Psychology of Conservation Capstone

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Office:	316 Psychology Building	on Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 - 12:50 p.m.
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Office hours:	Mondays at 9 a.m. and at other times by appointment	

Readings

- Braasch, G. (2009). *Earth under fire: How global warming is changing the world* (updated edition). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- MacBride, S. (2012). *Recycling reconsidered: The present failure and future promise of environmental action in the United States.* Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- PDF readings (and other course materials) available from the course's Canvas site.

Course overview

Our society faces many challenges related to conservation, preservation, and adaptation in response to environmental challenges and resource management issues. In this course, we will focus on three important phenomena (i.e., global warming, recycling and waste management, species preservation by community-based conservation efforts) to understand the challenges we face and the psychological principles that can address them. Readings will be a blend of books on environmental issues and of scholarly articles that speak to psychological processes. In addition to traditional seminar activities (e.g., in-class discussion, papers, exams), each student will design and implement a meaningful intervention or education project to address a significant conservation issue, and each student will complete several conservation involvement activities.

This capstone has a number of objectives that focus on integrating psychological theory with work involving environmental challenges for global warming, waste management, and community-based conservation.

- The books and readings chosen for this course present environmental issues in a relatively accessible way for a non-technical audience. Although it is important to understand the science underlying issues such as global warming or species conservation, students are not expected to become experts on climatology, biology, or waste management (the professor certainly is not an expert in these areas). It is important to become acquainted with the relevant science to understand the issues and psychology involved, but success in the class does not require becoming experts in areas such as meteorology, botany, or material sciences!
- Course exams focus on student mastery of relevant aspects of readings and course discussions, which will be composed both of environmental science and psychological principles. Although important, the exams are only a modest amount of the course grade (i.e., 400 of the 1600 total points, or just 25%).
- The primary focus of this seminar is on each student developing a meaningful project that will either serve to promote conservation behaviors or serve as an educational vehicle to that end. Students will develop their own project in consultation with the professor, and over the course of the semester, apply course content to building, implementing, assessing, and refining their project. Challenge grants will be available to help students implement worthy projects that require some degree of support to conduct.
- There is a strong experiential component to the course. In addition to each student conducting a major project, many assignments ask students to engage in active reflection (e.g., monitoring one's own behaviors) or to seek out and identify new content for the class presented on sharing and learning days.
- Writing is a significant component of this capstone seminar. For example, students will submit several written assignments and papers during the semester. Also, exams are all-essay in format.
- Our seminar has a global focus. Although we will examine issues in the United States, we will also explore conservation throughout the world in places such as Mongolia, Belize, Canada, and India.

Grades

Source		Points
Two exams (200 points each)		400 points
Student project (intervention or educational vehicle)		
Topic approval (no later than September 12)		40 points
Project written report		200 points
Poster fair poster		100 points
Project oral presentation		50 points
Overall project execution and quality		100 points
Ten pop quizzes on readings (10 points each)		100 points
Class participation points (5 points per class)		80 points
Conservation involvement activities (CIAs)		
Campus observations and questions	(CIA #1)	20 points
Value reflection activity	(CIA #2)	20 points
Monitoring 1: Your own climate impact	(CIA #3)	40 points
Paper 1: Impact on your species	(CIA #4)	100 points
Sharing 1: Climate change	(CIA #5)	20 points
Monitoring 2: My impact and behavior mod	(CIA #6)	40 points
Paper 2: Analysis of recycling in your space	(CIA #7)	100 points
Sharing 2: Recycling	(CIA #8)	20 points
Monitoring 3: Final report on climate impact	(CIA #9)	50 points
Paper 3: Community-based conservation	(CIA #10)	100 points
Sharing 3: Species conservation	(CIA #11)	20 points
Total Points		1600 points

Final grades will be determined by total points accumulated during the semester applied this scale:

Points	Percentages	Letter
1480 - 1600	93% - 100%	A
1432 - 1479	90% - 92%	A-
1384 - 1431	87% - 89%	B+
1320 - 1383	83% - 86%	B
1272 - 1319	80% - 82%	B-
1224 - 1271	77% - 79%	C+
1160 - 1223	73% - 76%	C
1112 - 1159	70% - 72%	C-
1064 - 1111	67% - 69%	D+
1000 - 1063	63% - 66%	D
952 - 999	60% - 62%	D-
0 - 951	0% - 59%	F

