

SYLLABUS

PHIL 250. Environmental Philosophy
Fall, 2007

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Office hours: M W 1:00-2:00pm
T Th 3:30-4:00pm
F 1:00-3:00pm

“One of the penalties of an Ecological Education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.”
—Aldo Leopold

Course Description. Environmental philosophers raise basic questions concerning humanity’s relationship to the natural world and to other-than-human animals, both wild and domestic. Some questions concern our moral obligations to animals, plants and ecosystems. Others seek to uncover the causes (ideological, social, political) and propose solutions to the host of environmental issues now facing humankind. In this course we will examine the major fields of environmental philosophy and seek to use our new philosophical tools to understand and deal with environmental issues such as population, climate change, energy, biodiversity. **Students should be aware that the readings for this course will prove challenging.**

Course Goals, Student Outcomes.

1. To introduce the student to the major thinkers and schools of thought associated with environmental philosophy;
2. To develop an awareness of the complexity of moral issues and of the need for interdisciplinary understanding for informed moral decision-making;
3. To develop the ability to critically reflect on one’s own unexamined assumptions, values and moral position-taking beliefs and values that shape popular debate on the environment;
4. To increase the student’s ability to read reflectively, think critically, write clearly, listen attentively and argue rationally and civilly.

General Skills to be Developed. This course should improve your ability to read, think, write and speak. Just as importantly, it will demonstrate how these are interlinked. **Reading** is not a passive act but an active, creative engagement with a text. To master philosophical material you must read and reread slowly, asking questions, taking notes and placing difficult sections within the context of the whole essay. **Thinking** may begin as a solitary act but will be deepened and sharpened through discussion with others. Hopefully, you will become more aware of the beliefs, attitudes and values that you bring to both texts and discussions. **Writing** can help pull together and make the reading your own. Writing is not something you do after the process of reading and thinking. It plays an active and creative role in the discovery, construction and articulation of meaning. Through the act of writing you can deepen, develop and crystallize our understanding both of self and other (text, author, interpreter). You are encouraged to keep a reading notebook to serve as the primary place for this process. **Discussions** will help you gain insight, broaden your understanding of the text and challenge your interpretation of the argument.

Plagiarism. We will discuss the Honesty Policy as found in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism on graded assignments will result in an “F” for the course.

Attendance. Since we only meet twice a week, students are expected to attend class and to participate. Frequent absences will affect one’s grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up after the scheduled class (except for illness, etc.).

EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION

I. Critical Reflection Essays (6)—60% (10% each; 4+ pages each)

In this critical reflection essay you will demonstrate your ability to comprehend, analyze and summarize philosophical discourse, analyze competing ethical positions and rationally argue your own position. You may select a question or topic from two or three provided by the instructor.

II. Group Research Paper—20% (16-20 pages)

We will divide the class into groups of four (4). Each group will decide upon a topic for a significant paper. The topic and the preliminary bibliographical hunt must be completed by October 15. Your research paper can explore (1) an issue in philosophical ethics or theory, (2) social justice and environmental issues, or (3) an environmental problem with its ethical or broader philosophical implications. Further instructions will follow.

III. Participation: Written and Verbal—(20%)

Oral. Two students will be assigned to begin the discussion for classes where readings from the Pojman anthology were assigned. The pair will be two of the four members of a group. Groups will rotate. Students will make a presentation based on questions raised by the philosopher and by the students. The students may use questions provided in the text, create their own or seek input from the instructor. If so desired, one student may defend the position of the philosopher and another student will attack it. Both students will prepare and turn in either an outline or written remarks.

Quizzes. Please come to class assuming there will be a quiz—there usually will be. The purpose of these are patently obvious—this class will not work unless everyone is on the same page, or pages for the assigned reading. The quizzes will be graded "S" or "U". A missed quiz is automatically given a "U" and cannot be made up (except in unusual circumstances). The final grade for these quizzes will be determined by the percentage of “S’s” one has (e.g. 8 out of 10=80%) 10%

Summary of Evaluative Tools and Values

Critical Reflection Essays	60%
Research Paper	20%
Participation and Quizzes	20%

REQUIRED TEXTS

Pojman, Louis and Paul, ed. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Fifth Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 2007.

