Welcome to the course!

Overview

This lecture course explores how psychologists can contribute to finding solutions to today’s pressing environmental challenges. We explore the many ways in which the physical environment affects psychological processes and how individuals change their environment. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the human-environment relationship, covering individual, community, cultural and global levels of scale, through the lens of complex dynamic systems theories. Through written reflections, class discussions on readings, and a term paper, you will gain competence in, and an appreciation for the importance of this growing field of psychology.

Course objectives

- You will gain a proficient understanding of the dire state of the environment and the positive and negative influences the environment has on human health and wellbeing.
- You will investigate the factors influencing human environmentally responsible / harmful behaviours or inaction.
- You will examine various psychological strategies that encourage environmentally responsible behaviours.
- You will have an appreciation for the psychological impacts from environmental conditions on human wellbeing.
- You will develop an appreciation for the importance of this growing field of psychology.

Can people experience a personal relationship with the environment analogous to how they experience a relationship with another human being?

(from “Interdependence with the Environment: Commitment, interconnectedness, and environmental behaviour”)

Photo by David Clode on Unsplash
Required readings
All readings will be found on Quercus under the Library Reading List.
There is no class textbook.

Class Outline

Part 1: Discussion of the state of the environment and the positive and negative influences the environment has on human health and wellbeing.

Week One
Class 1: Tuesday, 11 January – synchronous online

Class 2: Thursday, 13 January – asynchronous online

Week Two
Class 3: Tuesday, 18 January – synchronous online
- IPCC Secretariat IPCC PRESS RELEASE (9 August 2021): “Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying.”
- (anonymous) “The Contents of your daily life.”

Class 4: Thursday, 20 January – asynchronous online
  https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190057
For further (suggested) reading:

Week Three
Class 5: Tuesday, 25 January – synchronous online
  https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2014.12.007

Class 6: Thursday, 27 January – asynchronous online (Practice Reflection Paper due before class on Quercus)
For further (suggested) reading:
Part 2: Investigating factors influencing human environmentally responsible / harmful behaviours or inaction

Week Four – classes here on (with the exception of class 8 and class 15) are expected to be in person
Class 7: Tuesday, 1 February (Peer-review of 2 Reflections due before class on Quercus)

Class 8: Thursday, 3 February – online synchronous (Guest lecture by Associate Professor Stephen Scharper, School of the Environment)

Week Five
Class 9: Tuesday, 8 February

Class 10: Thursday, 10 February

Week Six
Class 11: Tuesday, 15 February

Class 12: Thursday, 17 February (short quiz at beginning of class)
  ▪ Klein, Naomi, Chapter 1, “This changes everything: the revolutionary power of climate change.” (2014). This changes everything : capitalism vs. the climate (First Simon & Schuster hardcover edition.). Simon & Schuster. Pp. 31-63. For further (suggested) reading:

21 – 25 February: READING WEEK- No classes
Week Seven
Class 13: Tuesday, 1 March

Class 14: Thursday, 3 March

**Part 3: Examining strategies that encourage environmentally responsible behaviours**

Week Eight
Class 15: Tuesday, 8 March – **online synchronous (Guest lecture by Senior Lecturer (Emeritus) Beth Savan, Ph.D. MCIIP, School of the Environment)**

Class 16: Thursday, 10 March **(Class outside campus at St. Gabriel’s Church, 670 Sheppard Ave E, North York, ON)**
- Guided tour of inside and out of this LEED-certified church

Week Nine
Class 17: Tuesday, 15 March

Class 18: Thursday, 17 March **(short quiz at beginning of class)**
  **For further (suggested) reading:**

Week Ten
Class 19: Tuesday, 22 March
  **For further (suggested) reading:**

Class 20: Thursday, 24 March

**Part 4: Recognizing the psychological impacts from environmental conditions on human wellbeing & surveying future paths of environmental psychology**

