

Advanced Topics
Spring 2011
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Tuesday 2, 3
Tillett 105.

Title:

Assessing and Designing the Local and Global Emotional Environment: Focus on Positive Emotion

Description:

Why did Salk claim that going to a specific place in Italy led to the solution of the problem of the polio vaccine?
Why does a window view of trees reduce the need for pain killers for patients just out of surgery?
Why do flowers make men, women, old, young, the depressed, the not so depressed, smile and behave more socially, have a better memory?
Why do fractal arrangements change meditation and perception?

What does Psychology have to say about emotional aspects of the environment – not the individual, not the social, but the “surround”?

While the environment might support any number of emotions in a productive way, we will focus on positive emotion. Senior students will bring their psychology expertise from brain chemistry to perceptive process to personal and cultural values to new problems in assessing and designing the environment to affect emotions. The consequences include effects on physical health, mental health, intelligent or creative behavior as well as social behavior.

The course will have two units. The first unit introduces basic background, both on emotion and on environment. Clearly we will be selective. The second unit will involve a specific problem area and the possible designs for assessing or changing the emotional environment – it could be in a hospital, a business, a school or a gym.

Readings:

There will not be an assigned textbook. Readings will consist of book chapters and review/research articles. I have not selected all readings yet, but the books listed here would be excellent preliminary reading for those wanting to enter the course. The Weiner book is easy popular reading. The Sternberg and the Pallasmaa are meant for any educated reader but have more technical material. The Weiner is a background textbook. The Frederickson article is easily available on the web. It is a good place to start with concepts of why one would bother to assess and design environments for positive emotion. The Haviland-Jones research is from our lab at Rutgers.

Bell, P. A., Greene, T., Fisher, J., Baum, A. S. (2005), Environmental Psychology Psychology Press

Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences (The Royal Society of London) 359, 1367-1377.

Haviland-Jones, J., Rosario, H., Wilson, P., McGuire, T. (2005) An environmental approach to positive emotion: Flowers. Evolutionary Psychology, 3:104-132.

Haviland-Jones, J. & Wilson, P. (2007) Chemosenses and Emotion. In M. Lewis, J. M. Haviland-Jones, & Feldman-Barrett, L. (Eds.), Handbook of Emotion (3rd Edition). New York: Guilford Press.

Pallasmaa, J., (2005) The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses. Academy Press

Sternberg, E. (2009), Healing Spaces, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Weiner, E. (2008), The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World

Writing:

This is a writing intensive course. You will be building a 20 page research report. By mid-semester or the end of the first unit an 8-10 page review paper is due. This will be built from smaller essays during the first 8 weeks. During the second unit another 8-10 page paper that describes the design and assessment of one positive emotion space will be added in smaller sections. By the end of the semester the 15-20 page research paper is written.

As well as generating your own paper there is an assessment rubric to evaluate your own and one other essay. This will improve your own essay. The assessment of the other paper includes the re-writing of one section of the alternate essay. In return a section of your essay will be edited by another person. The writing training (and your grade for the course) provides several levels of writing: generating, evaluating and editing.

Assessment:

Course participation is necessary. Missing more than 2 classes will result in automatic failure. At the mid-term and conclusion of the course you will be evaluated on participation as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. You may present your own criterion (must be accepted by instructor) for evaluation but an unsatisfactory will bring down your grade by one letter. The remainder of the grading is based on the writing. You will have a cumulative grade based on the individual assignments (including the editing and assessment) and a summary grade based on the final paper. When these do not match, the summary grade will have more weight. The excellence of the final product is more important than how quickly you improve -- in this seminar.