



Environmental psychology

ENVOIE project Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Instructor(s)

Goda Perlaviciute

Course Information

Course name: Environmental psychology, part of Master programme Environmental Psychology

Course code: PSMSB-2

Number of ECTS: 5

Semester and period: Ia

Partner information

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Course name: Energy and Society, undergraduate course

Envisaged OIE tasks

Exchanging course materials:

1. UG's MOOC video lecture on motivating pro-environmental behaviour is shown at Rutgers University.

Students read two articles about energy to enrich their exchange (optional).

2. Students fill in their carbon footprint calculator online (www.carbonfootprint.com) and exchange output in the group.

3. Students will use Blackboard/Nestor Environment together with Blackboard Collaborate for file exchange and online sessions with temporal accounts for the US students.

One online session – students discuss the group assignment (see Task design), before finalizing. Subsequently, they write a report on their answers and hand it in via Nestor.

Task design

What kinds of tasks do you intend to implement? Briefly describe objective and global content of the intended tasks.

In what way will your students' learning be enriched or enhanced by having them work on these tasks with international peers in an online environment?

What kinds of technologies do you intend to use? Do not think exclusively of synchronous voice and video-based conferencing (Skype, Hangouts, BB Collaborate, etc), but also of asynchronous text-based work (wikis, reflection blogs, writing assignments).

Exchanging course materials. We will exchange materials on a specific topic that is covered in both courses, namely energy use. Through these materials the students will get a concise overview of the psychological aspect of energy use (Groningen part) and the context of energy use (Rutgers part). Through these materials (e.g. lecture recording, teacher's personal note), the students will also learn the teachers' perspective on these topics, thereby indirectly experiencing the teaching from the partner university. The materials should be uploaded on the web portal so that students can access them at their own convenience.



Group assignment: Carbon footprint analysis. Filling in carbon footprint calculator is already part of the curriculum of the course Energy and Society at Rutgers; the tool is also relevant for the students of Environmental Psychology in Groningen. Through filling in the tool the students get a good insight into how our different daily activities contribute to global CO₂ emissions. Most importantly, the students will be able to use this as a case study to identify important psychological and contextual factors driving energy consumption. The assignment will hopefully encourage students' discussions in groups about their daily energy behaviours, thereby helping students to start communication and collaboration with their peers in a different country, and in this case even with a different background. Through the two online sessions (more if needed and/or further using online platform to exchange ideas) the students will train their intercultural communication and collaboration skills.

Outline group assignment:

1. Which individual choices/behaviours contributed most the carbon footprints of your group members? Does this differ between the Netherlands and the US? Identify three most "CO₂-intense" choices/behaviours.
2. Identify three important contextual factors (e.g. available technology, energy price) that may have influenced the differences in your carbon footprints. Shortly explain the influence of each factor. Compare key contextual factors in the Netherlands and the US (if relevant, discuss contextual factors of other countries and cultures).
3. Identify three important individual factors (e.g. values, norms, attitudes) that may have influenced the differences in your carbon footprints. Shortly explain the influence of each factor. Compare key individual factors in the Netherlands and the US (if relevant, discuss individual factors of other cultures).
4. If you had to develop an intervention to reduce footprint of university students, which intervention would you choose? Consider which behaviour(s) you would target (i.e. choose a behaviour with a high impact), how likely it is that the behaviour can be changed, and contextual and individual factors that influence the behaviour. Would you choose the same intervention in the Netherlands and the US and why? Are there other important contextual and/or individual that were not evident in your group but could nevertheless influence the effectiveness of your intervention?

Follow-up tasks. Ideally, the tasks could be reused for teaching purposes later, for example in subsequent course of the MA programme Environmental Psychology in Groningen. For example, the students could use the reports on carbon footprint to do a small research project or pick one energy behaviour and prepare a concrete intervention.

Competences and learning outcomes

The tasks are relevant for a number of current goals of the course Environmental Psychology, namely:

- appraise the contribution of psychologists to promoting a sustainable society;
- identify **individual, social and cultural** factors affecting environmental behaviour;
- apply psychological theories, methods and interventions to understand and manage environmental problems;
- identify which interventions can be implemented to manage environmental problems.

At the same time, the tasks are relevant for a number of current overarching goals of the MA programme Environmental Psychology, namely:

- develop and apply theories to explain the interaction between humans and the build and natural environment, and to explain the human dimension of environmental and energy problems;
- critically evaluate theories and state-of-the-art knowledge in Environmental Psychology;



- develop and evaluate theory-based interventions to change behaviour and to reduce environmental and energy problems;
- communicate knowledge and research findings in a clear way to **diverse audiences**.

The tasks will contribute to students' development of international competences and collaboration and team working skills, which we consider highly valuable learning outcomes in the course Environmental Psychology and the overall MA programme Environmental Psychology.

Integration and assessment

The tasks will deepen students' knowledge and understanding of the topic energy use that is taught in both courses. This unique combination of partner institutes will enable students to address two key types of drivers of energy use, namely psychological factors (Groningen part) and contextual factors (Rutgers part). The tasks will help students to envision how the knowledge that they gain in their courses applies to addressing concrete environmental and energy problems, including problems across different countries and cultures. As said above, we aim to reuse the tasks across various courses, thereby contributing to other tasks and overall learning goals in MA programme Environmental Psychology. In subsequent courses students could follow-up on these assignments and develop more detailed interventions how to address the relevant problems (e.g., in the course "Designing Interventions") and to explore possible contributions from other disciplines to solving these problems (e.g., in the course "Working in interdisciplinary teams"). In this way, the OIE tasks could form an ongoing assignment through the whole MA programme Environmental Psychology, embedding key aspects of different courses.

Time investment