

Lesson Plan: PSY 2012 (Introduction to Psychology) and the Precautionary Principle

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1) Description of Lesson Plan:

Students will reflect and apply parts of the Precautionary Principle to relevant chapters in the psychology textbook. Selected readings, reflections, class discussions and personalized assignments will be used to assist students in making correlations with the course material and enhance critical thinking relative to the Precautionary Principle.

2) Application of Lesson Plan:

Connecting health practices on both a personal and communal level with the Precautionary Principle. Students will be able to identify unsafe public practices and their direct impact on human psychological and physical well being.

Students will have read the various assigned chapters in the psychology textbook on Biology and Behavior, Stress and Health and Psychological Disorders. Students will be introduced to the Precautionary Principle (“The **precautionary principle** is a moral and political principle which states that if an action or policy might cause severe or irreversible harm to the public or to the environment, in the absence of a scientific consensus, that harm would not ensue, the burden of proof falls on those who would advocate taking the action. The principle implies that there is a responsibility to intervene and protect the public from exposure to harm where scientific investigation discovers a plausible risk in the course of having screened for other suspected causes”).

The professor will facilitate a discussion relative to the assigned topics. For example, students will be encouraged to become smarter consumers of food and other products because nutrition directly relates to how our bodies feel and function. After all, the essence of psychology is exploring and understanding human behavior and mental processes. The topic of the brain will also be mentioned. It is a scientific fact that the foods we eat contain certain chemicals that our bodies need to manufacture neurotransmitters. Similarly, the Blood-Brain Barrier is a tricky feature of the brain because sometimes unwanted substances can “sneak in.” Therefore, one must avoid foods that are tainted, genetically modified, or grown with pesticides, fertilizers, artificial hormones and other unnatural substances. These synthetic products have the potential to alter our brain chemistry, make us more vulnerable to stress and illness and can lead into a downward spiral of mental illness. The following excerpt will be introduced:

“Concerning potential risks to public health, examples of cases in which the precautionary principle has been advocated (but not always accepted) are: the commercialization of genetically modified foods, the use of growth hormones in cattle raising, measures to prevent the "mad cow" disease, health claims linked to phthalates in PVC toys, among many others.” This will then lead into a deeper discussion about certain developmental disorders such as Down’s Syndrome, Autism, ADHD and various psychological disorders.

Students will be encouraged to lean of the side of caution by being more aware of their actions and their significance on one’s well-being.

3) The professor will also connect the content *with Learning Outcomes # 6: Create strategies that can be used to fulfill personal, civic, and social responsibilities and # 10: Describe how natural systems function and recognize the impact of humans on the environment.* This will be done by having students write a reflection paper in which the student will state how the precautionary principle can prevent further negative impact on our environment and their personal lives. Students are encouraged to provide examples.

4) The professor can end the lesson by having students share their responses and also what personal resolutions they might have attained.