

PSY4130/4131 Cognition in the Wild

Spring 2026

Tu/Th 10:45 am - 12:05 pm

[BEHS 712 \(Social and Behavioral Sciences Building\)](#)

Instructor

Dr. Cory Inman, PhD (he/him)

Email

cory.inman@psych.utah.edu

Office Hours and Location

Email to schedule, Social and Behavioral Sciences Building, Office 1031 or Zoom

Contact

Email is the best way to reach me. Please don't hesitate to reach out to set up a meeting. I will do my best to respond to emails within 48 hours.

Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements.

Required Materials

I strive to support local businesses, so I would like to request that you please buy these books at the new Ken Sanders Rare Book Store location in the Leonardo Museum in downtown Salt Lake City (209 E 500 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84111). He will have them in stock waiting for you. If you are unable to purchase them at the bookstore, feel free to purchase online. These are the only books that you will need to purchase. The rest of the readings will be available on Canvas.

The Nature Fix by Florence Williams

ISBN-13: 978-0393242713

Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why by Laurence Gonzales

ISBN-13: 978-0393353716

General Course Information

Pre-Requisites and Requirements

The pre-requisites for this course involve a "C" or better in PSY 1010 or PSY 1011, or an AP Psychology score of 3 or higher OR IB Psychology score of 5 or higher. This class does not meet a GE requirement.

Course Description

This seminar focuses on how humans interact with the natural environment. How does nature affect mental health? How does nature affect cognitive health? How does interacting with nature affect stress? How can we encourage people to spend time in nature, while still conserving it? What are some of the barriers to accessibility, especially for groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the outdoors? We will use Southern Utah as a case study in exploring these questions. As part of the course, we will take a 4-day camping trip to Southern Utah. We will hike the slickrock, observe pictographs and petroglyphs, visit several ancient Ancestral Puebloan dwellings, and try to answer these questions through our own experience.

Expectations, Goals, and Learning Outcomes

This course is a seminar format in which we will collectively read papers, chapters, or books on various topics and then have class discussions about the readings. Tuesday class periods will generally consist of lecture-style presentations from me or a guest speaker on a given topic. Thursday will consist of student-led discussions on the content of the lecture and readings from that week. The class is designed to be a collaborative experience in which we learn from each other. We will sample broadly from the literature and focus on the intersection of the sciences and the humanities. The class should be fun and thought-provoking, but it does require reading, writing, and field experience. The goals of this course are as follows:

1. To understand and describe the various theories underlying the health and cognitive benefits of time spent in nature.
2. To understand and implement the scientific method.
3. To be able to critically evaluate the scientific research that has been done related to nature, stress, and cognition.
4. To actively engage in group discussion and respectful debate surrounding the topics we will discuss in class.
5. To develop your own research plan to test a scientific hypothesis.
6. To consider scientific evidence through an interdisciplinary lens, including taking multiple diverse perspectives into account regarding the human connection to nature.
7. To understand the barriers to accessibility to nature, especially for diverse groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the outdoors.
8. To develop an understanding of the threats that face our climate and the role of the individual in conservation and climate action.

Sustainability Course Attribute

This course fulfills the University of Utah requirements of the sustainability course attribute. Specifically, the four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be explored in this course include:

- Goal 3: Good Health & Well-being
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities
- Goal 13: Climate Action
- Topic Area 4: Nature & Culture

Certain topics and assignments in this course are intended to directly engage discussion surrounding each of these SDGs. To meet Goal 3, we will dedicate two weeks at the beginning of the semester to explicitly explore the intersection between exposure to natural environments, health, and well-being. These topics will then serve as a through line of discussion throughout the semester and are reflected in Learning Outcome #1. You will also hear from speakers whose work revolves around breaking down the “barriers to entry” that keep traditionally underrepresented groups from accessing nature. These discussions, as well as Canvas Discussion Posts related to identifying the gaps in the nature and cognition scientific literature regarding issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, will address Goal 10 and Learning Outcome #7. In the latter half of the semester, we will shift our focus to conservation and environmental stewardship. Goal 13 and Topic Area 4 will be addressed through reading excerpts from *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer to understand indigenous wisdom regarding the health benefits of being in nature.

Learning Philosophy

This course is meant to pique your interest in the benefits of the natural environment on human cognition and stress. It will expose you to the literature surrounding the physiological, cognitive, and socio-cultural processes involved in the human connection to nature. I will do my best to fulfill this goal, but it is essential that you are engaged with the course in order to meet these outcomes. Attendance in class, active participation in the discussion, and completion of all the readings and written assignments will help you achieve this goal. Please let me know how I can support you in your learning.

