



Environmental Psychologists Responding to COVID: Re-creating Assignments in a Context of Global Crisis

**FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2021
11:00-2:30P EDT**

**Organized by Erin Lilli & Fernanda Blanco Vidal
Cosponsored by Transformative Learning in the Humanities
Register [here](#)**

The first graduate training program in Environmental Psychology was created at CUNY more than 50 years ago. This traditional program is still a hub for critical thinking in psychology and correlated environmental areas. Environmental Psychologists are scholars and practitioners who work across disciplines focusing on real-world problems addressing people-place relationships critically. While the issues of culture, politics, inequalities, and environmental injustice were always part of our classroom discussions, the disruption of COVID-19 has demanded we recreate our approaches and pedagogical strategies to address new and urgent issues. If in prior semesters, fieldwork, outdoor activities, and other experiential learning approaches were common in our pedagogies, the context of the pandemic demanded we rethink those projects to provide safe spaces for students' experiential learning. Another important aspect is that many of our students were/are working on the frontlines of COVID-19 and have lost family members or loved ones; thus, we have strived to create a sense of community and a space for meaningful listening in our classes. In this seminar, we intend to create a space for Environmental Psychology educators to come together and share, reflect and document their amazing and challenging experiences as educators, focusing on art-based and content-creation projects/assignments developed or adapted in the context of the pandemic. Having an amazing diversity of students, we also seek a transnational and decolonial approach, creating content beyond the US framework and understanding our students as knowledge producers.

The format intends to be inclusive and involves ten presenters from different CUNY campuses, but also alumni that now are teaching in other colleges. Each presenter will offer a handout with a 5-7 minute presentation of their assignments. The rest of the time will be dedicated to audience engagement and contribution by using active learning strategies such as social annotations, group discussions with instant online polls, and exit tickets to promote feedback.

EVENT ORGANIZERS



Fernanda Blanco Vidal



Erin Lilli, M/MS.ARCH

Fernanda and Erin have enjoyed organizing this co-sponsored event with Transformative Learning in the Humanities and want to graciously thank our speakers for sharing their time, projects, and knowledge with all of us. You'll find Fernanda's full bio and project description—along with all the speakers'—in this program in alphabetical order.

Erin Lilli is a PhD candidate in Environmental Psychology at The Graduate Center, CUNY and has taught courses in Urban Studies at Queens College and worked as a WRAC Fellow at Kingsborough Community College. Erin's current research utilizes residential oral histories to study resistance to gentrification in Crown Heights, Brooklyn through a framework of racial capitalism. She held a fellowship developing a literature database on public space with the KTH Royal Institute of Technology and works with CUNY's Center for Human Environments as a research associate for the Public Space Research Group.

SCHEDULE

SESSION 1 :: 11:00-12:30

INTRODUCTIONS :: 11:00-11:15

PRESENTATIONS :: 11:15-12:00

11:15-11:22 :: Chris Hoffman, *Being Radically Honest in Pandemics: Intersectionality, Pedagogy, and Black Feminist Traditions*

11:22-11:29 :: Jennifer M. Pipitone, PhD co-authored with Tahia Devisscher, PhD, *Urban Greenspaces & Well-being: Promoting Intercultural Place Sharing through Field Observations*

11:29-11:35 :: Valkiria Duran-Narucki, PhD, *"In this together": Encouraging students to be active participants in their own environmental psychology education*

11:35-11:42 :: Eve Klein, M.Arch, M.Phil, *Environment Behavior Research on a Systemic Topic*

11:42-11:49 :: David Holzman, MLA, *Organizing/creating visuals for a BLM protest during COVID*

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION :: 12:00-12:30

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BREAK :: 12:30-1:00

Feel free to stay on zoom and chat over lunch or step away. Hope to see you for Session 2!

