Psychology of Sustainability

“We look backward to our parents and forward to our children and through their children to a future we will never see, but about which we must care.” Carl Jung

Instructor
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Virtual Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 8am-noon.

Teach Assistant(s)
TBA

Course Description
The Psychology of Sustainability course is designed to provide the experience of employing psychology towards developing an understanding of why we do and do not act sustainably.

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills
There are no prerequisites for this course and no prior knowledge in psychology, sustainability, or environmental science is required. This course is designed for anyone no matter your degree emphasis or status (undergraduate or graduate).

Purpose of Course
In this course “sustainability” is approached holistically, meaning that every aspect of the human experience—cultural, emotional, biophysical, ecological, economic, and geographical—is considered to be inextricably linked and simultaneously of equal importance. Any effort to create a sustainable society must begin by understanding the thinking and emotions that are motivating behaviors at the individual level and how these behaviors affect culture and society.

Working from the premise that every sustainability problem is first and foremost a social problem, the psychology of sustainability course emphasizes the necessity of psychological science leading any effort to create a sustainable society. This is accomplished by “translating” psychological theories into layman’s terms and employing these theories in real-world, practical situations first at the individual level and then at the group and university community level.

Course Objectives
By the end of this course you will have encountered and explored a number of psychological concepts and principals, and attained the ability to:

- More fully employ critical thinking.
- Better understand your thought processes, emotional experiences, and intentions for action in the context of sustainability.
- Assess a situation from a psychological perspective, and frame this situation in social and ecological context.
- More clearly recognize personal meaning and values as well as those of others.
• Develop holistic solutions to social-ecological problems.
• Appreciate more fully the importance of disciplines and areas of study different than your own.

Course Readings
• There is no text book required for this course.
• Students will be required to read analysis of theories papers, and articles from peer-reviewed journals and popular press. Reading citations for each week are also provided in the course schedule below and these represent the full conversation for that week. Your instructor will assign just one or two of the articles cited for each week.

Course Schedule

Introduction
This course is offered asynchronously meaning that generally you will have one week to complete each module. Please become familiar with the course syllabus and course schedule so that you will know when modules and accompanying assignments are available, as well as when these close.

Individual and Group Work
You will notice that with the exception of the last module, Module 14, you will have individual work and group work of some sort due in each module. Most of the individual work that you will do involves writing a “statement of understanding”, and most of the group work in which you will participate will involve collectively writing a “group synthesis paper”. You will be given specific instructions for individual or group work assignments in cases where your assignments will not be writing a statement of understanding and/or a group synthesis paper. Following are the basic instructions for the statement of understanding and group synthesis paper.

Statement of Understanding
Your Statement of Understanding is a short (1-2 page, single-spaced) paper with which you share not only your understanding of the concepts presented in the lecture and readings provided for the module, but also what you feel is/are the most important things that you learned from the lecture and readings in the context of sustainability.

Group Synthesis Paper
The group synthesis paper is document that you create collectively with each member of your group. It is a synthesis of each group member’s statements of understanding, and represents the collective statement of understanding of what you as a learned from the lecture and readings. The group synthesis is not a document where you cut-and-paste your individual statements of understanding, it is a synthesis of all statements of understanding that best states the group’s collective understanding of what was presented in the lecture and in readings in the context of sustainability.

One person from the each group, and this should be a different group member each time, will submit the group’s paper to your instructor via CANVAS.
Important: You will not be responsible for reading and reporting on all articles listed for each week. Articles listed represent many of the topics your instructor will introduce you to, but you will only be assigned one or two articles each week for your individual paper and group work. Your instructor will assign specific articles in class and in your CANVAS course page before each week.

Just a few weeks into this course the student will notice the interrelatedness of the psychological theories being presented in the context of sustainability. For example one can hardly consider Attachment Theory and Social Value Orientation in isolation of for example Environmental Identity and vice versa.

Schedule

Module 1: Introduction to the Psychology of Sustainability

Lecture: Introduction to the psychology of sustainability and course review.


Individual Statement of Understanding: Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

Group Work: Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

Module 2: In the Beginning

Lecture: In the Beginning: Attachment Style, parenting, and ecology of family.

