

SOSC3540 Environmental Psychology
Spring 2022
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 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.

Highlights

1. *4 main themes:* With four main themes, this course offers an in-depth analysis of the scientific concepts and empirical evidence in the environmental psychology literature.
2. *Learning through action:* We don't just talk. You will learn through various activities and hands-on experience, including videos, music, seminars, interviews, outdoor observations, and so forth.
3. *Peer learning:* We emphasize collaborative learning. There are a lot of opportunities for you to learn from each other. There is no competition in this course; we don't grade you against each other.
4. *Support for your learning:* You will receive plenty of learning support from the teaching team through guidelines, workshops, consultation sessions, etc.

Teaching team

Kevin Tam, kevintam@ust.hk; Vivien Pong, vivienpong@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.
*Lectures will not be recorded.
2. *Reading list.* For each topic, a reading list will be provided. Some readings are required, some optional. 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, and so on. You will find a lot of inspiration and fun in these resources.
3. *Investigative projects (25%, 35%).* The two investigative projects present an opportunity for you to consolidate your understanding of the course materials and develop the ability to apply what you have learned to specific real-world problems. Each project starts with some assigned learning materials and guiding questions. To equip you with the necessary skill set, you will receive training in a workshop. As collaborative learning is encouraged, you will have a chance to share and discuss your ideas and results with your peers in a seminar. After receiving the support and feedback from the teaching team and your peers, you will finalize your ideas and submit a written report.
*Attendance to workshops and seminars is mandatory
4. *Learning reflection (10%).* At the end of the course, you will 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: 12 noon, 18 May.
5. *Exam (30%).* The exam assesses your basic conceptual understanding. Materials discussed in the lectures and required readings will be tested. There will be short essay questions and multiple-choice questions.
*To be held during the exam period

(detailed guidelines regarding these learning activities will be released in due course)

Textbook (selected chapters required)

- 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)

Suggested reference books

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

Schedule (subject to minor changes)

13:30 – 14:50, Wednesday and Friday, Rm 2304

Introduction

4 Feb Overview

9 Feb Research methods

Theme 1: Humans and Natural Environments

11 Feb 01 Nature and health I

16 Feb 02 Nature and health II

18 Feb 03 Human-nature relationship

23 Feb 04 Nature and culture

25 Feb *Workshop (general advice)*

Theme 2: Humans and Urban Environments

2 Mar 05 Urban living and health

4 Mar 06 Urban living and social behavior

9 Mar 07 Urban design

Theme 3: Humans and Places

11 Mar 08 Sense of place

16 Mar *Workshop (Investigative Project 1)*

18 Mar 09 Public space

23 Mar 10 Human agency

25 Mar *Seminar (Investigative Project 1)*

Theme 4: Humans and Environmental Change

30 Mar 11 Impacts of environmental change

1 Apr 12 Public understanding of climate change

6 Apr 13 Pro-environmental behavior I

8 Apr 14 Pro-environmental behavior II

13 Apr *(no lecture)*

15 Apr *(no lecture)*

20 Apr 15 Behavioral interventions I

22 Apr 16 Behavioral interventions II

27 Apr *Workshop (Investigative Project 2)*

29 Apr 17 Society and politics

4 May 18 Technology

6 May *Seminar (Investigative Project 2)*

11 May *Workshop (Learning Reflection; Exam)*

Points to note

1. *Learning attitude*. We emphasize experiential learning, peer 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. *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.