Conservation behavior is becoming an increasingly important concept as natural resource managers, development officers, educators, politicians, regulators, and business leaders consider what it takes to nudge people toward sustainable behaviors. Most acknowledge that our behavior plays an important role in creating and resolving environmental challenges. This course will explore what we know about human behavior and apply it to the design of helpful education and communication tools.

A variety of disciplines have something to contribute to the field of conservation behavior. While this class will be firmly rooted in psychology, we will also explore other social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, and communication.

While it is important to understand environmental issues, that is not the purpose of this course. Education and communication play essential roles in creating a sustainable future. We will explore the theoretical foundation and application of using education and communication strategies in our collective efforts to reach this goal. This course is geared toward those who will be conducting research on behavior change through work with the public in a variety of formal and informal settings to develop strategies that support responsible environmental behavior.

Because of concerns about infection and illness, this syllabus describes the plan for an online course. We expect each student to participate in synchronous discussions with a camera and microphone sufficient for engaging with others. Cameras will be on unless bandwidth is an issue. We aim to mimic in-person discussion as much as possible. If we believe at least some of us can meet in person safely, we will do that on Wednesday afternoons when possible. We will make this decision when we have more information.

**Course Overview:**
Link theories of human behavior and change to education and communication research and strategies designed to move toward sustainability.

**Course Objectives:**
- Explain the models or theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyze the questions: Why do some people demonstrate environmentally responsible behaviors (ERB)? What are some psychological barriers to pro-environmental
behavior? What encourages the formation and adoption of ERB? Students will identify the similarities and differences among these models and become comfortable using them.

- Increase familiarity with social science research designs and goals to discuss what we can learn from theories and models and how they add value to your research.
- Explain a range of education and communication strategies and identify the underlying theoretical assumptions about human behavior.
- Examine current programs that are working toward sustainability by identifying how the programs address change, the behaviors that are targeted, the strategies that are used, and the theoretical frameworks/assumptions that might drive the programs.
- Explore your own ideas and experiences regarding personal behavior change and develop a composite model of what you think works to support behavior change in people like you.

**Required Readings:**

There is a pile of reading materials for this course. It is imperative that you read the materials before class, as much of our class time will be spent discussing the readings. The readings are available on electronic reserve at [https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/](https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/) and there is a link to them in the Canvas course at [https://elearning.ufl.edu](https://elearning.ufl.edu). Access from off campus is through the UF VPN client. For more information on downloading, installing and using the VPN client, please go to [http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html). For general information on course reserves, please contact the Course Reserves Unit at 352-273-2520, or email at [eres@uflib.ufl.edu](mailto:eres@uflib.ufl.edu).

To find readings, please use the tags. Required readings are tagged by the week they should be read (i.e., Week 3). Loads of goodies are tagged Optional and Background.

**Course Policies**

**Participation**

This course depends on active student engagement. You will read and discuss a number of models and research studies that contribute to our understanding of conservation behavior. The workload is heavy on theory and thinking in the first half of the course to give you a practical, working knowledge of this literature. The time you spend on reading probably correlates to your ability to engage in productive discussion and the amount you will learn about each theory.

Students are expected to attend class, engage in discussion, submit assignments on time, and participate in group work. Absences will be excused if accompanied by advanced notice or appropriate paperwork and if students join the online discussion for that week. Non-excused absences will result in a deduction of .5 points from the participation score per week. Assignments should be uploaded to Canvas by midnight (Eastern time) on the day they are due. If you are unable to attend class meetings (online or otherwise), you
are expected to obtain notes from another student and engage on the Canvas discussion space.

**Diversity and Inclusion**
As we work to recognize the opportunities and limits of privilege and change the outcomes of systemic injustice in the United States, it is important that we create a safe environment in this class to explore sensitive topics and help each other grow in our ability to respect all people and help them thrive. We can begin to do so by using inclusive and preferred language, acknowledging assumptions, considering the consequences and limitations of research findings, and seeking research that challenges the status quo.

**Academic Honesty**
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class. Please also refer to the UF guidelines on plagiarism at http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/msl/07b/instructorplagiarism.html and plan on avoiding all types of plagiarism: stealing, misquoting, insufficient paraphrasing, and duplication.

**UF Campus Resources**
Resources are available on campus for students having concerns or challenges related to their personal life, their academic progress, or their future that might interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

Health and Wellness U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 3921575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
http://www.police.ufl.edu/

Academic Resources E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learningsupport@ufl.edu. https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml.
Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.
http://www.crc.ufl.edu/

Library Support, http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask. Various ways to receive assistance with
respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing
documents. http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/

Student Complaints Campus:
On-Line Students Complaints: http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaintprocess

Software Use
All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the
laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary
damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are
also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Disabilities
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the
Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing
appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation
letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation.
Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the
semester.