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SESSION 2 :: 1:00-2:30

RECONVENE :: 1:00-1:05

PRESENTATIONS :: 1:05-1:40

1:05-1:12 :: Beth Bingham, *The Remote Studio: Place-based work from a distance*

1:12-1:19 :: Fernanda Blanco Vidal, *Critical pedagogy of place and the meaning of home in the context of a pandemic*

1:19-1:26 :: Zulmira Áurea Cruz Bomfim, PhD, *Expressions of Social Isolation*

1:26-1:33 :: Michael Arfken, PhD, *Making It Activities (Radical Home Economics)*

1:33-1:40 :: Tomo Imamichi, PhD, *Adapting to COVID: Virtually there*

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION :: 1:40-2:15

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WRAP UP :: 2:15 - 2:30



Michael Arfken, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
University of Prince Edward Island, Canada

Making It Activities (Radical Home Economics)

As part of my Ecopsychology course, students complete a wide range of post-consumer activities that encourage them to reflect on their immersion in consumer society in the midst of a global pandemic, the process of commodification/decommodification, alternative hedonism, and the transition to more environmentally sustainable society



Michael Arfken is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada and editor of *Awry: Journal of Critical Psychology* (<https://awryjcp.com>). His primary research interests are at the intersection of critical social theory and phenomenology. He focuses on a wide range of topics including environmentalism, socialism, cultural diversity, qualitative research methods, and social justice. His most recent work has taken him into the realm of labour activism both at the local and national level which he finds way more interesting than writing papers.



Zulmira Áurea Cruz Bomfim, PhD

Distinguished Professor in Social Psychology, Federal University of Ceará- Brazil

Expressions of Social Isolation

The quarantine diaries are written expressions made by students and professors of the Research Laboratory in Environmental Psychology during social isolation, in the first half of 2020 in Fortaleza, Ceará (Brasil), resulting from the Covid -19 pandemic. The main objective of the diaries was to help the group deal with the difficulties and fears arising from social isolation considering the diversity of affections in the environment that they live in.



Zulmira Bomfim is a Distinguished Professor of Social and Environmental Psychology at the Federal University of Ceará, Brazil. Coordinates the Laboratory of Research in Environmental Psychology (Locus). Acts on graduation and post-graduation by teaching, research and community work. Bomfim did her PhD training in University of Barcelona, studying public space and urban regeneration. Develops research on social and environmental vulnerabilities in the field of cities, neighborhoods and institutions. She has been developing action-research in public schools, social assistance and with community leaders in Ceará, through a participative method called affective maps, originally from her doctoral thesis. In addition, she works with integrative practices with Biodance, a therapeutic and participative method involving music and dance.



Beth Bingham

Visiting Assistant Professor, Pratt Institute, Graduate Center for Planning
& the Environment

The Remote Studio: Place-based work from a distance

This semester I am teaching a graduate-level studio, working with students from the Historic Preservation and Urban Placemaking & Management programs. Our project area is Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, from Barclay's Center to the waterfront. In a typical studio, students are out in the field immediately, touring the project area with faculty and members of the community or the studio client. They talk to people, talk to each other, talk to faculty and learn a lot on the ground. The first phase of inquiry is to explore the existing conditions of the place, starting with the students presenting on their initial impressions of the project area. Very little of this could happen in the remote teaching environment, so the first assignment has been adjusted. This week students presented their impressions using a range of data found online, and what they shared was incredible, and much more in the psychological realm than in previous semesters. I have some samples that I would bring to this talk, and some ideas about what happened when they could not rely on the typical ways we explore a new place as professionals.



Beth Bingham is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Pratt Institute. She is an Urban Planner and Historic Preservation consultant with a professional focus on sustainability and community-based initiatives. In New York she has worked for Partnerships for Parks, New Yorkers for Parks, and the Pratt Center for Community Development. She is a member of the Gowanus Canal Community Advisory Group, and on the Board of the Historic Districts Council. She holds a MS in City and Regional Planning and a Certificate in Historic Preservation from Pratt Institute's Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment, and is currently working towards a PhD in Environmental Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Fernanda Vidal

Graduate Student, The Graduate Center, CUNY



Critical pedagogy of place and the meaning of home in the context of a pandemic

In my years teaching the course, Psychology of People in Place – From Gentrification to Climate Change, at City College, I have developed different pedagogical strategies to support students' engagement with their surroundings at multiple-scales while exploring their situationality through critical thinking. This Critical Pedagogy of Place is a perspective intended to merge two pedagogical traditions – critical pedagogy and place-based education (Gruenewald, 2020). When the pandemic hit New York during the spring of 2020, we suddenly became intensely conscious of our surroundings and our interactions. Outside spaces quickly became hazardous, while our homes were transformed into workspaces, schools, spaces for worship, gyms, physician's offices, playgrounds, or even spaces for mourning. Considering the virtual classroom as a place of care and sense-making for my students during the pandemic; I created an assignment focused on the meaning of home for which they have reflected upon these critical changes. Using drawings, affective maps, guiding questions, prompts, and articles discussed prior to the pandemic, the students have written incredible and honest essays making sense of their own experiences through the lens of environmental psychology theories. At the same time they also taught me about their own struggles, conditions, hopes and fears.



