ER 190-002 Behavior and Sustainability
Spring 2012 (3 credits)
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:30 pm
56 Barrows Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aggregated effects of billions of individual decisions each day have large adverse effects on human and ecosystem health, natural resource stocks, and global climate change. While the causes of environmental degradation are anthropogenic, so too are the solutions. This course examines different perspectives on the motivations of human behavior, drawing on diverse disciplines, including psychology, economics, and sociology. Theories of behavior change and behavioral intervention case studies will inform student efforts to design viable programs that promote improved sustainability through behavior change.

INSTRUCTORS

This course will be led by doctoral students Chris Jones and Joe Kantenbacher of the Energy and Resources Group under the direction of Professor Isha Ray.

Chris Jones – cmjones@berkeley.edu
Joe Kantenbacher – kantner@berkeley.edu

Office hours available by appointment.

Course grader (and champion emeritus):
Sophia Ashton – sophiaashton@berkeley.edu

GRADING

1. Mini Write-ups: 20% - Students are expected to be actively engaged with course materials, and to discuss, debate, opine, and ask questions. Throughout the semester, students will do 10 mini write-ups (each worth 2% of the final grade) in response to provided prompts. Write-ups will be due on before class on Thursdays.

2. Lesson plan and discussion session: 20% – Working in pairs, students will be responsible for leading one class discussion over the course of the semester. Discussions should highlight material from lectures and readings, but are by no means limited to those subjects. Students will submit a final written lesson plan the day they lead discussion.

3. Midterm exam (Tuesday, March 13): 30% – The midterm will cover material from the first eight weeks of class, including concepts discussed in class and those from the reading. The exam will also require students to draw on work from their group project/individual research.
4. **Group project or individual research (due May 3): 30%** - The class project involves student groups (of up to four members) selecting from a range of “clients” from on campus and in the community who have or are interested in developing or improving a behavioral intervention. Students will evaluate the needs of the client as well as the relevant characteristics of the intervention and its target population. Students disinclined to participating in a group project may complete this part of the class by writing an independent research paper.

**READING**

All required readings will be posted to the course bSpace site. Assigned readings should be read prior to class on the day for which they are listed.

**Week 1 – Introduction and Organization**
Tuesday (1/17) – Introduction (Chris and Joe)
*Discussion of course objectives and syllabus*

Thursday (1/19) – Brainstorming session
*Prior to the formal introduction of material, students will identify sustainability-related behaviors to change and develop ideas for promoting that change*

*SIGN UP FOR DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP*

**Week 2 – Community-based Social Marketing**
Tuesday (1/24) – Lecture (Chris)
*Discussing the CBSM approach to structuring behavior change campaigns*

**ASSIGNED READING:**


Read Preface, Steps 1,2,3 (all - through “Developing Strategies Revisited”). Steps 4,5 and concluding remarks are recommended.

Thursday (1/26) – Semester project discussion

*WRITE-UP 1 DUE*

**Week 3 – Theories of Behavior and Behavior Change**
Tuesday (1/31) – Lecture (Joe)
*Major models of behavior: Rational Actor, Behavioral Learning Theory, Social Learning Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, Value-Belief-Norm Theory, Triandis’s Model*

**ASSIGNED READING:**


*Read sections 3, 4, 5, 6.3-4, 7.2-4, and 10.2-3. Much of the rest of Part 2 is interesting and relevant, though.*

Thursday (2/2) – Discussion

*Write-up 2 Due*

**Week 4 – Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes**

Tuesday (2/7) – Lecture (Chris)

*A look at how personal factors guide behavior*

**Assigned Reading:**


Thursday (2/9) – Discussion

*Write-up 3 Due*

**Week 5 – The Social Context of Behavior**

Tuesday (2/14) – Lecture (Joe)

*Examining the influences of other people/groups on behavior*

**Assigned Reading:**


Cialdini, Robert, 2003. “Crafting normative messages to protect the environment.” *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 12(4), 105-109


Thursday (2/16) – Discussion

*Write-up 4 Due*

**Week 6 – Habits and Choice Architecture**
Tuesday (2/21) – Lecture (Joe)

*Exploring automaticity and not-fully-conscious decision-making*

**ASSIGNED READING:**


Thursday (2/23) – Discussion

* Group Project/Independent Paper Declarations Due
* Write-up 5 Due

**Week 7 – Messaging, Marketing, and Cognitive Considerations**

Tuesday (2/28) – Lectures (Chris)

*Cognitive factors and the effect of language and framing on behavior*

**ASSIGNED READING:**


Thursday (3/1) – Discussion

* Write-up 6 Due

**Week 8 – Community Capacity Building**

Tuesday (3/6) – Lecture (Hazel)

**ASSIGNED READING:**


**Week 9 – Midterm**  
Tuesday (3/13) – **Midterm Exam**  
Thursday (3/15) – Discussion

**Week 10 – Consumption**  
Tuesday (3/20) – Lecture (Joe)  
  *Happiness and status as drivers of consumption behavior*

**Assigned reading:**


Read either the piece by Chancellor and Lyobomirsky or the piece by Frank. (They’re both good.) Also read either Neliseen and Meijers or Sundie, et al. It’s Choose Your Own Adventure week.

Thursday (3/22) - Discussion

*Write-up 8 Due*

**Week 11 – Special Topics 1**  
Tuesday (4/3) – Speaker TBD

Thursday (4/5) – Discussion

*Write-up 9 Due*

**Week 12 – Special Topics 2**  
Tuesday (4/10) – Speaker TBD

Thursday (4/12) – Discussion

*Write-up 10 Due*
**Week 13 – Special Topics 3**  
Tuesday (4/17) – Speaker TBD  
Thursday (4/19) - Discussion

**Week 14 – Wrapping Up**  
Tuesday (4/24) – Lecture (Chris and Joe)  
Thursday (4/26) – Discussion

**RRR Week – Project Party**

Thursday (5/3) – Final briefings on semester reports

*Final project reports due*