Week Eleven
Class 21: Tuesday, 29 March

Class 22: Thursday, 31 March

Week 12
Class 23: Tuesday, 5 April

For further (suggested) reading:

Class 24: Thursday, 7 April

Course Evaluation & Grading Scheme

Class Engagement 14%
Practice Reflection Paper (4) & Peer-review of 2 Reflections (2+2) 8%
Reflection Papers on Readings (2 x 8%) 16%
Quizzes (2 x 6%) 12%
Research paper proposal 10%
Research paper 40%

Class Engagement
With the idea that we learn from one another (me included), class discussions will be essential. They will be open collegial and respectful, in both small and large group formats. You will be expected to actively participate in class discussions, ask questions and generally be inquisitive. To this end, you are expected to attend every class (see Attendance, Due Dates and Lateness) and to have completed readings before class time so as to engage more proficiency in class discussions. Actual attendance will account for up to half the whole class engagement mark.

Reflection Papers on Readings (due throughout weeks 4 to 12)
As a means to

i. have you engage more deeply with readings,
ii. help you chose their final research paper topic,
iii. have me gauge your inquiry processes on readings, and suggest further lines of investigation, and
iv. help you develop skills in writing clearly and concisely,

you will be expected to reflect two times on one (1) aspect of any two (2) readings covered in class. The reflection will be no more than one-page double-spaced, (with 11-12 pt. font, and margins no smaller than .75 inches). You will begin by clearly describing the aspect in question

Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has strengthened since AR5.

IPCC AR6 Report, A3
(for example, a point raised by Wallace-Wells on refugees found in our first reading [1/3 to 1/2 of the page], and one fully developed critical inquiry into the author’s point [the remaining portion of page] (for example, What question does the point raise for you? How does the point relate to another point raised in previous readings? What seems missing from the analysis?, etc.: further explanation and examples will be shared in class). The reflections will be handed in starting week 4 as a printed hard copy before the start of the class whose paper is tied to the reflection and returned by the following class. Evaluation will be based on clarity in describing aspect of paper in question, evidence of critical thinking on that aspect, writing style & mechanics.

Practice reflection (due before class 4 begins) and Peer Review of 2 Reflections (due before class 5 begins)
As a means to
- have you practice the above reflection assignment, and
- have you, as peers, provide constructive feedback on each others' work as well as developing critical reflection on how you might improve your own work,

You will create and upload to Quercus a practice reflection on any reading from classes 1 to 6 (Word or Pdf.) and conduct a review of 2 other student papers (these will be anonymous). The reflections will be prepared as indicated in the Reflection Papers on Readings assignment above. Reviews will be short (even two sentences) that state a) something positive of their peer’s work, and b) one suggestion for improving their critical inquiry, bearing in mind the open collegial and respectful ethos that undergirds our class work. Evaluation (ostensibly an extension of class engagement marks) will be based on completing the creative work as directed above (4%) and reviewing two others, as directed above (2 + 2%).

Quizzes
The goal of the quizzes is to gauge your comprehension of concepts and issues covered in a low-pressure format. Quizzes will be returned the following week. Two (2) quizzes will be held in class on Thursday 17 February and Thursday, 17 March. The quizzes will run 20-minutes, short answer to concepts and issues covered in readings and class. A prep sheet with possible topics covered on the quiz will be handed out one class prior.

Research Paper Proposal
With the goal of ensuring your research topic is viable and sources adequate, you will prepare a one and a half to two-page research proposal (with 11-12 pt. font and margins no smaller than .75 inches) to Lydia Jiang, our TA, by or before Week Seven. The proposal will describe in 100 to 150 words the research question to be addressed, a plan of approach to the topic along with a list of a minimum of five to seven (5-7) academic sources [cited correctly in APA format] to be used. See Research Paper below for more details. Evaluation will be based on clarity, evidence of critical thought put into proposal, writing style & mechanics.