Required Readings

Recommended Readings
**Individual Statement of Understanding**: Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work**: Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

**Module 3: Who We are and Who We Can Be**

**Lecture**: Lifespan Development Psychology, and effect of psychological, sociocultural, and socioecological factors.

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Readings**


**Individual Statement of Understanding**: Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work**: Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

**Module 4: An Act of Kindness**

**Lecture**: Morals, ethics, compassion, empathy, and altruism, and the psychological, sociocultural, and socioecological factors affecting these.

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Reading**

**Individual Statement of Understanding:** Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work:** Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

**Module 5: The Ecology of Understanding**

**Lecture:** The nature of intelligence, and factors effecting reason, judgment and decision making, and perspective taking.

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Individual Statement of Understanding:** Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work:** Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

**Module 6: Green Fear, Green Courage**

**Lecture:** The effect of fear on sustainable behavior will be presented and especially the effects fear can have on perspectives of scarcity and abundance, security and insecurity, consumerism, prosocialness, cooperation, aggression, and existential meaning and value.

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Individual Statement of Understanding:** Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work:** Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.
Module 7: Developing a Reflexive Experience, Imagining a Sustainable Future

Lecture: You will be introduced to the process of developing a reflexive (reflection + cause and effect) understanding of their lives to this point, and how to employ this personal understanding towards manifesting healthier relationships and a sustainable society.

In this week you will employ the theories learned thus far, as well as new theories (e.g., Social Value Orientation, Environmental Identity) presented this week, towards writing an accurate and descriptive narrative. To help with this process you will respond in detail to a question provided by your instructor. You will receive thorough instruction on this process during the lecture as well as during group work.  
Note: Your work this week is also designed to improve your success with the midterm project.

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

Individual Work
Each person will share with their group and instructor their one page, double-spaced narrative expressing some of the thoughts elicited by the question below. By the way, this is the first question of the four research questions that you will explore for your midterm and final projects; your work this week will give you a head start on both!
Your individual work is due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.
Question
Do you attribute your decision to pursue this education at this college to the influence of a person, group, events, and/or place(s)?

Group Work
Each person will read and code each group member’s narrative. The coding that you will perform will be the procedure that you learned in class: word association, central message (For this exercise central message = meaning statement) synthesis, and descriptive narrative.

Each group member will then send their coding work back to the individual member so that she/he can comment—tell group member’s if their interpretation was accurate and what other meaning should be included—on the coding performed by the others.

Example of Your Group Work for this Module
Let’s say a group has four members Ron, Julia, Sam, and Caitlin. All four members write about what thoughts the research question brought up and share their short narratives with the other group members. Each member will code the other members’ narratives and also code their own narrative. Then each member will return the coded narratives to the appropriate individual member. For example, Ron, Julia, and Sam will code and return Caitlin’s narrative, and Caitlin will do the same for Ron, Julia, and Sam, and so on.

Each group member will compare the coding that they did on their own narrative with what the coding the others did on their narrative. For example, Caitlin would compare the coding that she did on her own narrative with the coding Ron, Julia, and Sam did on her narrative. Caitlin would then respond to Ron, Julia, and Sam with her comments about their coding of her narrative, and the other members would do the same regarding their self-coded narrative in comparison with the coding done by the others on their narrative.

Finally, the group as a whole will write a 1-2 page single-spaced paper that begins with a short presentation of the similarities and differences regarding the thoughts elicited by the research question, and then use the remainder of the paper to share the collective meaning or importance of the thoughts elicited by the research question. In other words the last and largest part of your group paper will explain what the group found most important and meaningful about what you learned from working with the research question together.

Your group work is due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

Midterm Analysis Review Opportunity: If anyone would like to have feedback on their midterm work prior to submitting it you send it to your instructor and or teaching assistant(s) at least 6 days in advance of the midterm due date in order to receive feedback on your work.

IMPORTANT: Your midterm project “Thoughts on Four Questions” is due by midnight the last day (Saturday) of Week 8. See the section Midterm Project: Thoughts on Four Questions following the course schedule for specific instructions.
Module 8: Paradigm Shift: It’s a Personal Experience

**Lecture:** How and why students and other individuals manifest the six essential outcomes or characteristics that facilitate successful prosocial action/sustainability agency will be presented. These characteristics are reflective judgment, post-conventional moral reasoning, interest in lifelong learning, leadership, wellbeing, and intercultural effectiveness. You will also learn what takes place intrapersonally and interpersonally as we develop these six characteristics.

