

PSYC81: Psychology for Sustainability

University of Toronto Scarborough
Winter Term, 2025

Time and Location: Thursdays 11-1 in Room IA 2040

Delivery Format: In-Person Lectures (all lectures will be recorded and made available on Quercus)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Prof. George S. Cree

Email: george.cree@utoronto.ca

Office: SW 405/408A

Office Hours: Thursday 2-4

Prof. Cree is a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at UTSC. He joined the department in 2003. Current research interests include how we can use technology, such as AI and smartphone APPs, to help people to lead more sustainable lifestyles, focusing on sustainable food and fashion choices.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to a variety of topics in psychology as they relate to sustainability. Topics covered will include: why scientists (and others) are worried about the sustainability of the current average North American lifestyle; the history of the environmental movement in North America; what more sustainable lifestyle choices might look like; and the various ways psychology contributes to understanding lifestyle choices and promoting sustainability. Examples used in the course will borrow heavily from the Canadian context, focusing on sustainable food choices, fashion choices, and links to climate change and associated mental health challenges.

PREREQUISITES

1. [(PSYB01H3) or (PSYB04H3) or [PSYB70H3](#)]
2. [[PSYB07H3](#) or [STAB22H3](#) or [STAB23H3](#)]
3. [0.5 credit at the B-level in PSY courses]

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recall and describe important psychological principles and mechanisms as they relate to sustainability and climate change (e.g., formal and cognitive mechanisms of belief formation and updating).
2. Demonstrate an understanding of psychological principles related to sustainability and climate change by applying those principles to novel situations.
3. Describe how psychology can contribute to mental health initiatives designed to mitigate the negative effects of unsustainable living, and climate change, on individuals and communities.
4. Identify psychological motivators and de-motivators to pro-environmental actions and describe how they can be overcome when required.

5. Evaluate real world examples of climate change communication and develop arguments that outline their strengths and weaknesses.
6. Critique data visualizations, and recommend methods of improving them, based on psychological principles.
7. Critically evaluate published research related to psychology, sustainability, and climate change.

Consistent with the department's goals of developing writing and research methods skills at the C-level, special emphasis will be placed on:

1. Developing effective written and oral communication skills.
2. Developing data visualization and interpretation skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Recognize and describe the myriad ways in which humans live both sustainably and unsustainably, and how and why this varies across cultures.
2. Appreciate and describe the cultural contexts in which unsustainable lifestyles have developed.
3. Describe psychological theory and research illuminating situational, social, cognitive, and individual difference factors underlying unsustainable behaviours, and how these factors can be recruited to promote alternatives. Apply these factors in novel situations.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

TEXTBOOK

Scott, B. A., Amel, E. L., Koger, S. M., & Manning, C. M. (2021). *Psychology for sustainability* (5th edition). Routledge.

SCHEDULE

We will be following the textbook chapters, in order, over the 12 weeks of the course:

Week 01: What on Earth Are We Doing?

Week 02: How Did We Get Here? Power, Privilege, and a Paradigm Problem

Week 03: Where Do We Go From Here? Applying an Ecological Worldview

Week 04: Psychology Can Help Save the Planet

Week 05: The Power of the (Unsustainable) Situation

Week 06: It's Not Easy Thinking Green

*** READING WEEK ***

Week 07: Putting the "I" in Environment

Week 08: To Be (Green) or Not to Be (Green) ... It's a Question of Motivation

Week 09: Making Ourselves Sick: Health Costs of Unsustainable Living

Week 10: Healing the Split Between Planet and Self: We All Need to Walk on the Wild Side

Week 11: When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get ... Together

Week 12: Getting Psyched for Sustainability

*** FINAL EXAM ***

EVALUATIONS

Learning will be assessed through three projects and a final exam. The exam will consist entirely of multiple choice questions based on the textbook and lectures.

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Project 1: Global Change | 10% (due Jan 30) |
| 2. Project 2: Community Change | 20% (due Feb 27) |
| 3. Project 3: Individual Change | 30% (due Apr 4) |
| 4. Final Exam | 40% (scheduled by Registrar during Final Exam Period) |

IMPORTANT DATES

First Day of Classes: Jan 6
Reading Week: Feb 17-21
Family Day: Feb 17
Project 1 Due: Jan 30, on Quercus
Project 2 Due: Feb 27, on Quercus
Deadline to Drop Course Without Academic Penalty: Mar 24
Project 3 Due: Apr 4, on Quercus
Last Day to Submit Term Assignments: Apr 4
Request a LWD from a UTSC Course on eService: Apr 4
Study Break: Apr 7-8
Final Exam Period: Apr 9-30
Good Friday: Apr 18

COURSE POLICIES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Due dates are provided for each assignment in the course. The due dates have been chosen very intentionally, to keep you on track for completing your projects on time, and to be in sync with the material covered in the lectures. We strongly recommend that you submit each assignment by the posted due date. Failure to follow the due dates is very likely to lead to trouble with successfully completing the projects on time.

However, with that said, we recognize that sometimes life gets in the way. Therefore, all students will be able to submit their assignments up to 7 days after the due date without penalty, and without needing to document why the submission is late. You do not need to contact us about this – just submit the assignment on Quercus as soon as it is ready.

Assignments submitted after this 7 day grace period will receive a penalty of 20% of the total possible score per 24 hour period (or part thereof) that the assignment is late (e.g., if you submit 6 hours after the end of the 7 day grace period, and you get 80/100, you will receive a grade of 60/100 on that assignment).