Fernanda Blanco Vidal is a doctoral student in Environmental Psychology at The Graduate Center, CUNY. Her research focuses on narrative and social memory, critical psychology, land and water injustice, forced migration and people-place relationship. Fernanda has many years of experience as an instructor in Brazil and as Adjunct Faculty at City College of New York where she created the course "Psychology of People in Places – From Climate Changes to Gentrification". As an educator, she focuses on interdisciplinary exchanges, liberation pedagogy, and student-centered approaches and has published the book Longing yes, Sadness no – Social Memory, Psychology and Forced Displacement focusing on people displaced by dams. Fernanda is a fellow with CUNY's Teaching and Learning Center where she develops workshops and projects focused on students' participation and critical pedagogy of place. In 2020, she created the ongoing project "From My Window and Other Places" sponsored by the Center for Humanities (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) Seminar for Public Engagement. Fernanda also co-created, with fellow Ph.D. candidate Erin Lilli, the group "Teaching Environmental Psychology Critically" where environmental psychologists come together to reflect and share their conceptions as educators.



Valkiria Duran-Narucki, PhD
Lecturer, College of Staten Island

“In this together”: Encouraging students to be active participants in their own environmental psychology education

The advent of the global COVID pandemic prompted a quick switch from face to face lecturing to full online teaching. Many professors were faced with lack of previous experience in online environments and tools, which in turn highlighted to students their role in their own learning process. Students became aware of how it was their responsibility to take control or ownership of their on learning when they were forced to ask professors basic pedagogical questions about the dynamic and specifics of their courses. This presentation will describe how one professor took this perceived opportunity to implement a participatory process in their environmental psychology online class, prompting students to make decisions on topics and assignments for their class.



Valkiria Duran-Narucki (Valky) is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology of the College of Staten Island, City University of New York. She teaches research methods, environmental psychology and social psychology to a diverse and resilient body of undergraduate students. Her research is on the quality of learning environments and how they play a role in students’ sense of self and possibilities. Originally from Costa Rica, she shares many of her students characteristics: First generation going to college, an immigrant, and a non-native English speaker.



Chris Hoffman

The CUNY Graduate Center of City College of New York (Environmental and Critical Social and Personality Psychology Department)

Being Radically Honest in Pandemics: Intersectionality, Pedagogy, and Black Feminist Traditions

In these difficult times, it's increasingly important to be "radically honest" in our classrooms. In this presentation, I'll be discussing using Bianca C. Williams' "Radical Honesty as Pedagogy" in the virtual classroom during the COVID 19 Pandemic. I believe this piece not only helps me create an intimate atmosphere with students, but also: acknowledges the many inequalities in our world today and how they personally affect us, helps begin a conversation on whiteness, and introduces students to Black feminist theory and critiquing objectivity within the field of psychology. I believe all three of these are uniquely helpful in times of pandemics and inequality, as well as essential for the field of environmental psychology.



Christopher LoBosco Hoffman is a dual doctoral student at the Graduate Center at City University of New York where he studies environmental psychology and critical social and personality psychology. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and the Wadham College Visiting Student Program, Chris studies ways to empower communities by equipping them with the resources to produce their own research, and to use their research to influence policy. Chris is specifically interested in participatory action research, youth, and the intersections of policy, education, and social justice. Chris is also a former Fulbright grantee and currently teaches Statistics, Psychologies of People and Place: From climate change to gentrification, and Queer(ing) Psychology at CCNY.



David Holzman, MLA

Adjunct Professor, NYU Tandon School of Engineering

Organizing/creating visuals for a BLM protest during COVID

Within the context of COVID and heightened attention paid to BLM, I reconsidered the focus and structure of a final assignment for an introductory course about graphic communication.