**Required Reading**
Watch I am the Paradigm Shift Video

**Recommended Readings**


*See video presentation prior to reading this article.

**Individual Statement of Understanding:** Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Your individual work is due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work:** Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Your group work is due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

Module 9: Five Facets of Sustainability and the Centrality of Human Dignity

**Lecture:** You will be introduced to the Five Facets of Sustainability (5-Facets Model) an approach to research and teaching that is used to communicate environmental, economic, and psychological relationships between water, food, energy, commerce, and human dignity, and centrality of human dignity in these relationships. You will also be introduced to techniques for identifying and describing these relationships in your own words while using the theories we have covered thus far.

**Readings**
There are no articles for this week but be sure to read the document “Coding Human Dignity, 5-Facets, Instructions, UFO”.

9
Individual Work
To begin your individual work, study the 5-Facets of Sustainability model (Figure 1) in the document “Coding Human Dignity, 5-Facets, Instructions, UFO”. Now code, just as you did the Module “Developing a Reflexive Experience” each facet with the following in mind. The essence of this work is to consider what human dignity and the systems or phenomena of Water, Food, Energy, and Commerce mean to you rather than their definition per se.

Individual Statement of Understanding
- One paragraph to one page expressing your personal meaning of human dignity.
- Perform word association (the first step in the coding you learned earlier in the semester) with the phenomena of Water, Food, Energy, and Commerce using no less than 10 words or phrases for each. You might find this work easier if you put each phenomenon on a separate page.
- Make as many connections as possible between your work in the previous step and your personal meaning statement about human dignity.
- Write a meaning statement (1-2 paragraphs, single spaced) about human dignity in context of Water, Food, Energy, and Commerce.
- Share your work with your group, instructor, and TA(s).

Your individual work is due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

Group Work
- Compare, contrast, and discuss the individual meanings of human dignity.
- Compare, contrast, and discuss results of your individual word association work.
- Compare, contrast, and discuss the connections you made between human dignity and you word associations, and share your individual meaning statements about human dignity.

Group Report
- From your individual meaning statements, synthesize a theme collective meaning statement (one sentence) of human dignity in context of Water, Food, Energy, and Commerce.
- As a group write a 1-2 page, single-spaced narrative about your collective meaning statement regarding human dignity in context of Water, Food, Energy, and Commerce.

Your group work is due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.
Module 10: Charting a Sustainable Future: Being an Agent on Our Own Behalf and on Behalf of Others.

Lecture: In this week you will be introduced to numerous areas of research that can help us understand how we got to where we are, how we can direct our lives towards a sustainable future, and how we can help others do the same. We will also revisit material from previous modules such as future scenarios, lifespan development, and identity to name a few.

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Individual Statement of Understanding: Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Your individual work is due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

Group Work: Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Your group work is due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

Module 11: Social Capital and the Innate Value of Participatory Action

Lecture: Drawing from material covered in this module, previous modules, and your individual work and group work in especially in Week 10, you will explore approaches to cooperation and collective action for common goals and why these are effective and resilient.
**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**

**Individual Statement of Understanding:** Each student will write an individual paper as explained in the instructions. Your individual work is due by midnight the Tuesday of week the module is open.

**Group Work:** Individual statements of understanding (individual paper) will be shared with your group. The group then collectively writes a Synthesis Paper as explained in the instructions. Your group work is due by midnight the Thursday of week the module is open.

**Module 12: Thematic Content Analysis**
**Lecture:** This module will be devoted to your success with the final project: “You as a Sustainability Psychologist”. Your instructor will review the instructions for your final project, and will help you continue to improve the narrative analysis techniques that you have been learning in this course.

Note: Detailed instructions for your final project “Midterm and Final Projects Described: Case Study”

**Readings**
There are no article readings, but be sure to review your individual and group work from modules 7 and 9.

**General Instructions for Individual and Group Work**
Your individual and group work this module will be much the same as that in Module 9. However there are a few important differences in your approach this time. You will actually be analyzing *together* much in the same way co-researchers would do in order to
be as certain as possible that the deepest meaning of participants’ responses were understood.

