

Title: *The Psychology of Pollution*

Study Guide Theme: Pollution

Featured Photos: Sorting Garbage, Smokestacks and Garbage, Garbage Cows, Trash Wave, Seal in Net, Blue Sky Sign, Darkening Skies



“Sorting Garbage” - Sorting garbage to eke out a living



“Smokestacks and Garbage” - Brick kilns dot a dystopian landscape



“Garbage Cows” - Watched over by a billboard depicting former President Ghagbo, cows graze on garbage in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.



“Trash Wave” - Indonesian surfer Dede Surinaya catches a wave in a remote but garbage-covered bay on Java, Indonesia, the world’s most populated island.



“Seal in Net” - Hawaiian monk seal caught in fishing tackle.



“Blue Sky Sign” - The ultimate irony- a giant LED screen on Tiananmen Square



“Darkening Skies” - Air pollution, CO2 and water vapor rise from the stacks at a coal-burning power plant in the U.K.

Overview: Students will evaluate the effect of pollution on mental health. Students will also be able to identify cognitive biases, cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors associated with pollution. Finally, students will develop plans for personal changes to reduce their own environmental impacts related to pollution.

Grade level(s): College

Subject(s): Psychology (can be adapted for other social sciences and for online or face-to-face courses)

Corresponding National Standards: APA Learning Goals addressed by this project:

- Goal 1: Knowledge Base in Psychology - describing applications of psychology
- Goal 3: Ethical and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World - adopting values that build community at local, national, and global levels
- Goal 4: Communication - demonstrating effective writing and presentation

Corresponding Global Competency Skills: (<https://asiasociety.org/education/what-global-competence>)

1. Investigate the world
2. Recognize perspectives
3. Communicate ideas
4. Take action

Essential Question(s) (include 1-3):

1. What is the impact of pollution on global mental health?
2. What cognitive biases, behaviors, and cultural values and beliefs are involved in pollution practices?
3. What can you change about your own behavior to reduce pollution?

Specific Strategies and Activities by Grade Level: (Time: Approximately 2 hours)

- **Photo analysis strategy(ies)**
 - Students will be given copies of all photos and will work individually and in teams to analyze them using the following questions:
 - What do I see? (individual, description of photo)
 - What does it remind me of? (individual, link to personal experience)
 - What do the photos have in common? (team/group, synthesis of ideas after sharing answers to

the first two questions with the team)

- So what? (team/group, why the photos are important and what message is being sent)

- **Discussion questions**

- Photo analysis questions listed above.
- What are some of the effects you can imagine of the pollution on the people living in these areas?
- How would you feel if you lived, worked, or raised a family amid this pollution?
- How can pollution affect mental health, and why is this important to overall well-being?
- What can you do to reduce pollution? Explain one thing you can do promote change using the concepts of learning (classical, operant, and cognitive conditioning), cognitive bias, cultural values and/or beliefs.

- **Specific student activities :**

- Evaluation of Overbook photos using the questions listed above.
- Watch video: [Indonesian Trash Tubes](#)
- Personal reflection of effects of pollution on mental health. This could be done as a discussion board online or as a minute paper (short written response) in class.
- Read and discuss the articles "[Pollution and Psychology](#)" and "[Green Buying: The influence of environmental concern on consumer behavior](#)" and how it relates to pollution reduction locally and globally.
- Find, read, analyze, summarize, and report on one article related to the effects of at least one type of pollution illustrated in the photos on mental health. (Include a library instruction session if needed.)
- Create a personal plan to reduce the student's own impact on environmental pollution.
- Possible extension to lesson: Watch "Wall-E," "Over the Hedge," or "Waste Land" during or prior to initial discussion.

Materials:

Images from Overbook

[Krueger, J. \(2017\). Pollution and Psychology. Retrieved from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/one-among-many/201704/pollution-and-psychology](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/one-among-many/201704/pollution-and-psychology)

[Mainieri, T., Barnett, E. G., Valdero, T. R., Unipan, J. B., & Oskamp, S. \(1997\). Green Buying: The Influence of Environmental Concern on Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 137\(2\), 189–204.](#)

[Personal Change Plan Template idea](#)

[Cote, J. \(2015\). *Surfing For Change: Indonesia Trash Tubes* \[Video\]. Indonesia: Adventure Sports Network.](#)

Library Instruction as needed or have a librarian create a libguide to help in article search

Local Resource and Possible Project: [Unnatural Resources Institute](#)

Bibliography

Cote, J. (2015). *Surfing For Change: Indonesia Trash Tubes* [Video]. Indonesia: Adventure Sports Network.

Kanyoro, M., Butler, T., Ryerson, W., & Crist, E. (2015). *Overdevelopment, overpopulation, overshoot*. San Francisco, Calif.: Foundation for Deep Ecology.

Krueger, J. (2017). Pollution and Psychology. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/one-among-many/201704/pollution-and-psychology>

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Images

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Calif.: Foundation for Deep Ecology.

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