

COURSE GUIDE (CSA 15:245:645)
ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

SPRING 2014



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Course Title: CSA 15:245:645: *Assessing Educational Environments*

Course Credit: 1.5 hours

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to focus on dimensions of human environments as tools for understanding the effects of educational environments on students. Theories of human environments will be applied to an understanding of specific educational environments, with consideration given to various policies and applications of educational practice within student affairs.

Texts/Resources: Strange, C.C., & Banning, J.H. (2001). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass. **(Required)**

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. **(Optional)**

Course Goals:

In general terms, the following course goals will be pursued:

1. To gain an explicit understanding of select theoretical approaches to the definition and description of human environments.
2. To acquire an appreciation for the application of environmental theory to educational policies and practices, focusing on the design of campus environments and their influence on student behaviors.
3. To gain insight as to how different campus environment factors may affect different students in different ways.
4. To continue developing skills of analysis, synthesis, and communication (verbal and written) with respect to theories and practices salient to student affairs work.

Course Format

Given the broad scope of the topics to be covered, this course will rely heavily on extensive reading as well as instructor facilitated and student-led discussions.

Course Topics

The content of this course tentatively includes the following topics.

- I. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS
- II. HUMAN AGGREGATES
- III. ORGANIZED ENVIRONMENTS
- IV. CONSTRUCTED ENVIRONMENTS
- V. INCLUSIVE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You determine your grade by the number of points earned on the various course activities. With this approach, there is no pre-conceived distribution of grades. Everyone or no one can receive an "A." There are four different course requirements (with assigned point values) specified below.

Activity	Points
1. Class Participation	10
2. Physical Environment Scan	25
3. Reading Cards (4 @ 5 pts.)	20
4. Environmental Assessment Paper	45
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Total	100

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION

10 points

An important aspect of this course is the exchange of ideas, opinions, questions, and information. Consequently, you are expected to come to each class **fully** prepared to participate in classroom discussion.

Points will be awarded for participation in several class discussions as follows:

Unusually good contributions	09-10 points
Good contributions	07-08 points
Minimal, but acceptable contributions	05-06 points
Essentially no contribution	00-04 points

In arriving at this total, points will be awarded in several class discussions as follows:

Obviously well-prepared, significant contributions	09-10 points
Well prepared, good contributions	07-08 points
Some preparation, minimal contribution	05-06 points
Simply there, little or no contribution, no participation	00-04 points

Your point total is determined by averaging ratings of your contributions over several class sessions. NOTE: **You lose 5 points for each class session missed.**

2. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT SCAN (IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT) 25 points

In groups, you will conduct a physical environment scan of a designated location on campus. In addition to a sketch that illustrates the physical environment, you will examine, among others, the following two questions: 1). What is the general nature of the physical environment's influence on human behavior? 2). How do the physical dimensions of any campus environment specifically impact the behavior of participants? A thorough analysis of the physical environment, what it communicates nonverbally, and how it shapes behavior will be the underlying premise of this assignment. Groups will work collectively in class and report findings at the end of class. Specific details and expectations of this assignment will be explained prior to the start of class.

3. READING CARDS 20 points

In addition to the assigned readings, you will be expected to complete supplemental readings on environmental issues impacting the higher educational environment. Please select four journal articles and complete the stated requirements cited in **Appendix B**. You are to select **one article** from each of the following course perspectives (Physical environments, human aggregates, organized environments, and constructed environments). The reading cards you choose should showcase articles that you will include in your environmental assessment paper.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PAPER 45 points

This assignment is intended to help you synthesize your knowledge of the four environmental perspectives (human aggregate, physical, structural/organizational, and perceptual) addressed in this course. In writing this paper, you should utilize the theoretical constructs (with appropriate documentation, of course) associated with these environmental perspectives to analyze your *current work* environment. Please refer to the guidelines to complete this assignment below and refer to **Appendix C** for the evaluation form.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PAPER GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Provide a brief description of the institution and office/department within which you work. How does your unit “fit” within the larger institution? What are its overall missions or more specific goals and objectives? What (briefly) are your titles(s), roles, and responsibilities within the unit?