*Important note:* Your work in this module will be more time consuming, so start early and give yourself time to do a good job for yourself and your group!

**Individual Work**
For the individual work this week you will code and analyze the responses provided below. These responses have been excerpt from interviews with participants in a study regarding individuals concerns about the health of our planet. Please read the following instructions carefully. You will notice much similarity to the work that you have done previously but also a few significant differences. Instructions follow participants’ responses.

Participants’ Responses
“The cry of those without a voice is deafening. It is all that I can think about. How can you not think about it?”

Helplessness is the worst form of fear. This is where I had to start…Knowing that I wasn’t helpless.”

“Free me from this dead [doomsday] message. I’m not going to wait for a paradigm shift, I am the paradigm shift!”

“It is a stubborn broken world. But healing will come with love, caring, patience, and practice.”

Individual Work Instructions
- Each group member will perform word association (the first step in the coding you learned earlier in the semester) on each of the four responses provided above just as you have done before.
- Here is one of the new steps: Now go back and perform words association on the words that you wrote in the first step. In other words, you will have two words or phrases associated with words and phrases in the participants’ responses. What you want to do is strive to find additional meaning in the first round of word associations that you performed.
- Now, send your two-level word association work to your group members and your instructor.

Note: This constitutes your individual work for this module. Remember that your individual work is due on midnight of the Tuesday that the module is open.

**Group Work**
Your group will be a cooperative analysis of each group member’s word association for each of the four participants’ responses. To do this work use the procedures flow chart for midterm work that was provide in the PowerPoint document “Analysis of Midterm and
Final Projects Illustrated”. The midterm procedures are illustrated in Slide 7. Follow these closely and your group will provide a good group paper.

Group Work Instructions

- Let’s use the group we “met” in the example for in the Module 7 instructions: Ron, Julia, Sam, and Caitlin. Each group member has performed the two-levels of word association on each of the four responses. Now Julia will read Ron’s, Sam’s, and Caitlin’s word associations and will add words or phrases their associations that come to mind and seem beneficial. Sam will do the same with Julia’s, Ron’s, and Caitlin’s word associations and so on for everyone in the group and your instructor.
- [Remember to follow the procedure illustrated in Slide 7]. Each group member will synthesize a central message/meaning statement from the word association done by all four group members on each of the four responses.

Here is an example. Julia now has Ron’s, Caitin’s, and Sam’s word associations for all four responses, and has added hers’ to theirs. Julia will now synthesize a central message/meaning statement from everyone’s word associations which will result in four central message/meaning statements one for each of the responses. Sam will do the same with Julia’s, Ron’s, and Caitlin’s word associations and so on for everyone in the group.

- Next Julia will further synthesize the four central message/meaning statements into one collective meaning/theme statement that represents as closely as possible all four of the individual central message/meaning statements. Sam will do the same with Julia’s, Ron’s, and Caitlin’s central message/meaning statements and so on for everyone in the group.

At this point Ron, Julia, Sam, and Caitlin have all now developed a collective meaning/theme statement from the individual central message/meaning statements.
- [You’re almost done!] Now write a short one-half-one page single-spaced narrative about the central message/meaning statement you created, and share this with your group and instructor. Remember that your central message/meaning statement is the title of your narrative.
- [Last step] Individually write one sentence about what your narratives had in common, and one sentence about how your narratives were different, and share these two sentences with each other and your instructor.

This was a lot of work but it has helped to ensure that you will do well on your final project!

Note: This constitutes your group work for this module. Remember that your group work is due on midnight of the Thursday that the module is open.
Module 13: Understanding our Vulnerability and Analyzing Popular Press

Lecture: Drawing from material covered in this module, previous modules, and your individual work and group work you will explore the phenomenon of Fake News, and how and why it has been and is being created. You will learn to employ what you have learned thus far in this course to more critically analyze media messages on a variety of topics related to sustainability.

Your instructor will share media articles related to sustainability via the CANVAS course page and with your group you will work on analyzing these for representativeness and accuracy.

Readings
Readings for this week will be in the form of a new game “Factitious” that tests your ability to recognize Fake News.

