Psychology of Sustainable Behavior
ENVI/PSYC 270 // Fall 2024

Tuesday & Thursday 3:00 – 4:30 pm // OLRI 243

Prof. Christie Manning
Contact: cmanning@macalester.edu // campus phone: 651-696-6164
Office hours in OLRI 158A: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30; Thursdays 3:15-4:00, or by
appointment (calendar link)

Course description

Psychology of Sustainable Behavior is built around the argument that so-called "environmental problems" are actually *human behavior* problems. Global crises such as climate change, ocean acidification, plastic pollution, and deforestation ultimately stem from individual and collective human actions. Understanding the foundations of behavior is thus critical in addressing these issues. In addition, the deterioration of ecological systems has significant social justice implications; the world's poor and those already targeted for marginalization and economic disadvantage are disproportionately impacted.

This course approaches environmental degradation and environmental justice through a psychological lens. We will use psychological principles, theories, and methods to explore the complex web of factors underlying how people satisfy their needs, express their identities, participate in their communities, and experience nature. We will also apply psychological knowledge to real-world sustainability case studies at the individual level, on our campus, and in our larger community. Throughout the course we will emphasize the central importance of justice, equity and anti-racism, often overlooked in environmental initiatives.

Psychology of Sustainable Behavior is a project-based class. Students will participate in an individual self-change project (2-3 weeks), an education/communication project (2-3 weeks) and a campus- and community-based collaborative project (5-6 weeks).

Course goals

- Introduce students to psychological perspectives on the global environmental crises caused by waste
- Examine human thinking and behavior at multiple levels: individual, social-network, organizational, community, governmental
- Explore the varying experiences with, and perspectives on, sustainability held by different US social groups and identities
- Develop and enhance student analytical skills through critical reading and discussion
- Demonstrate the practical implications and limitations of psychological theory with real-world testing and application of course material
- Encourage students to reflect upon their personal values and lifestyle choices

Course materials

Book: Scott, B.A., Amel, E.L., Koger, S.M. and Manning, C.M. (2021) Psychology for Sustainability. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

All other materials will be posted on our course Moodle site (https://moodle.macalester.edu).
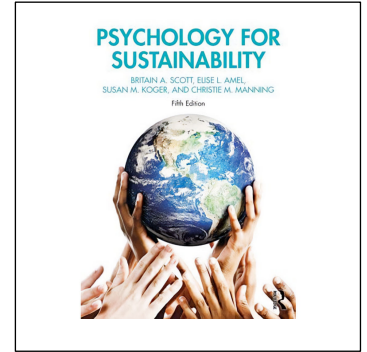
Meet your Professor: Dr. Christie Manning

I have a PhD in cognitive and biological psychology and I have been teaching in the Environmental Studies Department since 2008. My research focuses on how people respond to climate change and climate injustice, and I am particularly interested in the psychological circumstances that motivate collective action. In my personal life, I am the parent to two young adults, Maeve and Clara (ages 19 and 24), and partner to Frank, who grew up in Germany. I speak decent/not great German. When not working, I love walking with Frank and our dog (Biene), listening to books on the Libby app, taking long-distance bike rides, puttering in the garden, and exploring Minnesota state parks.

Note: **Please call me Christie! (she/her)**

Course Details

Assignments

Full assignment descriptions will be posted on Moodle.
- Attendance and participation in class (26 possible points)
- Reading responses (18 possible points)
- Self change project (draft and final report, 3 possible points)
- Communication/Education project (draft, final report, and presentation, 4 possible points)
- Campus/Community project (draft, final report, and presentation, 4 possible points)
- Portfolio of in-class activities (1 possible point)
- In-class topic presentation (1 possible point)
- Attendance at 3 EnviroThursdays (3 possible points)

Grading philosophy and specifications grading

In most learning situations in life outside of school, you are not assigned a grade. In academic settings, they are the norm. Yet conventional grading structures are often counterproductive. They may lead students to think more about their grades than about their writing or learning, or to focus on impressing (or fooling) a teacher rather than engaging wholeheartedly with the material, or to fear failure and thus be reluctant to take risks with writing or ideas. Many decades of psychological research in education suggests that grades, in the way they are traditionally given/used, can actually harm learning.

Thus, I have chosen to use an alternative system called "Specifications Grading" ("specs" for short) to determine final grades for this class. I have chosen specs because I believe it will encourage engaged learning, reward good effort, and acknowledge excellent work, while also being flexible and responsive to the ups and downs of normal life in college.