Research Paper
Soft due date: before class 12
Hard due date: one week after last class (April 14, 11:59 pm)
Format: Eight double spaced pages (with 11-12 pt. font and margins no smaller than .75 inches)
The goal of you writing this paper is to have you synthesize research on environmental psychology while shedding a new light on a specific topic given the likely devastation climate change will bring about to ecosystems, human communities, economies and life in general.

You will conduct a literature review related to a topic aligned with one of the four sections covered in class (see below) adding your own insight or perspective. You will produce and defend a thesis statement that discusses the possible implications of your argument for human health and convey the importance of your contribution to environmental psychology.

Four sections covered in class:

i. positive and negative influences the environment has on human health and wellbeing
ii. factors influencing human environmentally responsible / harmful behaviours or inaction
iii. strategies that encourage environmentally responsible behaviours
iv. psychological impacts from environmental conditions on human wellbeing

You are to employ reliable sources (those that have been peer-reviewed by other experts in the field prior to publication) and cite proficiently using APA formatting.

The evaluation criteria used in evaluating written work (in order of descending importance) are the following:

- Analysis – analysis will be evaluated in terms of success in using evidence in the form of data (comparison, examples, statistics, and testimony) to construct a logical argument which convincingly supports your research question.
- Precision and accuracy – precision means saying exactly and specifically what you mean, avoiding ambiguity and vague generalities. Accuracy refers to absence of major factual errors.
- Structure – this is how the paper is organized; each paper should be written as a focused essay that addresses the research question in a coherent manner. Avoid tangents.
- Writing style – writing style should be appropriate for an academic publication. Beyond that, style will be evaluated primarily in terms of clarity.
- Mechanics – defined as freedom from punctuation, spelling and grammatical errors. You are expected to include thorough, accurate and consistent references (according to reference instructions above)
University's Plagiarism Detection Tool
Normally, you will be required to submit your course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, you will allow your essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

Attendance
If you need to miss a class for any reason, please email me before class (see email policy) to let me know (you do not need to disclose the reason and no documentation is necessary). You are responsible for catching up on what was missed and are still expected to submit any work that is due that week. I highly recommend exchanging contact information with a classmate so that you may help each other out if you need to miss a class. Note that your class participation mark may be affected by your absence. Class attendance accounts for up to only half the whole engagement marks, so, missing classes still allows for full participation marks. Note that your class engagement grade will not be affected by an absence for health and safety reasons, even if prolonged.

Due dates and times and lateness
Assignment due times for Reflection Papers on Readings ('before the start of the class whose paper is tied to the reflection) are final. There is always the next class reading to do! Missed quizzes will require you to hand in an added Reflection Paper on Readings (critical thinking still required, though marked at quiz percentage). Assignment deadlines for the Research Paper are final, unless a valid reason is provided to the TA beforehand. Otherwise, a late penalty ensures as follows:

- A penalty of 1%/day for papers late by one day, 2%/day for papers late by two days, 3%/day for papers late three days until the fourth day onward, where a late penalty of 4%/day will take effect.

With the above in mind, this is a fourth-year class and you have proven yourself to be responsible for your work. Please come and speak with me or your TA about any extenuating circumstances. We will try to figure out a solution that works best for everyone.

Re-marking Policy
Requests for an assignment to be re-graded must be made within two weeks of the return of the assignment (please send the request via email). If it is a quiz, proposal, or final paper, Lydia Jiang will re-grade the assignment (for all others, I will). If unsatisfied with your mark from the TA, it is only after you have met and discussed your work with Lydia that you can come to me with your concerns. The re-grade will then be final (whether it is lower, higher, or the same as the original grade). Please make sure you have carefully reviewed your assignment, the feedback you received, and the marking rubric (if applicable) before submitting it for a re-grade (to ensure that you really do think it was graded inappropriately, and that you are not simply disappointed with the grade you received).
Religious Accommodation
As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes You and faculty from a wide range of backgrounds, cultural traditions, and spiritual beliefs. Lydia and I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity due to a religious observance, please let me know as early as possible, so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Email Policy
Please check the syllabus and the class materials posted on Quercus before sending an email. You will find answers to most of your questions there. I am available to talk and answer questions after class, or you may email me or Lydia to book an appointment.