HUMAN AGGREGATE

Describe the human aggregate of your internship/job site. What are the pertinent demographic, personality, and other characteristics of the group of people with whom you work? For this section you should use Myers-Brigg and/or Holland typologies. Whether or not you are familiar with actual scores on the MBTI, Strong, or other instruments, you should support your assessment of significant personality types by describing examples of behaviors. Remember that the human aggregate is defined by the collective, objective sum of the characteristics of the individuals within it. To what extent is the aggregate you choose to discuss homogeneous, consistent, differentiated, satisfied, stable, etc.?

PHYSICAL

Describe the natural and synthetic elements of the physical environment of your internship site. Diagrams, floor plans, photographs, or other visual materials appended to your paper are encouraged to illustrate the key points you wish to make in this section. You may wish to include comments regarding the environment’s location, particularly as it pertains to natural features, distances, traffic patterns, noise, etc.; the amount, arrangement, and use of space; institutional and personal amenities; and other constructs related to the physical environment as discussed in course readings, viewings, lectures, etc.

STRUCTURAL/ORGANIZATIONAL

Describe the predominant structural/organizational elements of your internship site. Your own “real” scores on the Organizational Dynamics Questionnaire (to be completed in class) may help you to describe your unit’s degree of centralization, formalization, stratification, complexity, etc. To what extent are these elements of your environment related to organizational effectiveness, size, change, development, etc.?

PERCEPTUAL

Describe your perceptual environment. That is, how do you (subjectively) “see,” interpret, and evaluate the environment you have described (objectively) in the previous sections of this paper? How close are your “real” and “ideal” environmental elements? To what extent are environmental factors what you expected? Have your perceptions changed or remained stable over time? Given your own personality characteristics, needs, interests, preferences, etc., what effect do your perceptions of various features of your environment have on your satisfaction with your internship experience?

The paper must meet APA (6th ed.) standards with respect to general format, citations/references, etc.; provide at least one-inch margins; 12-point font; and be no more than twelve double-spaced pages in length (excluding references).

You should have a minimum of eight references, including two listserv/WWW citations. Make sure that you note in the conclusion what you would do (or what have you have already done) to enhance the environment. Use the readings to support your conclusions, recommendations, and implications.

Below are a few additional factors you may want to take note of before you begin writing your Environmental Assessment paper. The purpose of this project is to allow you to look at your work setting in a detached, abstract way, and analyze how different aspects of the setting might affect your behavior and the behavior of those who interact with you. Please address each of the following issues/topics in your paper.

- I. Physical location: The general neighborhood, appearance, population, etc.
- II. Physical plan: Attractiveness, maintenance, and general impressions. Are there aspects of the physical plan that might affect your behavior? The behavior of others? For example, if there is no staff lounge and graduate assistant, support staff, and administrators have found no place to congregate, this may contribute to a feeling of alienation among staff members. You may include a floor plan if you feel it would be helpful.
- III. Organizational structure: To the best of your knowledge, prepare an organizational chart (e.g. are there subgroups of staff members headed by team leaders?). Also, does an informal organizational structure exist? Are there groups or individuals with more power, more decision-making authority than indicated in the formal organizational chart?
- IV. Administrator: Describe the primary administrator in terms of appearance, interpersonal style, administrative style, attitude toward his or her organization and clients, strengths, problem areas, etc. What is the administrator’s attitude

toward you? What is the administrator's understanding of your role within the structure of the setting?

V. Secretary: Length of tenure, relationship to staff and clients, status, responsiveness to you.

VI. Staff: Atmosphere in staff meetings, are there any subgroups, primary concerns that are addressed routinely, communication patterns among staff members, attitude toward clients, attitude toward you, understanding of your role, etc.

VII. Client population: Demographic data, attitudes, special strengths and weaknesses, how strengths and weaknesses affect the organization, etc.

VIII. Organizational history: Are there aspects of the history of the organization that affect how you are perceived, the role you play or staff members' response to you? For example, if your predecessor was respected by the staff, this would probably affect how you are treated.

This project emphasizes how environmental variables affect social roles and behaviors. In other words, given your description of the setting and its elements, what are the behavioral implications?

GRADES

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

For a grade of:

“A” At least 90 total points

“B” An accumulated point total between 80 and 89

“C” An accumulated point total between 70 and 79

“D” Any point total below 70

OTHER

Class Attendance

If you must miss class, please let us know in advance by contacting (848) 932-0811 (Dr. Banda) or Edrice Wyatt at (848) 932-0850. You are responsible for all materials covered in class and for completing any work assigned.

