Course: SUS 7200S—Green Thinking: An Environmental Psychological Exploration of Urban Sustainability
3 hrs./3 cr.

Day/Time: Thursdays, 6:30-9:00pm

Location: Shepard 375

General Description of SUS-7200S – Green Thinking: Selected Topics in Environmental Psychology, Education, and Communication: This course offers selected topics that explore the myriad ways that human thinking influences sustainability issues: communicating and promoting environmental stewardship, systems thinking and organizational change, environmental conflict management and dispute resolution, and environmental risk assessment and response. The goal is to help students deploy the insights of established social sciences to more effectively articulate and communicate sustainability issues and solutions to individuals and organizations.

Focus of Fall 2014 Course, An Environmental Psychological Exploration of Urban Sustainability: While many agree that the rise toward sustainable policies and practices across multiple fields is encouraging, many researchers and practitioners critique the popular use of the concept of “sustainability.” In this vein, psychology can assist us to critically examine how environmental problems are defined and how their solutions are devised. This course is based on the fundamental precept of the interdisciplinary field of environmental psychology—that the built, natural, and social environments influence human perceptions, values, and behaviors as much as we influence those spaces and places. In this context, the course will offer students the opportunity to reflect on how urban interventions are deemed sustainable. Another theoretical foundation of the course will be ecological psychological theories that focus on human perception, and integrate psychological processes within socio-structural influences. These theories will serve as a background to analyze and critique cases. The course will also enable students to utilize research methodology to analyze personal work-related practice, when possible. Students can expect a seminar style learning environment with active participation and peer interaction, in addition to individual assessment. Texts will feature seminal theoretical readings, those that bridge theory and practice, and empirical studies.

Course Objectives:

Part 1. The first part of the course will expose students to the fundamental concepts in environmental psychology that generally explain how human-environment interactions occur through a focus on individual-level behavior.

Part 2. The focus of the second part of the course will be on the subfield of ecological psychology, which explores the relationship between the ‘self and the environment’, broadly conceived, via systems and socio-cultural lenses.

Part 3. The third part of the course will expose students to applied empirical research on urban sustainability.
Course as a whole. Throughout the course, students will be introduced to qualitative methodology to undertake a research project through which they can analyze the practice of sustainability in their professional settings. This will expose students to the practice of qualitative inquiry, which is once again gaining a foothold in psychology.

Students will:
- Engage with original theoretical material fundamental to the fields of environmental psychology and ecological psychology.
- Practice the writing skills of synthesis and analysis.
- Integrate these fundamental concepts and their analyses in an independent research project.
- Learn the qualitative method of autoethnography through this same independent research project.

Instructor contact information: Email: icuervo@gc.cuny.edu

Attendance:
You are allowed one unexcused absence on days you are not assigned an active role in the class. However, you will be responsible for all work assigned or to be turned in on the day that you miss. You must provide proof of a valid excuse in all other absences. Anything further will cause your overall grade to decrease proportionate to the number of classes missed.

Grades & Assignments:
Students will be expected to follow the American Psychological Association’s (APA) style guide, 6th Edition. Your final grade will be determined by the following:

- 30%: In-class participation, measured by leading and actively participating in discussions, and team note-taking.
- 30%: One essay synthesizing and critiquing readings of students’ choice.
- 40%: Research project. Students will learn the method of autoethnography, employing it to engage in a critical analysis of their roles in their fields, as students, or as community members, related to sustainability.

Detailed instructions for all components will be provided as the course progresses.

Late assignments will be subject to grade deductions.

Academic Integrity
City College and CUNY policies on academic integrity will be strictly enforced. “Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York. Penalties for Academic Dishonesty include academic sanctions, such as failing or otherwise reduced grades, and/or disciplinary sanctions including suspension or expulsion.” For more information please refer to: www1.ccny.cuny.edu/current/upload/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf
Readings & Resources:
Readings will be found on Blackboard. Please make sure to regularly check the Blackboard page for updates and additional material.
- Note: Readings are subject to revisions or additions.
- Assigned students will post class notes on a weekly basis on the Blackboard site.

Class schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to the class and each other. Brief review of APA style. Article note-taking. Class discussion will focus on our opinions and experiences with sustainability and environmental psychology.

In-class assignment/ due next week: Environmental autobiography

Week 2: Introduction to Environmental Psychology (Env. Psych.): Background and early influences


Week 3: Env. Psych: Theoretical approaches to the field


Week 4: Env: Psych.: Place identity and place attachment


Week 5: Env: Psych.: Architecture and Planning


Week 7: Introduction to Ecological Psychology (Eco. Psych.): Antecedents


**Week 8: Eco. Psych.: Ecological Views of Perception**


**Week 9: Eco. Psych.: Culture, cognition, and perception.**


**Week 10: Eco. Psych.: Behavior settings & systems**


Week 11: Eco. Psych.: Lewin's conception of person-environment & the social environment


Week 12: Examination of sustainability in practice (SiP): In addition to the readings in this section, students will be required to select articles from peer-reviewed journals for the entire class to read.

Devine-Wright & Howes (2010). Disruption to place attachment and the protection of restorative environments: A wind energy case study.


Week 13: SiP: see week 12

Readings TBD
Research studio – we’ll use class time to workshop your project.

Week 14: SiP: see week 12

Readings TBD
Research studio – we’ll use class time to workshop your project.

Week 15: Student presentations of research project
Additional Resources:


David Orr talk, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5MNj9k0wWU

