

The Psychology of the Climate Crisis

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What will you learn from this Elective?	<p>Climate change is the biggest challenge facing our planet and its inhabitants. It has been directly caused by us. Yet, it is a challenge that humans are struggling to address in any meaningful way. This module leverages multidisciplinary perspectives on <i>human psychology</i> to answer three big-picture questions about the Climate Crisis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did we get here?</i> What is it about human thought and behaviour and the structures and systems we have created that has led to the current crisis? • <i>What are the effects?</i> How is the Climate Crisis affecting human health, behaviour, and well-being, and how will it affect us in the future? In what way are these effects unevenly distributed across the world and what are the implications of this inequity? • <i>What can we do?</i> How we can leverage our understanding of human thought and behaviour to address the crisis at multiple levels of our society, using both conventional and more radical approaches? <p>In doing so, the module will expose students to a spectrum of new domains of knowledge, methods of enquiry, and epistemologies</p>
Student Workload	<p>125 hours in total.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 face to face lectures (1hr): 8 hrs + 12hrs reading • 4 flipped classrooms (1hr pre-recorded lecture; 1hr face to face facilitated discussion seminar): 8hrs + 12hrs reading • 8 pre-recorded lectures (1hr): 8hrs + 12hrs reading • Workshops: 2 x 2hr face-to-face workshops on (1) climate-related public health communication and (2) climate mourning and hope + 9hrs related reading, research, and discussion • Group project (social media communication): topic research, group meetings, reading, and group-based and individual assignment completion: 22hrs • Individual assignment (Policy Brief): topic research, reading, and assignment completion: 30hrs
Assessment Components	<p>(1) Group Project: Tailoring and disseminating psychologically informed climate communications to the public via social media (<i>40% of final mark</i>) Students will work in groups of 3-4 (assigned) to compose <i>Tweet threads</i> OR <i>Instagram posts</i> OR <i>TikTok videos</i> aimed at changing public understanding of and action on climate change. Each of two communications will be supported by a 250-word <u>individually prepared</u>, fully referenced summary of the evidence base for the message (50% of assignment mark).</p> <p>(2) Policy Brief (60% of final mark). Working alone, students will produce and submit a policy brief (<1500 words) that aims to provide an identified decision maker(s) (e.g., political group, business, public body, etc.) with a brief, neutral overview of the evidence on a specific climate-related issue and to outline solutions in the form of actionable recommendations for policy change.</p>

Indicative Reading List

Readings and links to other media (e.g. recorded talks, podcasts, etc.) for each session will be made available through blackboard. Example readings are:

- Beattie G, & McGuire L. 2018. *The Psychology of Climate Change*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Van der Linden S, Maibach E, & Leiserowitz A. 2015. Improving public engagement with climate change: Five “best practice” insights from psychological science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(6), 758-763.
- Heglar MA. 2018. The big lie we’re told about climate change is that it’s our own fault. *Vox*. Retrieved from: <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2018/10/11/17963772/climate-change-global-warming-natural-disasters>

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, students will be able to:

- Evaluate how human thought and behaviour, and our *inventions* - the structures and systems we have created - have led to the current crises;
- Explain how the climate crisis and biodiversity loss affect human health, behaviour, and well-being, and explain the need for climate justice and a just transition;
- Explain how human thought, emotion, and behaviour can be manipulated for better and for worse;
- Apply and communicate knowledge of human psychology to motivate and provoke action on the climate and biodiversity crises.