EMAIL

We will do our best to respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving the email. You should not expect responses to emails outside of normal business hours (M-F 9-5). The course has been designed so that you do not need to work on weekends (unless you choose to), and we ask

that you respect the personal time of the instructor and TAs in a similar manner. Email contact information can be found on the Quercus homepage for the course. Please include "PSYC58" at the beginning of the subject line of any email related to the course, and please always use your UofT email address in correspondence about the course. Quercus mail is ok to use, but I find it a little clunky, so prefer normal email (george.cree@utoronto.ca).

CHANGES TO THE COURSE

The schedule, due dates, and nature of assignments are subject to change due to extenuating circumstances beyond our control. Some changes may be mandated by the University. Any other changes will be subject to a class vote, where a simple majority of those enrolled in the course must vote in favour of the change.

ACCOMMODATION FOR PERSONAL REASONS

There may be times when you are unable to complete coursework, including completing readings, viewing lectures, or attending tutorials, due to non-medical reasons. If this occurs during the term you should contact the course instructor immediately to discuss a strategy for completing or dropping the course. Failure to do so in a timely manner may leave you in a situation where it is impossible for you to successfully complete the course. It is also a very good idea in these circumstances to speak to an academic advisor as soon as possible.

UTSC POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences in papers and assignments include using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement, submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor, making up sources or facts, obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment. On tests and exams, cheating includes using or possessing unauthorized aids, looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test, misrepresenting your identity, or falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities. The University of Toronto is a richly diverse community and as such is committed to providing an environment free of any form of harassment, misconduct, or discrimination. In this course, I seek to foster a civil, respectful, and open-minded climate in which we can all work together to develop a better understanding of key questions and debates through meaningful dialogue. As such, I expect all involved with this course to refrain from actions or behaviours that intimidate, humiliate, or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem based on traits related to race, religion, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance or record of offences.

UNIVERSITY LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm AA142, Arts and Administration Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations 416-287-7560 or email ability.uts@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

All use of AI tools in this course for assignments must be appropriately documented (as will be described in the course). See <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt> for details (note that standards are rapidly evolving, and may change during the course itself!).

Students may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help with planning their assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit. It is important to note that current day AI is known to “hallucinate” meaning that, for example, it may make reference to research that does not exist, or it may describe research that does exist incorrectly. Fabrication of research evidence may constitute an academic offense. It is therefore YOUR responsibility to carefully fact check AI if you choose to use it.

Students may not use AI tools for the final exam, or for the visual or audio delivery of their presentation.

RECORDING OF CLASSROOM MATERIAL BY STUDENTS

Recording or photographing any aspect of a university course - lecture, tutorial, seminar, lab, studio, practice session, field trip etc. – without prior approval of all involved is not permitted.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY POLICIES

MISSSED TERM WORK POLICY

Department of Psychology Missed Term Work Policy

For missed term work (assignments and term tests) due to illness, emergency, or other mitigating circumstances, please follow the procedure outlined below.

Procedure:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) ("MTW Form").
2. Email **BOTH** your **MTW Form** and **Supporting Documentation** to george.cree@utoronto.ca according to the instructions specified below.

Supporting Documentation Requirements and Deadlines:

Reason for Missed Work	Documentation required for a first absence in the term	Documentation required for subsequent absences in the term	Deadline for submitting MTW form and supporting documentation
Illness or Injury	ACORN Absence Declaration	UofT Verification of Illness Form	<u>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</u> of the missed work
Bereavement	ACORN Absence Declaration	A death certificate or funeral announcement	<u>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</u> of the missed work
University-sponsored athletic or artistic obligation at the varsity/provincial/national level	ACORN Absence Declaration	A note from a university staff member (advisor, coach, residence staff, etc.) who can substantiate the obligation, sent directly to the course email	<u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u> of the missed deadline
Disability-related reasons for students registered with AccessAbility Services	For missed TERM TESTS , <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact your AccessAbility consultant and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed. For missed ASSIGNMENTS , <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If your desired accommodation is within the scope of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" and you need 3 days), send your Accommodation Letter to the course email and specify how many days extension you are requesting. 		<u>PREFERABLY IN ADVANCE OF THE MISSED WORK, OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If your desired accommodation is outside the scope of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that), contact your AccessAbility consultant and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed. 	
Academic Conflict (e.g. two midterms at the same time)	Screenshot from Quercus demonstrating the conflict.	<u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u> of the missed work
Religious Conflict	None required	

Notes:

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: social activities, recreational travel, technological issues, avoidance of assessments or deadlines, work commitments
- [Missed Final Exams](#) are handled by the Registrar’s Office and should be declared on eService.
- For ACORN absence declarations, the date you declare the absence is required to fall within the seven-day declaration period (i.e.) the absence cannot be submitted proactively or retroactively.
- Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, accommodations are only possible via the Registrar’s Office [petition process](#).
- If you are unable to submit your request within the specified number of business days, you must still email your instructor within that window to explain the nature of the delay. Exceptions to the deadlines are made only under exceptional circumstances.
- Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered academic conflicts. Students are expected to manage their time effectively to meet assignment deadlines.
- Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered academic conflicts. Only overlapping activities are conflicts.
- Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who register in two courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules will not be accommodated.

Next Steps:

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from your instructor or TA. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request. **You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily**, as accommodations may be time-critical.

For missed assignments, **do not wait for the instructor’s response to resume work on your assignment**. Extensions may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency. Complete your assignment as soon as you’re able, and email it to your instructor.

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting its requirements, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations.

Please make it clear in your subject line that you are requesting a second accommodation. Examples:
If you were granted an extension for a paper but are still unable to meet the new deadline, or if you miss a make-up term test, you must submit *another* MTW form and supply documentation according to the “subsequent absences” column in the chart above. *Note: In the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not necessarily be provided.