 Sep	Nature and health I
12 Sep	Nature and health II
17 Sep	Human-nature relationship
19 Sep	Nature and culture

Module 2: Humans and Cities

24 Sep	Urban health
26 Sep	Urban design
3 Oct	Urban living and social behavior
8 Oct	Seminar (for Investigative Project 1)

10 Oct	Consultation (for Exam 1)
15 Oct	Exam 1

Module 3: Humans and Places

17 Oct	Sense of place
22 Oct	Human agency

Module 4: Humans and Climate Change

24 Oct	Impacts of environmental change
29 Oct	Public understanding of climate change
31 Oct	Pro-environmental behavior I
5 Nov	Pro-environmental behavior II
7 Nov	Seminar (for Investigative Project 2)
12 Nov	Behavioral interventions I
14 Nov	Behavioral interventions II
19 Nov	Activism and Policy Support
21 Nov	Technology
26 Nov	Wrap up
28 Nov	Consultation (for Exam 2)
Dec	Exam 2 (date, time, and venue to be announced by the university)

Recommended reference books

- Clayton, S., & Manning, C. (Eds.). (2018). *Psychology and climate change: Human perceptions, impacts, and responses*. London, UK: Academic Press. (online access via library)
- Gifford, R. (Ed.). (2016). *Research methods for environmental psychology*. UK: John Wiley & Sons. (online access via library)
- Kopec, D. (2018). *Environmental psychology for design*. Fairchild Books. (on library 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. (online access via library)

<End of Course Outline>