Classroom Belonging

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of your identities. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

1. Attendance and Participation in Discussion (10%)

Attendance will be taken every class period. You are allowed to miss two classes with no deduction from your grade. Participation is key in this course, so attendance is essential.

2. Weekly Discussion Posts on Canvas (15%)

Each week, you are expected to answer thought-provoking questions or engage in short activities that will be posted on the Discussion Board in Canvas. You are also welcome (and encouraged) to add your own, unprompted thoughts about the readings. Your post will help the discussion leader lead a class conversation on Thursday. Late posts will not receive credit. You may miss two weeks of discussion posts with no deduction from your grade. **Due at 11:59 pm on Wednesday evenings (the night before class).**

Note: To receive full credit, discussion posts need to be substantive. Yes/no answers, definitional answers, or mere summaries of the texts will not suffice. Posts will need to be at least a paragraph or two long to address all the readings and display critical thinking. The intention of the discussion post is to prompt thoughtful discussion in class on Thursdays.

These posts will be graded on a 0 to 3-point scale:

- 0 = Nothing submitted
- 1 = The post is somewhat superficial, minimally related to the readings
- 2 = Good points/work, but they are limited in scope and could be more substantive
- 3 = Meaningful, thought-provoking work that stimulates discussion and introspection

3. Discussion Leader (10%)

Most Thursdays, 3-4 students will lead the discussion. As the discussion leaders, you are expected to give an overview of the readings from the week and how they relate to the bigger picture of the interaction between humans and the natural environment. Your goal as a discussion leader is to foster thoughtful exchange among students in our class. Your best resource will be the material contributed by classmates in their discussion posts. You are responsible for organizing everyone's contributions into a few themes and calling on people to pose their questions or discuss their responses in more detail

during class. As the discussion leader, you must, of course, read the material ahead of time so that you have thought about it on your own as well. Try to be creative in how you choose to lead the discussion! You may use handouts, interactive activities (going outside is a perk), videos, additional texts, demonstrations, etc. It is often helpful and interesting to find videos or articles online that provide new perspectives on the topic you are presenting on. You will be graded on your ability to facilitate discussion and engage with the class.

4. **Participation and Presentation on the Field Trip (30%)**

As part of the course, we will be going on a 4-day camping trip to Bonderman Field Station in Moab, UT. **If you are unable to come on the trip, you might consider taking this course a different semester when you are able to come.** The dates of the trip are **Thursday, April 16 to Sunday, April 19**. No camping experience is necessary! I will arrange all the logistics (campsite reservations, meals, hikes). The trip will cost \$100.00/student to cover food and campsites. We will carpool as best we can or use University vehicles.

On the trip, you and a partner will give a **10-minute presentation** on any topic of your choice that is relevant to the course. These presentations will be storytelling style and will take place around the campfire each night. In the past, topics have ranged from native Utah plants, to green burials, to how to make a fire with sticks and rocks, to songs written about the course material. This is a chance to add a more creative element to learning.

5. **Final Research Proposal (20%)**

I would like you to be thinking critically throughout the semester as to how you would measure the “nature effect” in relation to one of the Sustainable Development Goals discussed throughout the course (Goal 3: *Good Health & Well-being*, Goal 10: *Reduced Inequalities*, Goal 13: *Climate Action*, Topic Area 4: *Nature & Culture*). By the end of the semester, you will develop a research proposal for an experiment of your own design. Your final paper will include an Introduction, a Methods section, and an Expected Results section. The paper will be 6-8 pages (not including references), double-spaced, 1-inch margins, and will cite at least four peer-reviewed articles in APA style. A rubric and example research proposal will be available on Canvas. **Due at 11:59 pm on Friday, April 24th, 2025.**

6. **Research Proposal Draft (10%)**

To ensure that you are on track with the Final Research Proposal, you will submit a shortened version in the middle of the semester. This will include approximately 1-2 paragraphs of an introduction of the research proposal, a detailed research question, a hypothesis, and 2 paragraphs of methods (how you would measure this research question). The paper should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, and must have at least two peer-reviewed articles cited in APA style. I will provide detailed feedback on the research proposal draft, and it will be a useful starting point for your final paper. A rubric and example draft will be available on Canvas. **Due at 11:59 pm on Friday, February 28, 2025.**

7. **Research Presentation (5%)**

In the last two weeks of class, you will give a 5-minute presentation of your research proposal with 2 minutes of questions. You will give a very brief overview of your introduction, methods, and expected results. You may use PowerPoint for this presentation but must be limited to 1 or 2 slides.