When sending email, you must use your official utoronto email account, otherwise your email may be marked as spam and never received! Please use a meaningful subject line and start it with PSY435 (i.e., “class absence”). Use a proper greeting (e.g., “Hi Prof. Appolloni” or “Dear Lydia”). State your concern clearly and succinctly. If the issue is something that would be better discussed in person, please book a meeting with me instead. Lydia and I will typically respond to your email within 48-hours.

Health & Safety
To keep each other and our community safe, this course will follow all public health and U of T policy guidelines regarding the ongoing pandemic. These policies are subject to change, but at this moment this includes:

▪ Mandatory masks: A mask that fully covers your nose and chin must be worn at all times while inside our classroom. You may remove your mask to drink, but please do not eat inside our classroom.
▪ If you are exempt from the mask policy for any reason, please email me prior to our first in-person class meeting to let me know.
▪ Daily self-assessments and uploading your proof of vaccination to UCheck
▪ If you are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, please stay home and do not attend class. Let me know that you did not pass the self-assessment and we will figure out an alternative solution for you.

For winter 2022 term, a Verification of Illness (also known as a "doctor's note") is temporarily not required. If you are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and you require consideration for missed academic work, you should report your absence through the online absence declaration. The declaration is available on ACORN under the Profile and Settings menu. You should also advise me and the TA of your absence. If an absence extends beyond 14 consecutive days, or if you have a non-medical personal situation preventing you from completing your academic work, you should connect with your College Registrar. They can provide advice and assistance reaching out to instructors on your behalf. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.
Accessibility Needs
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca) at the beginning of the academic year. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with me or the TA, and we will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your medical situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your coursework. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Academic Integrity
All students, faculty and staff are expected to follow the University’s guidelines and policies on academic integrity. For you, this means following the standards of academic honesty when writing assignments, collaborating with fellow students, and writing quizzes. Ensure that the work you submit for grading represents your own honest efforts. Plagiarism—representing someone else’s work as your own or submitting work that you have previously submitted for marks in another class or program—is a serious offence that can result in sanctions. Speak to me or your TA for advice on anything that you find unclear. To learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at www.writing.utoronto.ca/. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University’s policy and expectations. For more information, please see http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai and http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/

Mental Health
Everyone feels stressed or anxious now and then – it’s a normal part of university life. In a recent National College Health Assessment (published in 2017), however, 64% of UofT students surveyed reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety in the past 12 months and 45% reported having felt so depressed it was hard to function. If you are ever experiencing anxiety, depression, or any other symptoms that are preventing you from completing your work and/or benefiting from your university experience, I encourage you to investigate U of T’s various resources: https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/. If you are experiencing more acute distress, please visit: http://safety.utoronto.ca/.

About Quercus
This course uses the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This includes posting readings and other materials required to complete class activities and course assignments, as well as sharing important announcements and updates. The site is dynamic and new information and resources will be posted regularly as we move through the term, so please make it a habit to log in to the site on a regular, even daily, basis. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at https://q.utoronto.ca.