Evaluation
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by
completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically
open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given
specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to
students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

Grades
Your grade will be determined from the level and frequency of participation,
presentations, attendance, and 8 assignments that total 100 points. The following scale
will be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.67 – 4.0</td>
<td>93 – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.33 – 3.66</td>
<td>90 – 92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1.67 – 1.99</td>
<td>73 – 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.33 – 1.66</td>
<td>70 – 72%</td>
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Course Schedule

Sept 2  Wk 1. Introduction, General Framework, Getting Started
Assignments and Comparison Chart
Thinking behind the course design
Discuss ideas for personal habitual behavior changes
Sign up for discussion responsibilities

Section 1: Exploring Theories

Sept 9  Wk 2. Intuitive and traditional models of human behavior change
Due: Assignment 1: Post your barriers and motives for personal behavior. Pick a Behavior Buddy to stay in touch with.
Every week: Comparison Chart and Behavior Update


Sept 16 Wk 3. Motives, values, attitudes and behavior change
Due: Assignment 2a


Ed Deci video on motivation
Dan Ariely video on motivation

**Sept 23**    **Wk 4. Perceptions: hope, identity, optimism and connection to nature**
Due: Assignment 2b


**Sept 30**    **Wk 5. Major models of behavior from psychology**
Due: Assignment 3a


**Oct 7**    **Wk 6. Major models influencing behavior from communication**
Due: Assignment 3b


**Oct 14 Wk 7. Presentations and Review (Assignment 5)**

Upload presentations and handouts by midnight Sunday October 11, though you can upload it any time prior to this, of course. Come to class prepared to ask questions of others, and answer questions about yours.


**Section 2: Apply Theories**

**Oct 21 Wk 8. Social Marketing**

Use your comparison chart to think about what theories social marketing uses! In small groups report on one of the social marketing tools. What it is, how it works, why it works, and provide a case study of it working. Explain Assignment 6.


Optional: Fostering Sustainable Behavior by Doug McKenzie-Mohr
Oct 28  Wk 9. Critique and Expansion of Social Marketing
We will discuss your mid-term Application Exercise (Assignment 6) as we expand social marketing ideas.


Videos: Nudge

Nov 4  Wk 10. Discuss your cases (Assignment 7)
Post your case studies to Voice Thread by Sunday.

Instead of readings this week, you’ll be reviewing everyone’s case studies! Discussion could be online or in-person, depending on how things go.

Nov 11  Wk 11. Moral and worldview contributions to behavior
Assignment 4a


Videos: Haidt
Nov 18  Wk 12. Change at the Community Level  
 Assignment 4b


Nov 25  No Class    Thanksgiving Break

Dec 2  Wk 13. Ramping Up Behavior Change - online


Section 4: Synthesis

Dec 9 Wk 14. Putting it All Together - online

Assignment 8 due in draft. Final paper due by Dec 12.
Submit your synthesis paper and model. Present your experiences with your Behavior Buddies to compare what worked and why to change your behavior. Organize a joint model with others who have selected a similar set of theories, discuss and draw a model. Present on your joint model.

Assignments

1. Barriers and motives for personal behavior Sept 9 5 points
Throughout this semester you will use readings and class discussions to change a personal behavior that you select. To give yourself the most fodder for contemplation, please select a behavior that you do frequently that relates to food, transportation, consumption, waste reduction, or energy.

For this first assignment, you will 1) define the behavior you wish to change, 2) explain why you think this is an important behavior to change, 3) explain why you haven’t changed it yet, 4) describe the barriers you experience to making this change, and 5) describe your motivations for wanting to change it. 1-2 pages, single spaced. There is a template on Canvas you may use.

Then, throughout the semester you will keep a journal that records your attempts and measures your success, try different strategies to adopt a new behavior, discuss your efforts with “behavior buddy” and analyze your efforts in the context of the theories we discuss in this course. Aim to record evidence of your attempts, in addition to your thoughts about your behavior, and to reflect on your progress with your Behavior Buddy during class.

2, 3, and 4. Three research articles on theories 10 points each
For each assignment, select one theory/paper from class that you are interested in and find a research-based article that explores this theory with a topic of interest to you. Please avoid assigned reading for the course (you will have to check ahead in the syllabus). Read the article, write a 1-2 page paper in which you summarize the findings and reflect on the theory you selected, and come to class prepared to discuss how the theory we read has or has not worked in this case (or include in online posting). Submit your paper on the day we discuss the theory.