Wenz, Peter S. *Environmental Ethics Today*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Note: Certain readings and/or their dates, as well as other aspects of this syllabus, are subject to change. The instructor will only do so after consultation with the students.

OUTLINE

- Aug. 28 Introduction to the Course
Aug. 30 “What is Ethics?” Pojman, pp. 4-8
“Introduction” Wenz, pp. 1-16
- I. OTHER -THAN-HUMAN ANIMALS & ETHICS
- Sept. 04 “Animal Liberation and Utilitarianism”
Wenz, Peter S. Part II. Chapter 4
- Sept. 06 “A Utilitarian Defense”
Peter Singer (Pojman, #9)
- Sept. 11 “The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights”
Tom Regan (Pojman, #10)
- Sept. 13 “Animal Rights and Medical Research”
Wenz, Peter S. Part II. #5
- Mon. 9/17 **Reflection Paper #1 Due**
- II. ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY
- Sept. 18 “Species Diversity and Gaia”
Wenz, Part II. Chapter 6
- Sept. 20 “Biocentric Egalitarianism”
Paul Taylor (Pojman, #17)
- Sept. 25 Ecocentric (Holistic)
“The Land Ethic”
Wenz, Paul Part II. Ch. 7
- Sept. 27 “The Land Ethic”
Aldo Leopold (Pojman, #19)
- Oct. 01 **Reflection Paper # 2 Due**

- Oct. 02 “Faking Nature”
Robert Elliot (Pojman, #33)
and
“Should Trees Have Standing?”
Christopher D. Stone (Pojman, #34)

III. GENDER, RACE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Oct. 04 “Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice”
Wenz, Paul Part III. Chapter 9
- Oct. 09 NO CLASS
- Oct. 11 “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism”
Karen Warren (Pojman, #5)
- Oct. 16 “Overcoming Racism . . . “
Robert D. Bullard, (Pojman, #70)
- Oct. 18 “Just Garbage...”
Paul Wenz (Pojman, #72)
- Oct. 22 Reflection Paper # 3 Due**

IV. POPULATION AND CONSUMPTION

- Oct. 23 “Overpopulation, Markets, and Human Rights
Wenz, Peter S. Part I. Chapter 1.
- Oct. 25 “A Special Moment in History: The Challenge
of Overpopulation and Overconsumption”
Bill McKibben (Pojman. #44)
- Oct. 30 “Personal Choice, Consumerism, and Human Nature”
Wenz, Peter S. Part IV. Chapter 11.
- Nov. 01 “The State of Consumption Today”
Gary Gardner, et. al. (Pojman 7. #47)
- Nov. 05 Reflection Paper # 4 Due**

V. ECONOMICS, ENVIRONMENT & HUMAN VALUES

- Nov. 06 “Competing Human-Centered Values”
Wenz, Peter S. Part I. Chapter 3.
- Nov. 08 “At the Shrine of our Lady of Fatima...”
Mark Sagoff (Pojman, Ch. 12. #68)
- Nov. 13 “On the Value and Limits of Cost/Benefit...”
David Schmidt (Pojman #69)

VI. GLOBALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Nov. 15 “Human Rights, Agriculture and Biodiversity”
Wenz, Part III. Chapter 8
- Nov. 20 “Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly...”
Michael Fox (Pojman #55)
- Nov. 22 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING
- Nov. 26 Reflection Paper #5 Due.**
- Nov. 27 “Public Policies, Efficiency, and Globalization”
Wenz, Peter S. Part IV. Chapter 12.
- Nov. 29 “Sustainable Development: Economic Myths
William Rees (Pojman, #66.)
- Dec. 04 “Deceiving the Third World...”
Maria Mies (Pojman, #73)
- Dec. 06 “The Impoverishment of the Environment: Women and Children Last”
Vandana Shiva On Reserve
- TBA Reflection Paper #6**