

Psychology of Environmental Crisis

Course code: PSY 367/567

Term and year: Summer 2026, June 1-18.

Day and time: AAU, June 1-6 Class 2.03. June 8-18 Class 3.26. June: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18.

Instructor: Dr Joseph Dodds

Instructor contact: joseph.dodds@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: by appointment

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Intermediate
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	Introduction to Psychology
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	HSC, PS, JC Elective HUM Elective

1. Course Description

In our era of anxiety, denial, paranoia, apathy, guilt, hope, and despair in the face of climate change, this course introduces various psychological approaches to understanding environmental crisis, our relationship to nature and the nonhuman world, and the difficulties of psychological and social change. We shall apply a range of psychological methods and theories to the problem, with a focus on psychoanalytic contributions. The nonlinear sciences of complexity and chaos, as well as the philosophies of Bateson, Deleuze and Guattari, are also studied, together with new clinical applications from ecopsychology and ecotherapy, helping to contribute towards a critical dialogue between psychology and ecology.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Demonstrate abilities to apply definitions and main concepts of different psychological theories to explain and interpret different aspects of the environmental crisis.
2. Learn theoretically and experientially about the clinical practice of ecotherapy.
3. Provide evidence of their abilities to analyze, synthesize and evaluate the studied material through active participation in class.
4. Be able to compare and contrast difference between the psychological theories, outline the limits and controversies individual theories imply when describing the same phenomena.
5. Choose a topic relevant to the psychology of environmental crisis and prepare a presentation demonstrating their in-depth familiarity with their chosen theories' conceptual frameworks, and the ability to apply those in interpretation of an ecological/ environmental phenomena of choice.
6. Demonstrate and defend their individual critical evaluation and critically review other fellow students' positions.

7. Show active pursuit of in-depth discussions in seminars, ability to lead a class debate on a topic of choice, and demonstrate attainment of interpretive psychoanalytic perspectives applicable not just to the realm of ecology/nature but also phenomena ranging from culture, politics and psychology to psychopathology and the media.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

Psychology of Environmental Crisis Website: www.psychanalysis.cz/ecopsy.html.
 Required book: Dodds, J. (2011) *Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos: Complexity Theory, Deleuze|Guattari, and Psychoanalysis for a Climate in Crisis*. Routledge

4. Teaching methodology: Lecture, class discussion, group work, presentations, etc.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
June 1. Class 2.03. 5:30-9:15pm	<p><i>Topic:</i> Environmental Crisis: The Science of the Problem</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds (2011) Chapters 1-3. IPCC (2023) Report and Summary for Policy Makers. Roe Randall and Andy Brown (2016) In time for tomorrow? the international carbon conversations handbook (ch.1)</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> To be able to clearly explain the current science of climate change and the ecological crisis, and describe the complex dynamical systems model and its relation to the Earth-system, and the place of psychology within this system.</p> <p><i>Out of class activity:</i> Calculate your carbon footprint and prepare for discussion next class.</p>

<p>June 2. Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Psychology of Climate Change</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds. J (2011), chapter 4. APA Task Force on Climate Change (2026) Addressing the climate crisis: An action plan for psychologists . Roe Randall and Andy Brown (2016) In time for tomorrow? the international carbon conversations handbook (ch.2-3)</p> <p><i>Optional reading:</i> APA Task Force on Climate Change (2007) Psychology and Global Climate Change: Addressing a Multi-faceted Phenomenon and Set of Challenges</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> After this unit students should be able to clearly explain a range of different psychological approaches to climate change and ecological crises more generally, and be able to apply these ideas to themselves and their own experiences.</p> <p><i>Out of class activity:</i> conduct psychological survey/research on an optional topic in relation to ecological crisis.</p>
<p>June 3. Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Psychoanalysis, Freud, eco-anxiety and defence</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds (2021) The Psychology of Climate Anxiety. Dodds (2011) chapter 5-6.</p> <p><i>Optional reading</i> (assigned in class): Hoggett, P. (2011) Climate change and the apocalyptic imagination or Randall, R, (2009) Loss and Climate Change: The Cost of Parallel Narratives.</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> Students will be able to clearly describe different affective and emotional responses to ecological crises, and be able to articulate the various kinds of anxiety it can lead to, and the various individual and social defences against them. te on the Couch: Unconscious Processes in Relation to Our Environmental Crisis.</p> <p><i>Out of class activity:</i> explore your own feelings and strategies of dealing with them in relation to the environment.</p>
<p>June 4. Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Object relations and ecological relations</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J (2011), chapter 7. Jordan, M. (2009) Nature and Self – An Ambivalent Attachment?</p> <p><i>Optional reading</i> (assigned in class): Rust, M-J. (2008) Climate on the Couch: Unconscious Processes in Relation to Our Environmental Crisis. Randall, R. (2005) A New Climate for Psychotherapy? Searles, H. (1972) Unconscious Processes in Relation to the Environmental Crisis.</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> Students will be able to effectively apply the object relations and relational perspectives to ecological crises, including the role of various developmental levels and how they play out in individuals and groups. The relevance of this to psychoanalytic clinical practice will also be covered.</p> <p><i>Out of class activity:</i> Draw a picture of a scene from a natural environment linked to your childhood. Reflect on the feelings, memories, and identifications you have with the environment related to this picture. Discuss in class.</p>