How it works:
1. You have the flexibility to opt out of a certain number of assignments, depending on the final grade you would like to earn in the class.
2. Everything that normally receives a grade (class participation, reading responses, project reports, presentations, the portfolio, etc.) will be evaluated on a credit/no credit basis. "Credit" is given for work that fulfills all of the specifications for an assignment according to a clear rubric (available on Moodle). The specifications for all assignments are set at B+ quality work. If you do B+ quality work or higher, you will get credit. You will not receive credit for work that does not earn at least a B+.
3. Every time you earn credit for a graded course component by meeting its specifications, you will earn a point in the appropriate category. Your final grade will be determined by how many points you earn across each of the assignment categories of the course. (See the table above.)
4. I will give you feedback on the final versions of your formal written assignments and if they are not B+ quality work, you may turn in a revision one week after you receive my feedback.

Flexibility tokens

Because lots of life happens during the semester, it isn't always possible to complete everything we intend to do, or to complete things on the schedule we hoped to follow. Tokens are designed to recognize this reality and give you some additional flexibility to meet the goals you set for yourself for this class. Everyone in the class will begin the semester with five tokens. You can use these in whatever combination you'd like at the following 'rates of exchange'.

■ 1 token = 1 extra revision on a formal writing assignment; OR a 48-hour extension on a reading response

■ 2 tokens = 1 participation point; OR 1 week extension on a formal writing assignment; OR a missed draft; OR an EnviroThursday presentation

■ 4 tokens = not being part of a group presentation; OR an extension on a major assignment; OR a missed reading response

Please note: If you fall behind and don't feel like you can catch up, even with the help of tokens, PLEASE talk to me. I will work with you to earn extra tokens and get back on track.

Specs

Attendance & Participation	Reading Responses	Self-change project	Campus/comm-unity project	Communication project	Portfolio	In-class topic presentation	EnviroThurs-days	Course grade
24	16	3	4	4	2	1	3	A
23	15	3	4	3	1	1	2	A-
22	14	2	4	3	0	1	2	B+
21	14	2	3	3	0	1	2	B
21	13	2	3	3	0	1	1	B-
20	13	1	2	2	0	1	1	C+
20	12	1	2	2	0	1	0	C/C-
19	11	1	2	2	0	0	0	D

Policies and well-being

Health and well-being

First and foremost, this class is a community of human beings. Let us be kind to ourselves and one another as we learn together and navigate this era of (post?)pandemic adjustment, national and global political uncertainty, violence in many parts of the world, growing climate change impacts, and many other issues outside of this class that may on your mind. I strongly encourage you to make your well-being a priority. Reach out to me if you are struggling.

We are fortunate to have on our campus the Laurie Hamre Center for Health and Wellness, where you can access many health and wellness services. I highly recommend visiting their website or visiting them in person (in the Leonard Center) to learn more about their resources.

Accommodations

I am committed to supporting all students in my class. If course design ever poses barriers to your ability to access or to demonstrate understanding of course content, please let me know. I will make reasonable academic accommodations in such cases. If you have a known disability and think that you may need formal accommodations, email disabilityresources@macalester.edu, call the office at 651-696-6275, or use their online scheduler. Given these post(?) pandemic times, you may find yourself needing things that you normally would not. In those cases, please let me know what is going on. I may be able to make reasonable accommodations that will help.

Recommended academic resource

Many wonderful resources exist that will help you with this class. To book an online appointment with a writing counselor at the MAX Center, visit WCOnline. You can find the center's guide to working remotely with a writing tutor here. Our research and instruction librarians are also a great resource for many writing-related questions. You may book an online appointment with one of them here.

Title IX

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) has experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone, and that help and support are available.

Please be aware that as a faculty member, I am a ***non-confidential resource.*** This means that if I become aware of incidents or allegations of sexual misconduct, I am **required** to report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinators. This College policy is intended to ensure that you receive the resources and support you may need. For more information, please see the Title IX page of the Macalester website.

If you would like to speak with a ***confidential resource*** (someone who is not required to share what they are told with the Title IX Coordinator), the following people and organizations are available to you on or off campus:
- Macalester College Center for Religious and Spiritual Life All of the chaplains in the CRSL are confidential resources.
- Macalester College Hamre Center for Health & Wellness counselors, physicians, registered nurses, or nurse practitioners, 651-696-6275.
- SOS Sexual Violence Services of Ramsey County Trained advocates offer information, referrals, legal advocacy, support groups, one-on-one counseling off-campus, and a 24-hour confidential hotline at 651-266-1000.

Academic integrity

Academic dishonesty erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how we know it, and why it matters. It has no place at Macalester or in this course. Find Macalester's academic integrity policy [here](). For help avoiding plagiarism, visit the Library's Academic Integrity materials [here]().

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

AI tools (such as Bard or ChatGPT) are now prevalent, and we need reasonable guidelines for their use in our classroom. In this course, I am willing to allow *some* use of AI *as long as you are transparent and acknowledge your use*. My main concern with use of AI is that the assignments in this class are meant to challenge you and encourage your creativity, critical-thinking, and innovative problem-solving. Using AI tools can circumvent all of these goals.

At the same time, I recognize that AI tools can be helpful to start the idea generation process, or to overcome the paralysis of the blank page. If you use AI in this class (or in any other context!), you should be aware that the material generated may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Plus, overuse of AI is likely to stifle your own independent thinking and creativity.

If you choose to use AI tools for this class, here are some guidelines that we will navigate together:

- Provide an acknowledgement that you have used AI: Include a statement at the end of any assignment (including reading responses) for which you used AI, and state how you used it (e.g., to help you get started, to rephrase an idea, to generate full sentences, to generate full paragraphs, etc.) I will provide a template for this.

- Don't trust anything AI says. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check in with another source. AI works best for topics you understand.

- If you provide minimum effort prompts, you will get low quality results. You will need to refine your prompts in order to get good outcomes. This will take work.

- Be thoughtful about when this tool is useful. Don't use it if it isn't appropriate for the case or circumstance, or if it will detract from your learning.

- Remember that the best learning often comes through the (unfortunately) painful process of mentally grappling with ideas and trying to wrestle them into coherent sentences. You lose the development of mental sharpness when you abdicate mental work to AI.

Religious Observance

Students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this semester. If you have a religious observance or practice that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me ASAP to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Schedule

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Readings	Notes and deadlines
1	1T	9/3/2024	Course Intro		
	2R	9/5/2024	The state of things	RR1: Ch. 1 & 2	Introduce self-change project
2	3T	9/10/2024	HERC field trip	RR2: Ch. 3	
	4R	9/12/2024	TBD		
3	5T	9/17/2024	Visit with custodial staff	RR3: Article	
	6R	9/19/2024	Context	RR4: Ch. 5, part 1	Begin self-change project
4	7T	9/24/2024	Social cues	RR5: Ch. 5, part 2	Self-change check-in
	8R	9/26/2024	Habits	RR6: Article	Self-change check-in
5	9T	10/1/2024	TBD		Self-change *draft* report due
	10R	10/3/2024	Thinking	RR7: Ch. 6	Introduce communication project
6	11T	10/8/2024	Communication	RR8: Article	
	12R	10/10/2024	Communication project work day		Self-change final report due
7	13T	10/15/2024	EJ	RR9: Article	
	-		NO CLASS		FALL BREAK
8	14T	10/22/2024	Identity	RR10: Ch. 7	Introduce group project
	15R	10/24/2024	Showcase		Communication project showcase and draft due
9	16T	10/29/2024	EJ	RR11: Article	
	17R	10/31/2024	TBD		Communication project final report due
10	18T	11/5/2024	Waste sort		
	19R	11/7/2024	Motivation	RR12: Ch. 8	
11	20T	11/12/2024	Motivation	RR13: Article	Group project check-in
	21R	11/14/2024	Revisit context	RR14: Ch. 5/article	
12	22T	11/19/2024	Group project day		Group project check-in
13	23R	11/21/2024	Health and (un)Sustainability	RR15: Ch. 9	
	24T	11/26/2024	Reconnecting to nature	RR16: Ch. 10	
	-		NO CLASS		T-DAY BREAK
14	25T	12/3/2024	Collective action	RR17: Ch. 11	
	26R	12/5/2024	Presentations		
15	27T	12/10/2024	Getting psyched	RR18: Ch. 12	
	W	12/11/2024			Group project report due at 7pm
	W	12/18/2024			Portfolio due at 10:30 a.m.