The professor reserves the right to adjust the grading scale. If modifications occur, changes will only make it easier for students to get a better grade (i.e., the scale will never be adjusted against students). However, it would be unwise to anticipate that an adjustment will occur. Final grades are based on the total points earned, no exceptions. There is no end-of-semester negotiation period where students beg for better grades. Students who are dissatisfied with their class performance should discuss the situation with the professor early in the semester. Also, assignments are due at the beginning of each class period (11:30 a.m. on the dates listed on page 6). Please submit work on time (and early submissions are always encouraged)! Most assignments (e.g., pop quizzes, CIAs) cannot be submitted late, *regardless* of circumstances (see details below).

Exams

Two essay exams will be administered during the course. Each exam will only cover the material presented since the previous exam (i.e., they are not cumulative). There is no final exam; however, there are end-of-semester poster presentations, oral presentations, and written reports that serve as capstone evaluations for the course. The exams focus on the readings and class discussions. Although the exam material will primarily reflect what is discussed in class, reading material that is assigned but not discussed in class is fair game. However, exams will *never* assess trivial aspects of the readings. The exams assess how well students are mastering the readings and class discussions and appreciating the interrelations among ideas.

Student projects

The primary focus of the course is the student project. Students will develop and oversee their own *individual* project, which will either take the form of a conservation intervention project (e.g., develop a new campus recycling initiative) or a conservation education project (e.g., develop an educational resource, such as a website or classroom program, to educate people on conservation). Students are allowed to develop any class project that they want (but once it is approved, it cannot be changed), and although it is expected to be a very significant undertaking, it must be something that can be identified, developed, implemented, and assessed during the course of the semester. The student project and its related activities (e.g., written report, oral presentation, poster presentation) represent the largest evaluation component of the class (490 points).

Projects must be approved by the professor no later than the start of class on September 12 (unapproved projects beyond this deadline receive a 10% deduction on the entire collection of 490 points for *each* 24-hour period they are late; thus every late day subtracts 49 points from one's grade). Project papers will receive a 10% deduction for *each* 24-hour period they are late as well. Once a student has instructor approval for the project, that topic is no longer available for other students (thus, early approval helps secure a desired topic).

At the end of the semester, students will present reports on their projects in several forms. First, a written paper will document the project, its execution, and its effectiveness. Students will give an oral presentation about their project to the class. Finally, students will present a poster about their project during the course's poster fair, which will be held in the Psychology Atrium on November 30th. Funding has been set aside for this course to print posters and to provide modest support for student projects (all details forthcoming).

Conservation involvement activities (CIAs)

To further engage students outside of the classroom in reflecting on conservation and related psychological processes, each student will complete *independent* conservation involvement activities (CIAs), each of which involves a written component uploaded to the class's Canvas site before the beginning of class (11:30 a.m.) on the assigned due date (page 6). Late CIAs, regardless of circumstances, earn 0 points. Because these are *self-paced activities*, there is plenty of time to complete them and submit them early (and students are encouraged to do so). CIAs are designed to scaffold learning objectives throughout the course, and in some cases, multiple CIAs will be due by the same date (however, students should be working on CIAs all throughout a particular unit rather than waiting until "the night before" to start).

CIA #1 (campus observations and questions) asks students to walk around campus observing what they see with respect to conservation-related aspects of campus life and generate 5 questions related to conservation practices (e.g., energy use, recycling, landscaping). This assignment will be due before the second class session. Later CIAs focus on outside-of-class activities, such as assessing the value of nature (CIA 2) or monitoring of one's climate impact (CIAs 5, 8, and 11). Finally, three other CIAs are more substantial analysis papers on climate change impact (CIA 4), on recycling practices in one's environment (CIA 7), and on community-based conservation research (CIA 10). Details regarding all eleven CIAs are provided on the Canvas site.

Quizzes

Throughout the semester, short pop quizzes (10 total) on assigned readings will be periodically administered to reward students for keeping up with readings. They will not be difficult. If students complete the readings, this will be the easiest points in the class to earn. They will be administered at the very beginning of class. If students are late to class or miss class, they cannot make them up (even with a documented excuse).

Class participation

Class participation and attendance will be assessed each class where there is a reading assignment. Missing class will cost students 5 points per day (even if the absence is excused). Students who habitually say nothing will lose points even if they attend class (they will receive a warning from the professor to speak up before losing points). Because much of this class is discussion oriented and class size is small, participating is essential.

Academic integrity

Both Miami University and the Department of Psychology are dedicated to providing a learning environment based not only on academic excellence but on academic integrity as well. In this course, it is expected that students will adhere to all Miami University guidelines regarding academic misconduct (see Chapter 5 of the *Miami Student Handbook: Academic Integrity* for details). Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting work (homework, papers, etc.) conducted for another course without professor approval
- Submitting the work of another individual or party (whether in part or in whole) as one's own, including work from another student, a website, a book, or failing to provide appropriate citations for others' ideas
- Allowing other students to submit one's work as their own
- Possessing prohibited materials during a test or quiz in any form (e.g., notes, internet access, texting)
- Providing or receiving assistance from another student without the professor's permission

Engaging in academic misconduct can result in penalties ranging from a *minimum* of an F on the assignment to an F in the course, an "AD" signifying academic dishonesty on Miami transcripts, academic suspension, and expulsion from Miami University. Misunderstanding appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic misconduct (see *Miami Student Handbook*, Chapter 5). Please see the professor for clarification regarding any of the above policies. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the professor if they suspect another student has engaged in academic misconduct.

Class policies

RTFS: Countless hours have gone into crafting this very detailed syllabus. Before asking, read the syllabus!

Assignments: Assignment due dates are posted in the syllabus. Any revisions that entail making assignments due at an earlier date will be announced at least one week in advance of a deadline. Alterations to the class will be announced in class, and it is each student's responsibility to attend to these announcements.

Special considerations: In situations where special and documented circumstances require that a student not take an exam during a scheduled time (e.g., learning disabilities, an official university obligation, religious observances), special arrangements can be made with the professor. However, students must make these arrangements at the beginning of the semester and provide documentation for them.

Course materials, recordings, and legal disclaimers: Attending class, obtaining course materials, and taking notes are each student's responsibility. The professor will not lend out notes or books under any circumstances. If students miss class, they should ask classmates to borrow notes to catch up on what was missed. Students may lend notes to fellow students in the same course as long as they do not financially profit from doing so (i.e., the commercialization of class notes is strictly prohibited).

Uploads and electronically-submitted assignments: All assignments (e.g., class assignments, CIAs) require students upload documents to Canvas. All documents should be uploaded in one of three formats: PDF (Acrobat's Portable Document Format), DOC (Microsoft Word's Document format), or RTF (Rich Text Format). All documents will be scanned for plagiarism to ensure authentic scholarship (see section on academic integrity). Students with questions (e.g., how to upload documents, questions about academic integrity) should ask the professor before assignments are due (e.g., technical issues with uploads or uncertainty about Canvas will not excuse late or incomplete assignments). If Canvas is unavailable before a deadline, email your assignment to the professor to ensure it is not late (but only do this if Canvas is down).

Classroom conduct: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and civil manner in class, and they are encouraged to express their opinions and beliefs. It is another thing, however, to be disrespectful or rude to students or to the professor. It is fine to disagree with others and to express non-politically-correct views. However, bigotry or disrespectful behavior is unacceptable. Moreover, some topics in this course (e.g., global warming) have been subjects of political debate; however, the science on issues such as how people contribute to global warming has achieved scientific consensus. Students who wish to turn discussion of the science into political theatre (on any side of these issues) should not take this class. Although skepticism is an important component of science, we will not debate the authenticity of evidence underlying the scientific consensus in the scholarly literature on global warming, species extinction, etc.

Disruptive conduct (e.g., distracting texting, laptop use, conversations in class) is unacceptable and students who disrupt class (either for their fellow students or for the professor) will be asked to leave class. Students who want to spend classroom time texting, tagging their photos, watching videos, playing games, talking to friends, listening to music, or sleeping should stay at home.