Extra Credit

You can earn up to 3 extra credit points on your final grade in this course by participating in psychological experiments/completing alternative credit options.

Experimental Participation: The field of psychology has been established through scientific research examining how people learn, think, and feel, and through standardized assessment of learning, thinking, and feeling. Only by verifying our intuitions with empirical data can science advance. Your grasp of the nature of psychology's methods and claims is greatly enhanced by participating in the actual process of research and/or assessment.

To enhance students' awareness and understanding of this empirical process, the Department of Psychology provides the opportunity for students enrolled in psychology courses to participate in psychology research/assessment experiences during the semester. To accomplish this, the Department has established the Psychology Participant Pool. This Pool allows students to participate as participants in psychology research projects that have been approved by the University's Institutional Review Board, or to participate in practice assessments being administered by graduate students in clinical psychology. **Each hour spent participating in an experiment is worth .5 extra credit points.**

Important University Dates

Friday, January 16: Last day to add or drop classes

Friday, February 27: Last day to withdraw from classes

Sun.-Sun., March 8-15: Spring Break

Tuesday, April 21: Classes end

Grading

This course will be graded using the associated letter grades and averages, which will be strictly enforced.

93-100%	A	77-80%	C+	60-63%	D-
90-93%	A-	73-77%	C	<60%	F
87-90%	B+	70-73%	C-		
83-87%	B	67-70%	D+		
80-83%	B-	63-67%	D		

Late Assignments

Late discussion posts will not be accepted. Keep in mind that you can miss two discussion posts without penalty to your final grade. If you need to move a due date for the research proposal draft or the final paper, please let me know at least a week ahead of time and we can arrange for a new due date that will not affect your grade. If any of the assignments are late without a pre-approval, 5% of the grade will be deducted for that assignment for every day that it is late.

Academic Misconduct

It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code (<https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>) and the Psychology department's policies (https://psych.utah.edu/undergraduate/files/acad_misconduct_policy.pdf).

I encourage students to refrain from utilizing AI language models, such as ChatGPT, in their writing assignments. The primary goal of this course is to nurture your individual intellectual growth, critical thinking, and scientific writing skills. Embracing the challenge of formulating your own thoughts and arguments will

enhance your learning experience and deepen your understanding of the subject matter. Instead, rely on your insights, research, and creativity to craft well-structured and original pieces of writing. Engaging in this process will not only foster academic integrity but also empower you to express your unique perspectives effectively.

Behavioral Misconduct

I strive for our classroom to be a welcoming environment for all—no matter your gender identity, race, orientation, or beliefs. If a student is being disrespectful to the instructor or another student, they will be asked to leave the classroom and may be subject to further disciplinary action within the university.

Per university policy, no drugs or alcohol are allowed on the field trip.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week	Topic	Assigned Readings
Week 1: January 6th & 8th	Tu: Course Overview Th: Theoretical Approaches	For Th: Kaplan (1995) Ulrich et al. (1991)
Week 2: January 13th & 15th	Tu: The Scientific Method Th: Nature and Behavior	<i>The Nature Fix</i> , Intro & Chapter 1 Nadkarni et al. (2017)
Week 3: January 20th & 22nd	Tu: Risk and Emotion in Nature Th: Discussion	Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why Chapter 1
Week 4: January 27th & 29th	Tu: Nature and Affect/Well-being Th: Discussion	<i>The Nature Fix</i> , Chapter 9 Berman et al. (2012)
Week 5: February 3rd & 5th	Tu: Nature and the Brain I Th: Discussion	<i>The Nature Fix</i> , Chapter 2 Bratman et al. (2015) Sudimac et al. (2022)
Week 6: February 10th & 12th	Tu: Nature and the Brain II Th: Discussion	<i>The Nature Fix</i> , Chapter 8 LoTemplo et al. (2020) McDonnell et al. (under review)
Week 7: February 17th & 19th	Tu: Nature and Stress Physiology Th: Discussion	Park et al. (2009) Scott et al. (2021)
Week 8: February 24th & 26th	Tu: Visual Properties of Nature <i>Guest:</i> Dr. Jeanine Stefanucci Th: Discussion	<i>The Nature Fix</i> , Chapter 5 Schertz & Berman (2019) Research Proposal Draft due Friday, February 27th at 11:59pm
Week 9: March 3rd & 5th	Tu: Nature as a Clinical Intervention Th: Discussion	The Nature Fix, Chapters 10 & 11 Russell (2001) DeMille et al. (2018)
Week 10: March 10th & 12th	SPRING BREAK	
Week 11: March 17th & 19th	Tu: Diversity in the Outdoors <i>Guest:</i> Jose Gonzalez Th: Discussion	Walker et al. (2021) LoTemplo et al. (2023)
Week 12: March 24th & 26th	Tu: Climate Action <i>Guest:</i> Ginger Blodgett Th: Discussion	Braiding Sweetgrass: “The Sacred and the Superfund” The Wilderness Letter