Individual Work
Your individual work for this group meeting will be to first take the Factitious test three times and record your results (percentage of accurate responses). You will not be graded on your results so take the test “blind”, that is do not stop and research the topic in question on the web but simply answer to the best of your ability.

Then for each question you missed think about why you selected the wrong answer and write down what you think tricked you into accepting the Fake News headline as being accurate news. This individual report should be one, single-spaced page.

Your individual work is due on the Tuesday of the week that the module is open.

Group Work
Each group member will review the other members’ explanations as to why they think that they selected Fake News over accurate news, and an idea as to how you think you can avoid being tricked by Fake News again.
For example, read one of the Fake News titles that tricked you and think about the subject, how the title was worded and presented, and then develop an approach to make you aware of that media “sleight of hand”. Share this with your group and instructor.

Your group report will be compilation of each member’s chosen Fake News title and their approach to avoiding being tricked by that type of Fake News sleight of hand again. One group member will compile these results and share the report with the group and your instructor.

Note: Your group work is due on the Thursday of the week that the module is open.
Module 14: Coding for the Final Project: Three Steps Towards Completing Your Final Project

Lecture: In this week your instructor will answer questions that you have pertaining to your interviews and initial interview response analysis. In addition, you will learn to perform more advanced approaches to further analyze initial results towards developing a synthesis of responses and developing your sustainability psychology theory. Note: Be sure to refer to the detailed instructions for your final project provided in this syllabus and ask questions if you need help.

Individual Work
Your individual paper (same as your assignment) is to submit 2-5 questions pertaining to analysis of interviews.

This assignment is due midnight of the Tuesday this module is open.
Important: No late assignments will be accepted. your assignment submission (below).

Group Work No group paper is due for this module.

IMPORTANT: Your final project “You as a Sustainability Psychologist” is due by midnight the first day of Finals Week. Refer to the document “Midterm and Final Project Instructions” that you will find in the CANVAS course page in the Announcements tab.

Evaluation of Grades, Grading Policy, and Grading Methods

Grading Methods
There are four general components of your total grade: Attendance, group report, midterm project and final project. Refer to Evaluation of Grades table on the previous page for exact points per component. A detailed rubric will be provided in your course CANVAS page however following are general grading method guidelines.

Attendance and Participation: For full credit you are expected not only be present in class but contribute to conversation with thoughtful comments and questions.

Individual Statements of Understanding and Individual Work: Your Statements of Understanding (one single-spaced page) will be assessed equally in three areas: Quality of synopsis of lecture and readings, presentation of relevance of material in context of sustainability, and quality of writing.

Group Report: Your group report will be assessed equally in four areas: quality of synthesis of members’ individual perspectives, length of report (2-3 single-spaced pages), quality of presentation of relevance to sustainability, and quality of writing.

Midterm and Final Projects: Your midterm and final project papers (8 – 10 single-spaced pages, not including cover page and reference page(s)) will be assessed in three areas: Opening material 15%, main body 75%, and closing material 10%. These areas are described in detail in the document “Midterm and Final Project Instructions” that you will find in the CANVAS course page in the Announcements tab.
### Evaluation of Grades

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<td>Individual Work*: 14 at 10 pts. each</td>
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<td>Group Work: 13 at 10 pts. each</td>
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<td>Thoughts on Four Questions Narrative</td>
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*Includes statements of understanding.

### Grading Policy

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### Class Attendance and Make-Up Policy

Students are required to attend all classes unless absence is excused. Excused absences include illness, family emergency, or personal/family tragedy. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a reduction of one letter grade on your final grade. It is important to remember that not only can an absence negatively affect your grade it can also impact your group’s grade. In the case of an excused absence a student may submit their individual paper as well as midterm project late for grade consideration. There will be no make-up permitted for the final project.
Students Requiring Accommodations
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

Class Demeanor
Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in all correspondences, and comments that do not contribute to the individual and group work should be held at minimum, if shared at all.

Materials and Supplies Fees
There are no materials or supply fees for this course.

Course Technology
At least one student in each group will need a laptop computer and access to UF web/email during group work days so that the group’s report can be emailed to the instructor and TA(s) before the end of class.

University Honesty Policy
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center
Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.