Exam make-ups: There are no make-ups for missing an exam for an unexcused reason. An unexcused absence occurs when a student (1) did not obtain prior permission from the professor concerning the absence or (2) did not provide documented evidence justifying the absence. Valid documented evidence can be one of three things: (1) a signed note from a health care professional stating that the student was sick and unable to attend class, (2) a letter from a funeral home or clergy on their letterhead indicating that one attended a memorial service, or (3) a letter from the dean supporting one's absence. There are no exceptions to this policy. Students who miss an exam should contact the professor as soon as possible to address the situation and use *multiple* methods of contact (e.g., e-mail, telephone).

Reading pop quizzes: Periodically, unannounced reading quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. These quizzes will be brief (i.e., 2-3 sentence answers) and cover basic aspects of the readings assigned for that day. Pop quizzes are graded as all or nothing (i.e., no partial credit) and will be returned to students at the next class session. Students who miss a quiz (even for an excused absence) cannot make up quizzes (and students who arrive late to class are likely to miss a pop quiz, so please be on time to class).

Class participation: Students are expected to actively participate in each and every class. For each of the regular class periods (i.e., classes without exams or structured presentations), class participation will be assessed by the professor in an all or nothing fashion. Class participation points cannot be made up if students miss class (even with an excused absence -- you cannot participate in class if you do not attend the class).

Incompletes: Except for cases of documented medical or family emergencies, incompletes will not be given. There is no need for students to do badly in this class: the professor will be available for meetings and he will answer e-mail questions promptly. Points are earned in small, multiple increments rather than in a couple of monolithic assignments. Deadlines for dropping classes and withdrawals are provided by the Office of the Registrar. Students who miss these deadlines assume responsibility for the consequences. For more details, consult Miami's official publications regarding deadlines and university policies.

Semester schedule

Assignments are due on the day indicated, with assignments due before 11:30 a.m. Reading assignments are entire chapters from the Braasch or MacBride books, or they are entire PDFs of scientific papers or relevant articles (listed by author and publication year), which are available for download from the course Canvas site.

Date			Topic	Assignments
Week	M	8/29	Introduction to the course	
1	W	8/31	Topic development	**CIA #1**
Week	M	9/5	Labor Day (no class)	
2	W	9/7	End of the ice age	Braasch (chapters 1, 2); **CIA #2**
Week	M	9/12	Changing climate and life	Braasch (chapters 3, 4); **project approval**
3	W	9/14	Future of the environment	Braasch (chapter 5, epilogue)
Week	M	9/19	A role for psychology	Swim et al. (2011); **project grant deadline**
4	W	9/21	Social dilemmas	Van Vugt (2009)
Week	M	9/26	Social influence	Cialdini (1995); **CIA #3**
5	W	9/28	Work on projects (no class)	
Week	M	10/3	Norms	Schultz et al. (2007)
6	W	10/5	Sharing and Learning Day #1	**CIAs #4, #5**
Week	**M**	**10/10**	**Exam 1**	
7	W	10/12	Residential recycling	MacBride (chapters 1, 2)
Week	M	10/17	Stewardship in Ontario	Blue Box (2013): History, Summary Report
8	W	10/19	Industrial recycling	MacBride (chapters 3, 4)
Week	M	10/24	Sharing and Learning Day #2	**CIAs #6, #7, #8**
9	W	10/26	Species reintroduction	Morell (2007); Cohn (1999); Xia et al. (2014)
Week	M	10/31	Community-based conservation	Western & Wright (1994); Little (1994)
10	W	11/2	Expanding the role of psychology	Clayton et al. (2016)
	F	11/4	Dr. Susan Clayton visits	(pizza lunch at 11:30 a.m., colloquium at 3 p.m.)
Week	M	11/7	Community Baboon Sanctuary	Horwich & Lyon (1998)
11	W	11/9	Bird conservation in Hawaii	*Bird Conservation* (2009) special issue
Week	M	11/14	Sharing and Learning Day #3	**CIAs #9, #10, #11**
12	**W**	**11/16**	**Exam 2**	
Week	M	11/21	Finalize projects (no class)	
13	W	11/23	Thanksgiving Break (no class)	
Week	M	11/28	Prep posters	
14	**W**	**11/25**	**Project Poster Fair** (Psychology Atrium)	
Week	**M**	**12/5**	**Project Oral Presentations**	
15	**W**	**12/7**	Wrap-up day	**Project final paper due**