EnvS 6300/7300 – Social and Environmental Psychology of Natural Resources

Instructor: Mark Brunson, 797-2458, Mark.Brunson@usu.edu

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9-10:30 am

Course description and purpose
This course examines how social science research and theory can add to our understanding and practice of environmental and natural resource stewardship, focusing on human phenomena that occur primarily at the individual level. We will draw on ideas and discoveries from the fields of social psychology, environmental psychology, and (to a limited extent) applied behavior analysis, emphasizing how this work can be and has been applied to problems in human thought and behavior processes regarding nature. Because this is an applied social science course, we will emphasize ways to use the information as researchers and potential practitioners.

Course structure
This is a graduate seminar course so we’ll spend more time in discussion than in lectures, although I will formally introduce topics throughout the semester. Each of us will be expected to serve as discussion leaders. Most days I’ll ask you to read two articles or book chapters before each class, and we’ll use those as a focal point for discussion. For some of you this will feel like an awful lot of reading; for others it will be a lighter load than you’re used to having in graduate social science courses. I’m looking for a balance between covering the breadth of literature on these topics and being able to absorb the material, and this reading load seems to achieve that.

In the latter part of the course, the focus will shift from reviewing the literature to applying what we’ve learned, first as researchers and then as practitioners. At that point the reading expectations will be lessened significantly, but there will be opportunities for both group and individual problem solving.

Web support
All readings will be available through the Canvas course management system. When you log in to the course, the first page you’ll see is the Modules page. Each day is its own module, and contains the readings for that day as well as a brief description of how the readings relate to the learning goals for that class period. Article summaries that you prepare will also be posted in the appropriate module. The Canvas site will also be used to present and upload assignments, enable you to discuss course topics and assignments outside of class (if desired), and post grades.

Expectations/requirements
Discussion leadership (35% of course grade): Each of us (myself included) will be assigned articles for which we're designated as discussion leader. Discussion leaders will be asked to provide one-page summaries for each article that typically include:

a. A description of the “researchable problem” in theory or management that the paper attempts to address, and the method(s) the authors used to do so;

b. Key findings and/or recommendations made by the authors; and

c. Your personal critique of the paper: e.g., is it useful, are the methods straightforward, do you detect flaws in the research approach, do you agree with the authors’ arguments?
If a summary is submitted to me via e-mail before 10:30 a.m. on the day of class, I will post it on the website and present it electronically in class. Otherwise bring actual handouts. Summaries can be submitted as PDF, MS Word or PowerPoint files – it if comes as a Word file I’ll convert it to HTML; if you’d rather give a presentation I’ll post it as a screen show.

In class, the discussion leader will *briefly* review what’s in the summary (NOTE: do not simply read the handout), and offer discussion questions appropriate to the article. Usually three questions are enough to do the trick. Questions may relate to critiques of the methods, findings, or recommendations; discussions of the relevance or importance of the study or problem; or other topics as indicated. Everyone is expected to participate in discussions.

**Mid-Course Review (25%)**
This assignment, due in the 8th week of the semester, will ask you to synthesize information about course topics and concepts we’ve discussed so far. I will use it to see where there may be gaps in understanding, and also areas meriting more or less attention than they’ve been getting.

**Research Design Paper (10%)**
Later on in the semester we’ll identify some topics that are of particular interest to the group, and we’ll discuss them in class. This assignment will ask you to choose one of those topics, and provide a rudimentary study design for a research project that would test a relevant theory while leading to a practical, applied social science result.

**Knowledge Application Paper (10%)**
Just before the end of the term, we’ll spend some time discussing potential applications for social and environmental psychology research findings. We will do so in the context of the topics we identified for the research discussion (or additional topics, if new enthusiasms arise among the group). The final short paper will ask you to choose one of the topics we’ve been discussing, and describe an intervention, campaign, or other application of social science research that might be developed based on research such as that discussed in this class.

**In-class and written participation (20%)**: All students should participate in discussions during class. But the participation aspect of the class will have a second (experimental) component:

Often ideas during group discussions don’t ever get discussed because the conversation turns a different way before we get a chance to express them. Other times something occurs to us outside of class – a question, a conclusion, a tirade – but we never have a chance to do anything with them. This year I’m going to try to capture some of these stray thoughts and weave them into our ongoing discourse about course topics. To do this, we’ll use the Discussions tool in the Canvas site. This portion of the website will be available to you at any time during the semester, and you can contribute as you see fit to the topic called “Unresolved Questions.” You do not have to participate in this manner, but it might be an especially good way to do so if you’re someone who doesn’t tend to feel comfortable offering opinions in a group the size of ours.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 25</td>
<td>Introduction to course topics, procedures, participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 27</td>
<td>Overview: Explaining/encouraging conservation behavior (Readings: 1,2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1</td>
<td><em>No class – Labor Day holiday</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 3</td>
<td>Introduction to social psychology (3,4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 8</td>
<td>Attitudes: the “most indispensable concept” (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10</td>
<td>How are attitudes related to behaviors? (6, 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td>Applying attitude research to a natural resource issue: wolf management (8, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 17</td>
<td>Broader influences: worldviews and societal contexts (10,11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td>Socio-demographic correlates of attitudes and perceptions (12,13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>Fostering pro-environmental behavior: Is better education the answer? (14,15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Behavioral interventions (16,17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Norms, conformity and compliance (18,19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td><em>No class – work on mid-course review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td><em>No class – work on mid-course review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 13</td>
<td>Introduction to environmental psychology (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>Mid-Course Review paper due (upload to Canvas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 20</td>
<td>Nature and its role in psychological wellness (21, 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>Perception of beauty and its role in nature stewardship (23,24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td>Designing nature into urban spaces (25,26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>Place perception and place attachment (27,28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>Fear, risk, and natural disasters (29,30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td>Trust and its influence on attitudes (31,32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Equity, fairness, and perceptions of justice (33,34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nov. 10  Adoption of innovations to enhance sustainability (35, 36)
Nov. 12  Designing research projects (discussion and group work)
Nov. 17  Designing research projects (discussion and group work)
Nov. 19  No class
          Research Design paper due (upload to Canvas)
Nov. 24  Developing practical applications (discussion and group work)
Dec.  1  Developing practical applications (discussion and group work)
Dec.  3  Synopsis and synthesis: What are the consistent themes of this field? (37)
Dec. 10  Knowledge Application paper due (upload to Canvas)
Reading List