<p>June 9. Exam 1 (30%) Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Deep ecology, ecopsychology and ecotherapy</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J (2011), chapter 8. Jordan, M. & Marshall, H. (2010) Taking counselling and psychotherapy outside: Destruction or enrichment of the therapeutic frame?</p> <p><i>Optional reading:</i> Kanner, Roszak & Gomes (1995) Ecopsychology Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind. Buzzell & Chalquist (2010) Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind. McGeeney (2016) With Nature in Mind: The Ecotherapy Manual for Mental Health Professionals. Rust (2020) Towards and Ecopsychotherapy. Hinds, Marshall, & Jordan (2026) Ecotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice & Education</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> To be able to critically evaluate the philosophical approach to nature of Deep Ecology, and the development of the field of ecopsychology. Students will also be able to assess the role of nature in therapy and the clinical practice of ecotherapy and outdoor therapy.</p> <p><i>Out of class activity:</i> Go into nature (park, forest, mountain, garden, as you wish), and move through the space until you find someone that feels 'right'. Spend time there (without your phone or book or other distraction). Notice what you experience from the world around you, and the world inside you. Connect the inner feelings (emotions, memories, thoughts) with the outer experiences. Notice as you breathe in and out you are physically exchanging carbon and oxygen atoms with the living things around you.</p>
<p>June 10. Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Postmodern ecopsychanalysis: ecology without nature.</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J (2011), chapter 9.</p> <p><i>Optional readings:</i> Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2003) <i>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i>, University of Minnesota Press (selected chapters). Bonta, M. & Protevi, J. (2004) <i>Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary</i>. Edinburgh University Press (selected). Timothy Morton, <i>The Ecological Thought, and Ecology Without Nature</i>. Dodds (2020) <u>Elemental Catastrophe: Ecopsychanalysis and the Viral Uncanny of COVID-19</u>. Stillpoint Magazine, number 004.</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> Following this class students should have an overview of posmodern and posthuman perspectives on ecology without nature, focusing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Timothy Morton, Slavoj Zizek, and others.</p>
<p>June 11. Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm. Presentation Proposal Due</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Animality in the three ecologies. Presentation proposal due.</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J (2011), chapter 9.</p> <p><i>Optional readings:</i> (assigned in class) Derrida, J. (2008). <u>The Animal That Therefore I Am</u> or Dodds (2012) <u>Animal Totems and Taboos: An Ecopsychanalytic Perspective</u> or Volkan, V. (2000) <u>Animals as Large-Group Symbols</u>.</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> <i>Learning Objectives:</i> The aim of this class is to explore different approaches to the 'animal' and the 'nonhuman' from various psychoanalytic, philosophical and posthuman perspectives. Students will be able to discuss different levels of symbols for animals and the non-human from phobias in clinical practice, to mythical, cultural and political meanings, to 'real' animals, and the interactions between the ecologies of mind, society and nature.</p>