David Holzman received a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Virginia, and a B.A. in Gender Studies from the University of Chicago. He teaches various courses for New York University's Sustainable Urban Environments program and New York Botanical Garden related to topics ranging from green roofs and urban water to gender, sexuality and public space. David worked for a variety of design-build and architecture firms before launching his own independent design practice. His research and work focuses on urban ecology; diversity, inclusion and equity in the public realm; and challenging conventional uses and beauty standards for the built environment.



Tomo Imamichi, PhD

Associate Professor of Psychology, LaGuardia Community College and The Graduate Center, CUNY

Adapting to COVID: Virtually there

Adapting to COVID- pedagogical adaptations to remote learning: maintaining presence, relevance, and rethinking field trips. Engagement in the physical environment is a cornerstone of Environmental Psychology, which poses interesting challenges in the context of stay-at-home orders.



Tomo Imamichi, PhD, is Associate Professor of Psychology teaching courses in General, Social, and Environmental Psychology at LaGuardia Community College, and is co-chair of Environmental Psychology Subprogram at the Graduate Center. His interests include global events, modes of being-in-the-world (the world experienced with a stroller, 2014, the world experienced with an elderly, 2019), walking and running, and links between the physical environment, health/well-being, social and environmental justice, and sustainability.



Eve Klein, M.Arch, M.Phil
Visiting Lecturer, Pratt Institute

Environment Behavior Research on a Systemic Topic

In this project the students explore a systemic topic through Environmental Behavior Research. This project includes a presentation and a paper on a topic that should address an issue that bridges societal concerns and physical spaces (like homeland, anti-racism, social gatherings in the time of COVID-19, daily living/working in the time of COVID-19, health and wellness, etc.) This project will include data collection (environment behavior research that can be safely conducted with physical distancing OR using existing data sets), scholarly research, and written analysis. A recommended intervention or proposal for change is optional. For the first part of the project, the professor forms small Research Groups with three students each, based on shared interests. In these groups the students support each other's ideas and curiosity, advance scholarly and field research, and make a presentation. After the group presentations, each student will write a paper on one aspect of the research topic.



Eve Klein is an architect and planner with expertise in the social and psychological impact of built environments in higher education and cultural institutions. She is a doctoral candidate in Environmental Psychology at the Graduate Center (CUNY), where she is a Research Associate of the Public Space Research Group. Her research focuses on how the social sciences can contribute to design processes and equity on college campuses. She currently teaches at Pratt Institute. She is co-founder of the Social Science + Architecture Committee, AIANY and serves on the Research Sub-committee of the AIA National Architecture for Education Committee. In addition, she is the Chair of the Board for the Design Trust for Public Space. Previously, she was the AVP of Strategic Assessment, Planning & Design at New York University.



Jennifer M. Pipitone, PhD

Assistant Professor of Psychology,
College of Mount Saint Vincent

Tahia Devisscher, PhD

Research and Teaching Fellow,
University of British Columbia

Urban Greenspaces & Well-being: Promoting Intercultural Place Sharing through Field Observations

In Fall 2020, we were both teaching environmentally-focused courses that included a unit on how the corona virus will/has changed the way we engage with public space. To promote student-centered intercultural place sharing, we piloted a collaborative assignment in which our students completed an observation of a greenspace in their city, analyzed how the space could be improved to support well-being during the pandemic, and created short videos to share their findings and experiences with one another.



Dr. Jennifer Pipitone is Assistant Professor of Psychology and Director of Professional Learning at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, New York City, and serves on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Experiential Education. Jennifer directs her energies toward addressing social issues and collective problems that arise from living in an increasingly diverse society. Her primary research aims to develop socially-conscious and culturally-sensitive study abroad programs; her second line of research explores social (in)equity in urban greenspaces. Jennifer has a PhD in Environmental Psychology from The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Dr. Tahia Devisscher is a Banting Research and Teaching Fellow at the Faculty of Forestry in the University of British Columbia, Canada. She is currently studying the extent to which forests and other greenspaces in and around cities increase social-ecological resilience, and how to strengthen ways in which urbanites connect with nature. In past work with the Stockholm Environment Institute, Tahia implemented and led applied research to support climate change adaptation through Nature-based Solutions. Tahia has an interdisciplinary background and a PhD in ecosystems science from the University of Oxford.

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*Post-event, registrants will
receive a link to resources
including assignments and
handouts from the event.*