- Assignment 2: If you select cognitive dissonance, motives, or any of the theories listed in the Dietz review, or Self Determination this is due Sept 16. If you select learned helplessness, hope, or environmental identity, it is due Sept 23.
- Assignment 3: Use TPB or Stern’s Coherent Theory for a paper due Sept 30, or use ELM or Diffusion for a paper due Oct 7.
• **Assignment 4**: Use Moral Reasoning or Cultural Cognition for a paper due Nov 11, or social identity, social learning, social capital for a paper due Nov 18.

Please note that these authors have written about many things – aim to find articles that reference these theories. In addition, some authors talk about someone else’s theory – please hunt for research articles that **test and explore the theory**. To find cited works, go to [www.uflib.ufl.edu](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu) and follow these steps: Click on Databases and Journals tab, then Project Starters, Web of Science, Cited Reference Search, and input Cited Author and Cited Work. Narrow your search with ‘social science,’ etc.

5. **Present another behavior change theory**  
**Oct 14 10 points**
Using Vining’s overview of behavior change theories (and others), identify one that we have not yet covered and become an expert on it. You may work in pairs on this assignment if you wish. You will explain the theory, find at least two articles that use the theory, and explain those too. Some may not have been applied to conservation topics yet. What can we learn from these authors? Prepare a 1-2 page handout for the class to accompany your short (5-10 minute) ppt presentation that will help everyone complete their Comparison Charts. Upload your handout and presentation to Voice Thread by October 11 and narrate the presentation in Voice Thread. Respond to comments and questions in class on October 14.

- Bandura: Self efficacy and outcome expectancy
- Brehm and Brehm: Reactance
- Chawla: Significant Life Experience
- Fazio: Attitudes and Behavior
- Hungerford and Volk: Environmental Citizen Model
- Kahneman and Tversky: Decision Heuristics
- Kaiser and Shimoda: Responsibility
- Kals & Schumacher: Emotional Affinity
- Krasny: Civic Ecology Education
- Millar and Millar: Direct Experience, Information
- Prochaska: Stages of Change
- Sansone: Self Regulation
- Schwartz: Norm Activation
- Seguin & Pelletier: Environmental activism
- Tuan: Sense of Place (see Jorgensen and Stedman)

6. **Application of Theories**  
**Oct 28 5 points**
Complete a “take home quiz” that asks you to apply these theories to potential survey questions. Submit your responses prior to class, and we will discuss on October 28. You’ll be able to submit a revised version and new reflections after class discussion.

7. **Case study of a program/project**  
**Nov 4 15 points**
Identify a program or project that is designed to encourage people to engage in or change environmental behavior. Describe the program, critique the degree to which the program is successful, and suggest which theories are or are not working. Explain why. Create and
narrate a powerpoint that describes your program or project and makes clear the connections to theory. Upload to Voice Thread by Sunday Nov 1 so that everyone can review the programs prior to class. We’ll discuss similarities, differences, and the ways theories could have been more helpful on Wednesday. This could be an opportunity to meet in person if you want to bring posters instead of creating powerpoints; let’s discuss.

8. Reflection & Model of Personal Behavior Change Dec 9/12 15 points
Throughout the semester you have worked on changing a personal behavior that you selected. Return to your first assignment and reflect on your initial ideas about motivations and barriers. Review your journal that noted your attempts to alter your behavior and the evidence of your effort. Reflect on what worked and why. What incentives did you try? Did commitment work? To what extent is perceived control or subjective norm a relevant factor? Summarize your experience in the language we used in the course (identifying variables, barriers, theories, etc.) in about 2 single spaced pages.

Then, using what did or did not work for you, develop and describe an all-encompassing synthesis model that explains your behavior change using at least four of the theories and models that resonate most strongly with your experience. You should consider and define the context in which this model might hold true – all behaviors, just personal behavior, just public behavior; any behavior or only self-selected behaviors; only when motivated by a class assignment, with peer support, etc. Then describe how you could use this model to design communication or education programs to change other people’s personal behaviors. Have a draft ready for our last class. The model description should be about 3-4 pages. If you need more time, you can submit the final assignment by Dec 12; it should be no more than a total of 5 pages, single spaced, with a graphic model.

Participation points from participation, questions, attendance 20 points
Asking questions, providing answers, facilitating conversation, attending class, and engaging in small group work are important components of this class. Points will based on quality of participation in discussion – online and/or in person. One point is allocated for each discussion on Canvas; other points will come from synchronous discussion.

Suggested background to support conservation behavior


Specific theories and papers to help with Assignment 5


Optional readings that support class discussions