<p>June 16. Presentations 1 (30%). Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Ecopsychanalysis of film and art.</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J. (2011) Chapter 10-11.</p> <p><i>Optional readings:</i> (assigned in class). Gabbard (1997) The Psychoanalyst at the Movies (bion, junglist). Dodds (2019a) ‘Between art, mind and nature, ecopsychanalytic reflections on Jaro Varga’s ‘We don’t know that we know’. Dodds (2019b) Feeling the future, finding our place in the world: Ecopsychanalytic reflections on ‘Future Perfect’ by Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> To explore what an ecopsychanalytic perspective can offer to aesthetics, including the role of art in our minds and society, and how art can be a place where our relation to nature can be explored, expressed, worked through, and understood. Students will provide examples in art and film and share their analysis with other students in class.</p>
<p>June 17. Presentations 2 (30%). Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Geophilosophy, nonlinear psychoanalysis and complexity,</p> <p><i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J (2011), chapter 12-13.</p> <p><i>Optional readings:</i> Palombo, J (2013) <i>The Self As a Complex Adaptive System</i>. Galatzer-Levy, R (2016). <i>The Edge of Chaos: A Nonlinear View of Psychoanalytic Technique</i>, and further optional readings on complexity in relation to biological, social, and ecological systems.</p> <p><i>Learning Objectives:</i> The aim of this class is to integrate the understanding of nonlinear dynamics, complexity and chaos theory from the first part of the course (science of climate change) with clinical psychoanalytic practice, and the benefits of such an integrative perspective.</p>
<p>June 18. Presentations 3 (30%). Exam 2 (30%). Class 2.03. 5-8:45pm</p>	<p><i>Topic:</i> Ecopsychanalysis: bringing it all together, <i>Required readings:</i> Dodds, J (2011), chapter 13. <i>Learning Objectives:</i> The aim of the final class is for students to integrate the ideas from throughout the course to develop their own perspective on ecopsychanalysis. Students will discuss these ideas in class and post a short text to the course email group.</p>

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance, homework and participation	75 hours	10%	Students are expected to join in and actively participate in class discussions and respond to other students presentations. This will include the overall participation as well as attendance. Students are expected to keep up with the readings and prepare for the discussions	1, 2, 3.
1 st Exam	25 hours	30.00%	The first exam will cover the first half of the course. It will take place on June 9th. The exam will take place in class, without notes or phones/laptop. Students should show a high level of comprehension of the area involved and good analytical abilities. They are expected to show a good grasp of the theoretical issues and make a good case to support their argument.	1, 2, 3
2 nd Exam	25 hours	30.00%	The second exam will cover the second half of the course take the form of assigned essays. It takes place in the last class (June 18th) The exam will take place in class, without notes or phones/laptop. Students should show a high level of comprehension of the area involved and good analytical abilities. They are expected to show a good grasp of the theoretical issues and make a good case to support their argument.	1, 2, 3

Final Presentation and Presentation Proposal	25 hours	30.00%	The final presentation will be on a relevant (approved) topic of the students choice, and can be written alone or with one other person. Students should show a high level of comprehension of the area involved and good analytical abilities. They are expected to show a good grasp of the theoretical issues and make a good case to support their argument. Presentations take place in the last three classes (to be assigned during the second week).	1, 2, 3
TOTAL	150	100%		

7.

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Attendance, Presentation, Participation

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Reading, analyzing and recording main ideas, problems and questions	
Posing relevant questions on readings in class	
Mindful presence and thoughtful involvement in class	
Completing readings and other homework tasks and tasks in class	
	10 %

Assignment 2: Exam Essays

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
The two exams will cover three sections of the course and include multiple choice, short answers and essays. To be done individually.	
Show a high level of comprehension of the area involved and good analytical abilities.	
Demonstrate a good grasp of the theoretical issues	
Make a good case to support their argument.	
	60% (30% per exam essay)

Assignment 3: Final Paper

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
	30%
Final paper on the students own independent research into the psychology of art, culture or society. To be done on their own or with one partner (not more).	
Demonstrating knowledge of concepts and essential issues, in writing	
Providing relevant discussion and examples	
Writing well-documented and well-argued essay	
Incorporate at least two different psychological approaches	
Show good abilities of analysis, synthesis and application of theory to a relevant topic.	
Scholarly researched, referencing, and bibliography.	
Demonstrate ability to take an independent position and be able to defend their point of view	

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question". All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Use of AI such as Chat GPT is forbidden for the writing of their presentation. Its use will result in a failure of the course.

Attendance

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is expected and encouraged. However, the requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he can submit to the Dean of Students an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. These must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

Electronic devices

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the exam or assignment will be failed and the student will be expelled from the exam or class.

Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.

8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU. If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Use of AI such as Chat GPT is forbidden for the writing of their essays and final paper. Its use will result in a failure of the course.

Course accessibility and inclusion

Students with disabilities are asked to contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive. Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95-100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90-94	
B+	87-89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	65-69	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60-64	
F	0-59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

10.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Joseph Dodds. Date: 1 June 2026

Approved by: _____ Date: _____