		Jiang et al. (2024)
Week 13: March 31st & April 2nd	Tu: Decision-making in the wild I Guest Lecture: Dr. Kellie Gerbers Th: Discussion	Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why Chapter 4
Week 14: April 7th & 9th	Tu: Decision-making in the wild II Guest: Marco Johnson, NOLS Th: Discussion	Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why Chapters 3 and 7
Week 15: April 14th & 16th	Tu: Trip Preparation Th: Leave for Trip!!!	Trip leaves at 8:30 am on Thursday, April 16th and returns afternoon on Sunday, April 19th
Week 16: April 21st	Tu: Research Presentations	Fill out Course Feedback Final Research Proposal due Friday, April 24th at 11:59 pm

Student Resources

University Policies

Updated mandatory syllabus policies regarding the ADA Act, Safety at the U, Addressing Sexual Misconduct, and Academic Misconduct can be viewed at:

<https://cte.utah.edu/instructor-education/syllabus/institutional-policies.php>

Accommodations: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Wellness Statement: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness; www.wellness.utah.edu; 801-581-7776.

Veterans Center: If you are a **student veteran**, I want you to know that the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center on campus. They are located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

Learners of English as an Additional/Second Language: If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include:

Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu> (Links to an external site.))

Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu> (Links to an external site.))

English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli> (Links to an external site.))

Plagiarism/Cheating: It is assumed that all work submitted to your instructor is your own work. When you have used ideas of others, you must properly indicate that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code, "includes, but is not limited to, cheating,

misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct."

For detailed definitions and possible sanctions, see the Student Code: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php> (Links to an external site.)

Department of Psychology Undergraduate Academic Misconduct Policy: The Department of Psychology has a zero-tolerance policy for academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one's work, and inappropriately collaborating. This applies to any work students turn in for evaluation or course credit. Definitions can be found in the Student Code linked above.

If you are suspected of academic misconduct, the process proceeds according to the rules found in the Student Code, University Policy 6-400(V). **If you are found responsible for misconduct, consequences range from failure on the assignment to dismissal from the program**, consistent with both University and Psychology Department Policy.

Minor offenses (plagiarism in written work) include failure to use citations correctly, because of lack of understanding of proper procedures for crediting ideas, rather than intention to cheat (with no evidence of lifted/stolen text). Major offenses include:

Cheating on a test, quiz, problem set, or other independent work.

Plagiarism in written work: Copying any quantity of text from another source or another student without quoting and citing the copied text.

Plagiarism in written work: Flagrant misuse of citations, such that a student clearly attempted to represent ideas that were not his/hers as if they were, even if the ideas were presented in the student's own words.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities.

All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the [Center for Disability & Access](#) (CDA). CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the [Instruction & Evaluation regulations](#).

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should never be made publicly available. In addition, recordings must be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

According to Title II regulations for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), federal law requires all educational content made available to students digitally at the University of Utah to meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards to ensure compatibility with assistive technology tools.

If you find that any content throughout this course is not compatible or needs additional assistance interpreting any of the content throughout this course, please contact your instructor. For further support, contact the Center for Disability and Access (info below).

If you will need accommodations in this class, or for more information about what support they provide, contact:

Center for Disability & Access

801-581-5020

disability.utah.edu

162 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Safety at the U

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more safety information and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

dps.utah.edu

1735 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to university officials:

Title IX Coordinator & Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

801-581-8365

oeo.utah.edu

135 Park Building

201 Presidents' Cir.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Office of the Dean of Students

801-581-7066

deanofstudents.utah.edu

270 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

To file a police report, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

dps.utah.edu

1735 E. S. Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence.

To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact:

Center for Student Wellness

801-581-7776

wellness.utah.edu

328 Student Services Building
201 S. 1460 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Academic Misconduct

It is expected that students comply with University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: [Policy 6-410: Student Academic Performance, Academic Conduct, and Professional and Ethical Conduct](#).

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code:

"...Includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct."

For details on plagiarism and other important course conduct issues, see the U's [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

Statement of my support for all individuals

I stand in support of compassion, dignity, value-of-life, fair treatment, belonging, and justice for all individuals regardless of color, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language, socioeconomic status, ability, gender, gender identity or expression, immigration status, or any type of marginalization. I stand in support of making our society more fair and compassionate for all individuals. I stand against discrimination in all its various forms.