Recording lectures
The January online classes will be recorded and uploaded to Quercus. The in-class classes (should they occur) will not be recorded. However, should you wish to record my lectures, you
are free to do so; remember that lectures are the intellectual property of the instructors, and the recordings should be respected thus and used for your own educational use. For further discussion, see the section on taping, recording and photographing lectures in the FAS Academic Handbook and CTSI Guidelines on Recording Lectures and Class Sessions.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING & VIEWING (concerning the environment)**

*The following books and/or resources can be found normally through our library system.*

**Economics/commerce and environment**


**Ethics and environment**


**Natural sciences and environment**


Richardson, J. H. (2015, August). Ballad of the sad climatologists: when the end of human civilization is your day job, it can be hard to sleep at night. *Esquire*, 164(1), 82+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A426765666/CPI?u=utoronto_main&sid=bookmark-CPI&xid=b20d1df0


**Psychology and environment**


**Religion and environment**


**Sustainability and environment**


**Worldviews and environment**


**Film and Environment**
The following is a short list of good movies I have come across that impart one or more themes tied to the environment, all which provoke deeper reflection.

*Avatar*, US 2009, dir. James Cameron
*Babette’s Feast*, Denmark 1987, dir. Gabriel Axel
[The] *China Syndrome*, US 1979, dir. James Bridges
*Don’t Look Up!* US 2021, dir. Adam McKay
[The] *Grapes of Wrath*, 1940, dir. John Ford
[The] *Truman Show*, US 1988, dir. Peter Weir
*WALL-E*, US 2008, dir. Andrew Stanton
Documentaries and Environment

Documentaries on the environment are too numerous to list here. And not all, despite their intentions, are completely factual, and some have dated data. It is wise to approach all documentaries with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Below are samples of documentaries I have found worthwhile (I used the IMDB tag lines); let me know of others you found worth a look! The list is not, by far, comprehensive. Some might be of interest to you because of the tone concerning the environment they convey.

*Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*, directed by Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtinsky (2018); filmmakers travel to six continents and 20 countries to document the impact humans have made on the planet.

*Baraka*, directed by Ron Fricke (1992); a collection of expertly photographed scenes of human life, religion and how we interact with life.

*Before the Flood*, directed by Fisher Stephens (2016); Leonardo DiCaprio looks at how climate change affects our environment and what society can do to prevent the demise of endangered species, ecosystems and native communities across the planet.

*[The] Biggest Little Farm*, directed by John Chester (2018); documentarian John Chester and his wife Molly work to develop a sustainable farm on 200 acres outside of Los Angeles.

*[The] Corporation*, directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott (2003); documentary that looks at the concept of the corporation throughout recent history up to its present-day dominance.

*Food Inc.*, directed by Robert Kenner (2008); an unflattering look inside America's corporate controlled food industry.

*Inner Climate Change: The Change Starts within You* (2020) directed by Lorenz Grammann. The documentary focuses on personal inner change as a necessary path to lasting sustainability.

*Kiss the Ground*, directed by Joshua Tickell and Rebecca Harrell Tickell (2020); a revolutionary group of activists, scientists, farmers, and politicians band together in a global movement of "Regenerative Agriculture" that could balance our climate, replenish our vast water supplies, and feed the world.

*[The] New Corporation: The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel*, directed by Jennifer Abbott and Joel Bakan (2020); exposes how companies are desperately rebranding as socially responsible - and how that threatens democratic freedoms.

*There's Something in the Water*, directed by Elliott Page (2019); an example of environmental racism in Canada where Black and First Nations in Nova Scotia suffer disproportionate effect of environmental pollution.

*This Changes Everything*, directed by Avi Lewis (2015); narrated by Naomi Klein, this video looks at seven communities around the world with the proposition that we can seize the crisis of climate change to transform our failed economic system into something radically better.

*[The] Race to Save the World*, directed by Joe Gantz (2021); a documentary film following the lives of passionate and determined climate scientists, activists, and concerned citizens who are working to shift the world towards a clean energy future and to fight climate change before it's too late.

*Sharkwater Extinction*, directed by Rob Steward (2018); Filmmaker Rob Steward exposes the illegal fishing industry that threatens the survival of the world's sharks.
*Water Warriors*, directed by Michael Premo (2017); when an energy company begins searching for natural gas in New Brunswick, Canada, indigenous and white families unite to drive out the company in a campaign to protect their water and way of life.