

# Psy 410B: Psychology of Conservation Capstone

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Psy 410B, CRN 84232  
Class meets in 127 Psychology Building,  
on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:05 - 11:25 a.m.

## Readings

- Braasch, G. (2009). *Earth under fire: How global warming is changing the world* (updated edition). Berkeley, CA: University of California 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 important phenomena such as global warming, recycling and waste management, and biodiversity conservation efforts to understand the challenges that we face and the psychological principles that can help address them. Course readings will be a blend of books and scholarly articles on environmental issues and relevant psychological processes. In addition to traditional seminar activities (e.g., discussions, papers, exams), each student will design and implement a meaningful intervention or education project to address a significant conservation issue and will complete several conservation involvement activities to facilitate experiential learning.

This capstone has a number of objectives that focus on integrating psychological theory with work involving challenges ranging from combating global warming to engaging in community-based conservation.

- This class requires hard work, but students enjoy a lot of autonomy and flexibility in self-directed learning.
- The readings chosen for this course present environmental issues in a relatively accessible way for a non-expert 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 overall course grade (i.e., 400 of the 1500 total points, or just 27%).
- 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, refining, and assessing their project. Challenge grants will be available to help students implement worthy projects that require some degree of financial 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 many 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 February 13)	40 points
Project written report (due before May 10)	200 points
Poster fair poster (May 3)	100 points
Project oral presentation (last week of class)	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
Place-based conservation activity (CIA #7)	30 points
Paper 2: Community-based conservation (CIA #8)	100 points
Sharing 2: Species conservation (CIA #9)	20 points
Monitoring 3: Final report on climate impact (CIA #10)	40 points
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>1500 points</b>

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

Points	Percentages	Letter
1388 - 1500	93% - 100%	A
1343 - 1387	90% - 92%	A-
1298 - 1342	87% - 89%	B+
1238 - 1297	83% - 86%	B
1193 - 1237	80% - 82%	B-
1148 - 1192	77% - 79%	C+
1088 - 1147	73% - 76%	C
1043 - 1087	70% - 72%	C-
998 - 1042	67% - 69%	D+
938 - 997	63% - 66%	D
893 - 937	60% - 62%	D-
0 - 892	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. Assignments are due before the beginning of each class period (10 a.m. on the dates listed on page 6). Please submit work on time (and early submissions are always encouraged)! In general, 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, covering material presented since the previous exam (i.e., they are not cumulative). There is no final exam; however, the end-of-semester oral presentations, poster, and project paper serve as capstone evaluations. Exams focus on the readings and class discussions. Although exam material will primarily reflect what is discussed in class, assigned reading material not discussed in class is fair game. However, exams will *never* assess trivial aspects of the readings. 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 can develop any class project that they want (once it is approved, it cannot change), and although it is expected to be a very significant undertaking, it must be something that can be developed, implemented, and assessed during the semester. The student project and its related activities 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 February 13 (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 (due by May 10). The paper requires that students summarize and synthesize the existing literature, construct convincing evidence-based arguments, apply basic research findings, and write in effective prose. Students will also give an oral presentation about their project to the class. Finally, students will present a poster about their project during a poster fair, held in the Psychology Atrium on May 3rd. Funding has been set aside to print posters and to provide modest financial support for student projects (all details forthcoming).

## Conservation involvement activities (CIAs)

To engage students outside of the classroom in reflecting on conservation and related psychological processes, students will complete ten *independent* conservation involvement activities (CIAs), each involving a written component uploaded to the class's Canvas site before 10 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 to submit them early (which is encouraged). CIAs 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 throughout the course rather than waiting until "the night before" to start).

CIA #1 (campus observations) asks students to walk around campus observing what they see with respect to conservation-related aspects of campus life and to generate 5 questions related to conservation practices (e.g., energy use, recycling, landscaping). This assignment will be due before the second class. Later CIAs focus on out-of-class activities, such as assessing the value of nature (CIA 2), thinking about place-based conservation (CIA 7), or monitoring one's climate impact (CIAs 3, 6, and 10). Two CIAs involve more substantial analysis papers on climate change impact (CIA 4) and on community-based conservation efforts (CIA 8). Finally, the two remaining CIAs are student-led sharing and learning days in class (CIAs 5 and 9). Details regarding all ten CIAs are provided on the Canvas site (e.g., instructions, upload instructions, details).

## 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.

## 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 academic integrity policy). 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 file formats or uncertainty about Canvas will not excuse late or incomplete assignments). If Canvas is unavailable right 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. The Department of Psychology values diversity and inclusion (see department website for details), and students are expected to conduct themselves in the spirit of these important values.

*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 by 10 a.m. Reading assignments are entire chapters from the Braasch book 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 1	Tu 1/30 Th 2/1	Introduction to the course Topic development	<b>CIA #1</b>
Week 2	Tu 2/6 Th 2/8	End of the ice age Changing climate and life	Braasch (chapters 1, 2); <b>CIA #2</b> Braasch (chapters 3, 4)
Week 3	Tu 2/13 Th 2/15	Future of the environment Biomimetics	Braasch (ch. 5, epilogue); <b>Project approval</b> Bhushan (2009)
Week 4	Tu 2/20 Th 2/22	A role for psychology Social dilemmas	Swim et al. (2011); <b>Challenge grants due</b> Van Vugt (2009)
Week 5	Tu 2/27 Th 3/1	Social influence and norms Emotions and prosocial behavior	Cialdini (1995); <b>CIA #3</b> Piff et al. (2015)
Week 6	Tu 3/6 Th 3/8	Work on projects (no class) Sharing and Learning Day #1	<b>CIAs #4, #5</b>
Week 7	<b>Tu 3/13</b> Th 3/15	<b>Exam 1</b> Work on projects (no class)	
Week 8	Tu 3/20 Th 3/22	Spring Break (no class) Spring Break (no class)	
Week 9	Tu 3/27 Th 3/29	Recycling in the U.S. and Canada Species reintroduction	McBride (2012); <b>CIA #6</b> Morell (2007); Cohn (1999); Xia et al. (2014)
Week 10	Tu 4/3 Th 4/5	Community-based conservation Howler Monkeys CBC in Belize	Western & Wright (1994); Little (1994) Horwich & Lyon (1998)
Week 11	Tu 4/10 Th 4/12	Bird conservation in Hawaii Place attachment (no class)	<i>Bird Conservation</i> (2009) special issue Williams et al. (2013) to complete CIA #7
Week 12	Tu 4/17 Th 4/19	Place-based conservation Expanding the role of psychology	<b>CIA #7</b> Clayton et al. (2016)
Week 13	Tu 4/24 <b>Th 4/26</b>	Sharing and Learning Day #2 <b>Exam 2</b>	<b>CIAs #8, #9, #10</b>
Week 14	Tu 5/1 <b>Th 5/3</b>	Finalize projects (no class) <b>Poster Fair</b> (Psychology Atrium)	<b>Upload posters to Canvas</b>
Week 15	<b>Tu 5/8</b> <b>Th 5/10</b>	<b>Project Oral Presentations</b> Wrap-up day	<b>Project final paper due</b>