Class Procedures

You are expected to turn in all assignments by the dates outlined in the tentative course calendar (**Appendix A**). Late assignments will be assessed an initial **10% penalty** and a

10% penalty for each day accrued after the specified due date. Extenuating circumstances will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Tentative Course Calendar

Appendix A contains a tentative course calendar. Please note that this calendar is subject to change. Any necessary amendments will be announced in class.

Academic Dishonesty

Matters relating to academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the guidelines specified in the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy (http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf).

Students with Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Students with disabilities should contact the Disabilities Services office to make the necessary arrangements if modifications are required to facilitate the classroom teaching and learning process. This office is located in the Rutgers Office of Disability Services (dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu), Lucy Stone Hall, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Suite A145, Piscataway, New Jersey 08854. They may be contacted directly at (848) 445-6800.

Conferences With The Instructor

I will be available to meet with students during regularly scheduled office hours or by appointment. I will also be available for conferences immediately before or after class. If you need to reach me by telephone or e-mail, my number and address is listed below.

Graduate School of Education (GSE)

Room 346

(848)932-0811 (office number)

rosie.banda@gse.rutgers.edu (e-mail address)

APPENDIX A***TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>
March 12	Introduction and Overview; Part I
March 19	SPRING BREAK NASPA
March 26	Physical Environments (Ch. 1) Physical Environment Scan Assignment (In-Class)
April 2	NO CLASS ACPA
April 9	Aggregate Environments (Ch. 2) Reading Cards 1 & 2 Due
April 16	Organizational Environments (Ch. 3)
April 23	Constructed Environments (Ch. 4) Reading Cards 3 & 4 Due
April 30	Part II; Promoting Safety and Inclusion (Ch. 5) Encouraging Participation and Involvement (Ch. 6)
May 7	In-Class Discussion about EA Paper EA Paper Due

***Subject to change**

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR READING CARDS

Please use 5 X 8 index cards-**ONE CARD PER SOURCE**-print or type. Use the following format:

Course:

Article Title:

Your Name: _____

Source: For a journal article, give author, name of journal, volume number, date, and page number(s). **Use APA 6th edition citation style.**

Purpose: Brief statement of what the author set out to accomplish

Method: If a research study, a statement regarding purpose, sample, instrument, etc.; for other articles, please state how the author arrived at her/his conclusion(s).

Summary: Brief listing of significant points, each in short sentence form.

Appraisal: Give your reactions to the value of the work.

Questions: What questions did the article generate for you? (Include at least two questions)

APPENDIX C

ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT EVALUATION FORM

PRESENTER(S) _____

RATING DEFINITIONS

- EXCELLENT - SURPASSED EXPECTATIONS
- GOOD - ONLY SLIGHT ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT
- FAIR - MARGINALLY ACCEPTABLE
- INADEQUATE - DID NOT MEET CRITERIA

	EXCELLENT 3.0 POINTS	GOOD 2.0 POINTS	FAIR 1.0 POINT	INADEQUATE 0.0 POINTS	COMMENTS
EA (45 TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS)					
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT ASSESSED?					
2. PROVIDE A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON THE THEORY ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN AGGREGATES?					
3. INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION (EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS) OF HUMAN AGGREGATES?					
4. INCLUDE INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS (RATIONALE) OF HUMAN AGGREGATES?					
5. PROVIDE A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON THE THEORY ASSOCIATED WITH PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT?					
6. INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION (EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS) OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT?					
7. INCLUDE INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS (RATIONALE) OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT?					

	EXCELLENT 3.0 POINTS	GOOD 2.0 POINTS	FAIR 1.0 POINT	INADEQUATE 0.0 POINTS	COMMENTS
8. PROVIDE A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON THE THEORY ASSOCIATED WITH STRUCTURAL/ ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT?					
9. INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION (EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS) OF STRUCTURAL/ ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT?					
10. INCLUDE INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS (RATIONALE) OF STRUCTURAL/ ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT?					
11. PROVIDE A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON THE THEORY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT?					
12. INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION (EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS) OF PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT?					
13. INCLUDE INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS (RATIONALE) OF PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT?					
14. INCLUDE MINIMAL AMOUNT OF REQUIRED REFERENCES AND FOLLOW APA (6 TH ED.) GUIDELINES?					
15. WRITTEN CONCISELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH LESS THAN THREE GRAMMATICAL ERRORS?					

TOTAL POINTS/GRADE:
COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS: