

SYLLABUS
PHIL 250. Environmental Philosophy
Fall 2009

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Office hours: M W 1:00-2:00 p.m.
T Th 1:00-2:00 p.m.
F 2:00-3:00 p.m.

“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 sustainability, population, overconsumption, 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 and dialogue with a text. To master philosophical material you must read and reread slowly, ask questions, take notes, and learn to place a difficult section within the context of the whole essay. **Writing** can help pull together and make the reading your own. Writing is not something you only do after the process of reading and thinking. It can play an active and creative role in the discovery, construction, and articulation of meaning. Through the act of writing you can deepen, develop, and crystallize your 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. **Thinking** can be a solitary act and at times sustained reflection can absorb one for hours. However, it can also be an activity that gains in intensity and insight through **dialogue and debate** with others. Thus, in-class and out of class discussions can help you gain insight, correct your understanding and deepen your grasp of a text.

EVALUATION

Evaluation tools for this course will be geared towards the development of the skills listed above and will be integrated into all facets of the course. The initial integration will be of critical reading with short writing assignments for each class that will help students make the reading their own and prepare them for active participation in discussions. Interaction and dialogue with other students not only helps one to better understand the material one reads and test one's written interpretation of it, but also to learn the art of discussion and debate. Responsibility for leading a discussion will enable the student to verbally explain the material and raise questions for class discussion. Three essays exams will provide the opportunity to compare arguments and viewpoints of several schools and/or theorists in route to working out one's own position. An optional scenario will allow students who perform well on the first exam (see below) to write a research paper of their own in lieu of the other two.

I. Short Writing Assignments. 20%

At the beginning of most classes, students will turn in a writing assignment of one to two typed pages that reflects a serious engagement with the required reading. It may take the form of an outline of the argument, a short reflection responding to a question given by the instructor, a critical analysis, etc. These exercises will not be graded on an A to F scale which gauges one's closeness to a perfectly correct answer, but "S" or "U" which indicates one's level of intellectual work. A shoddy, poorly written and argued essay even if materially correct could receive a "U". In some cases in lieu of an at-home assignment the instructor will ask students to write a short response to a question at the beginning of the class. A missed assignment will receive a "U" and cannot be made up (except in unusual circumstances). The final grade for these assignments will be determined by the percentage of "Satisfactory" grades one has (e.g., 8 out of 10 = 80%).

II. Discussion leadership and Active Participation. (20%)

Two students will be assigned to introduce the discussion for each class. They may divide up the task as they see fit. The first student will begin with a summary of the main arguments of the philosopher (s). The second student may raise additional questions about the argument or do something more creative. One example of the latter might be a You Tube or other Internet example of an act or speech or attitude that demonstrates a point or argument made by the philosopher (example, showing a short video illustrating effects of a particular action on the environment, or show the treatment of animals in labs, or the unequal effects on human groups of environmental costs, etc). Another might be bringing in and discussing an article sent by the Instructor or that appears on Infotrac or in a (reputable) magazine or newspaper. Another option for the two students would be a debate in which one student will present and defend the position of the philosopher and the second student will attack it. Grading will be determined by the quality of the classroom presentations including discussion generated, clarity of ideas, eye-contact, tone and effectiveness of voice. (10%each)

III. Three take-home essay exams/short papers. (20% each)

These exams are similar to short papers. Students will be graded on how well they grasp the position or argument of a particular environmental philosopher or a philosophical issue and the extent to which they are able to coherently argue for or against a position using their own or the thoughts of an opposing philosopher. Students must also be able to compare and contrast opposing positions if asked.

IV. Option: Research Paper 8-10pp (Proposal w/Bibliography 10%; Draft 10%; Final 20%)

You may choose to do a research paper in lieu of the last two exams unless the grade on your first exam is poor (C+ or lower). If you do a paper, you have the option of teaming up with another student to work on a joint project. Obviously there must be more length and research depth for a joint paper (18-20pp). A written proposal along with the results of an initial bibliographical search must be submitted by October 15. Your research paper may explore (1) an issue in environmental ethics or theory, (2) a social justice environmental issue, or (3) a particular environmental problem with its ethical or broader philosophical implications. The first draft is due November 16th.

Summary of Evaluative Tools and Value

Writing Assignments 20%

Leadership & Participation 20%

First Essay Exam 20%

- 1) Essay Exams #2 and #3 40%, or
- 2) Research (10%, 10%, 20%) 40%

Plagiarism

We will discuss the Honesty Policy as found in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism on **any** assignment will result in an "F" for the course.

Attendance

Students cannot advance their participation grade if they are not in attendance. Therefore, absences will affect one's grade. Missed writing assignments cannot be made up after the scheduled class (except for illness, etc.).

Attendance at other events. All students are required to attend the following events and to write a short synopsis:

- 1) Friday, October 16th "Evolution and Faith: What Is the Problem?" Lecture by Professor John Haught of Georgetown University in Prosser Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Professor Haught is an internationally recognized philosopher and theologian whose area is evolution and religion. He was an expert witness at the Dover, PA school board trial where he testified against the introduction of intelligent design as a rival scientific theory to Darwinian based natural selection. Participation/Writing Assignment.
- 2) Thursday, November 5th, Fred Pearce will be giving a lecture in Prosser Auditorium at 7:30 entitled "When the Rivers Run Dry," focusing on global water problems and issues. The lecture will be based on his book, "When the Rivers Run Dry: Water -- the Defining Crisis of the 21st Century." Pearce is an environment and development consultant.

REQUIRED TEXTS

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

Shiva, Vandana *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005.

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.

COURSE OUTLINE

Sept 01 Introduction to the course
Sept 03 In Memoriam. Thomas Berry (1914-2009) was called by Newsweek, “the most provocative figure among the new breed of eco-theologians.” At that time (1989), this member of the new breed was 75 yrs. old. Tom died this summer at 94 in his beloved North Carolina. We will read and discuss a couple of his essays. Dr. St. John will discuss the life and thought of his mentor.

I. ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHIES

A. Biocentric Philosophy

Sept 08 “Reverence for Life” Albert Schweitzer 5th ed. # 16; 4th ed. #14
Sept 10 “Biocentric Egalitarianism,” Paul Taylor 5th ed. #17; 4th ed. #15

B. Ecocentric Philosophy

Sept 15 “The Land Ethic,” Aldo Leopold. Pojman, 5th ed #19; 4th ed. #17
Sept 17 “The Conceptual Foundations...” J. Baird Callicott. 5th ed.#20; 4th ed. #18

C. The Question of Values in Nature

Sept 22 “Naturalizing Values,” Holmes Ralston 5th ed. #13; 4th ed. #11

D. Deep Ecology

Sept 24 “The Shallow and the Deep Ecological Movement” Naess 5th ed. 24; 4th ed. #22
“Deep Ecology” Devall and Sessions 5th ed. 26; 4th ed. #24
“Should Trees Have Standing?” Christopher D. Stone , 5th ed. & 4th ed., #34.

E. Ecological Feminism

Sept 29 “The Power and Promise of Eco. Feminism,” Karen Warren. 5th ed. #5. Not in 4th
Oct 01 “Nature, Self, and Gender” Val Plumwood On Reserve
(Suggested: “The Death of Nature” Carolyn Merchant)
Pick-up Essay Exam #1

II. ANIMALS AND ETHICS

Oct. 05 Return Essay Exam #1 By Noon

Oct 06 “A Utilitarian Defense,” Peter Singer. 5th ed., #9; 4th ed. #7

Oct 08 “The Radical Egalitarian Case..” Tom Regan 5th ed. #10; 4th ed. #8
“A Critique of Regan’s Animal Rights Theory,” Warren 5th ed. #11, 4th ed. #9

Oct 13 **NO CLASS-FALL BREAK**

Oct 15 “The World Food Supply...Cattle-Raising,” Coffin 5th ed. & 4th ed., #54;
“Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly . . .” Michael Fox. 5th ed. #55; Not 4th ed.

Oct 15 **Research Proposals/Tentative Bibliography due.**

Oct 16 **Event: John Haught, “Evolution and Faith: What is the Problem?”
Prosser, 7:30p.m.**

III. POPULATION AND CONSUMPTION

Oct 20 “A Special Moment in History: The Challenge of Overpopulation and
Overconsumption,” Bill McKibben 5th ed. and 4th ed. #44

Oct 22 “The State of Consumption Today,” Gary Gardner, et al. Pojman 5th ed. #47;
Not in 4th ed.

III. ECONOMIC MYTHS, ECOLOGICAL REALITIES

Oct 27 “Consumption . . .” Herman E. Daly. 5th ed. #67; 4th ed. #68

“Deceiving the Third World . . .” Maria Mies. 5th ed. #73; 4th ed. #74

Oct 29 “Sustainable Development: Economic Myths,” William Rees. 5th ed.#66;
4th ed. #67

IV. WHOSE COST, WHOSE BENEFIT?

Nov 03 “Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima . . .” Mark Sagoff. 5th ed. #68; 4th ed. #69

Nov 05 “An Eco-Critique of Global Advertising” A. Durning 5th ed.#76 4th ed.

Nov 05 Pick-up Take-Home Essay Exam#2

Nov 05 Event: Fred Pearce, “When Rivers Run Dry”, Prosser: 7:30p.m.

V. ECO-JUSTICE

Nov 09 Essay Exam Due Back by Noon

Nov 10 “Overcoming Racism. . .,” Robert D. Bullard (Pojman, #70)

Nov 12 “Just Garbage . . .,” Paul Wenz, 5th ed. #72; 4th ed. #73

VI. THE FUTURE, AN AGENDA

NOV 16 FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY NOON

Nov 17 “Who Cares for Posterity?” Garrett Hardin. 5th ed. & 4th ed. #41;

Nov 19 *The Earth Charter* 5th ed. #71; 4th ed. #72

VII. EARTH DEMOCRACY

Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace, By Vandana Shiva

Nov 24 Living Economics Introduction and Chapter One(1-39)

Nov 26 **NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING**

Dec 01 Living Democracies Chapter One (39-73) & Ch. Two

Dec 03 Living Cultures Chapter Three

Dec 08 Earth Democracy in Action Chapter Four

Dec 08-11 **Research Paper Due**

Take-Home Essay Exam Handed Out

Dec 18 8:30 a.m. Essay Exam Due Back (Date of Exam)