

Course Description

Affecting change is at the heart of all sustainable development efforts. While change is an unavoidable part of human existence, change theorists and practitioners agree that our most natural, and often first, reaction is to resist change. The current course proposes how an understanding of the human response to change as well as an appreciation of the change process can enable us to approach sustainable development more effectively.

The objective of the course is to expose the students to the most relevant, and most influential research in the field of psychology that underpin our understanding of human behavior. The students will not only build an appreciation for the various theoretical concepts but also review research/ case studies that have successfully *applied* these concepts in sustainability and other relevant change contexts.

To begin, the course will first build an understanding of human behavior as a rational, cognitive, affective outcome. This area of research views behavior as a well-reasoned, self-led, self-regulated outcome.

The course will then proceed to consider research in social psychology which suggests that while individual cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors matter, they are far less important than situational determinants of behavior. In fact, more often than not our behavior occurs as a response to widely held social norms.

Having built an appreciation of the individual level, group level and societal level determinants of behavior, the course will then steer the discussion towards understanding, if there is a process to change? While change happens quickly, transition on the other hand is internal and slow. Transition involves what happens in people's minds as they go through change. Once we shift our focus from 'change' to 'transition' we can effectively facilitate people to move through the various stages by streamlining our strategies and approach. Sustainable change can be achieved if we minimize the key resistance factors, and maximize the relevant driving factors.

Some of the key topics to be covered include:

- Role of external reinforcements (rewards and punishments) in changing behavior.
- Behavior as a triadic, dynamic and reciprocal interaction between person, behavior and environment. Learning behavior through observation, imitation and modelling.
- The role of beliefs and attitudes in determining behavior. Importance of perceived control and self-efficacy in adopting change.
- Attitudes, components of an attitude, attitude accessibility and attitude strength (stability, resistance, accessibility).
- Models of information processing: Heuristic-systematic model of processing and Elaboration Likelihood Model (routes to persuasion or attitude change).
- Norms and institutions. Institutional Iron cage and isomorphism.
- Conformity, social proof, pluralistic ignorance, bystander apathy.
- Behavioral consistency, commitment bias, cognitive dissonance, commitment escalation during failure.
- Understanding scarcity, liking and authority in the context of social influence.
- Leveraging social networks, strength of weak ties, structural holes as opportunities bridging networks for flow of information, behaviors and change.
- Forced-field analysis, Bridge's Transition model, Kotter's Change model.

- Role of Trust, Fairness, Justice and Commitment in the context of change.

Some of the significant theories that will be covered as a part of the above topics: Behavioral Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attitude Change and Persuasion. Institutional theory, Conformity theory, Cognitive Dissonance, Reactance theory, Prospect theory, Similarity-Attraction theory, Social Network theory, Tragedy of Commons, Theory of Quasi Stationary Equilibrium, Equity Theory, Trust, Theories of Fairness & Justice - distributive, procedural and interactional, Just-World theory.

Learning Objectives

- Establish a solid behavioral groundwork with pillar psychological theories for the students to anchor themselves in.
- Enable the students to understand, predict and explain real world behavioral phenomena during the course of their research.
- Enable the students to approach change with more maturity and preparedness and design effective strategies & interventions for change.
- Integrate and make connections naturally into other areas of inquiry.
- Acquire a vocabulary and cultivate the depth needed to both access, and in turn be accessible to, research in the international academic community.

Instructional Materials

Specific readings will be assigned to the students on the topic to be covered every week. These will include articles from academic journals, chapters in books, media resources etc. from the fields of psychology, sociology, management, consumer behavior, marketing and others.

The students are greatly encouraged to rely upon the following reference material to deepen their understanding of the topics covered in class.

Books:

1. Cialidini Robert B. (1984), **Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion**, Harper Collins.
2. Bridges, William (1991), **Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change**. Mass: Addison-Wesley.
3. Kotter, John P. (1996), **Leading Change**. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.
4. Ajzen I. (1985) *From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behavior* in Kuhl J Beckman J, Editors. **Action control: From Cognition to Behavior**. New York: Springer-Verlag.
5. Bandura, Albert (1986), **Social Foundations of Thought and Action:A Social Cognitive Theory**. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
6. Eagly, A. H. and S. Chaiken (1993) **The Psychology of Attitudes**. Harcourt Brace Javanovich College Publishers.
7. Fazio RH, (1986), *How Do Attitudes Guide Behaviour?* In Sorrentino RM, Higgins ET, editors. **Handbook of Motivation and Cognition:Foundations of Social Behavior**. New York:Guilford Press.
8. Petty, Richard and John T. Cacioppo (1996), **Attitudes and Persuasion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches**. Westview Press.
9. Powell Walter W. and Paul J. Dimaggio (1991) **The New Institutionalism in Organizational**

analysis.

Course Format

The course will involve a series of seminars conducted on a weekly basis. The learning will be based on the participation of the students, their grasp of the theoretical concepts, as well as their ability to connect and transfer their learning to real world applications. The quality of the seminar will be dependent on the quality of discussions that will enable the class to arrive at key takeaways, individually and collectively. Thus the students will be expected to have reviewed and synthesized the assigned material and come prepared to share their understanding.

Participation: The students will be expected to engage and share their thoughts and key highlights from the material (20% of course evaluation).

Mid-Term paper: The students will be expected to write a paper on a theme selected by the student from a list of topics identified by the instructor (30% of course evaluation).

Final Exam: The students will be expected to write a take home exam (50% of course evaluation).