

SYLLABUS
PHIL 250. Environmental Philosophy
Fall 2010

Dr. Donald St. John

Office: Comenius 204 (610-861-1585)

Email: medps01@moravian.edu

Office hours: M-T-TR 12:30-1:30

W-F 4:00-4:30

“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.

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. Environmental Films and Lecture.

There are two mandatory films which will substitute for class time on October 19 and November 9 at 7:30 p.m. A writing assignment will integrate the reading for the day and the film. One of the class leaders for the following class will chair a discussion of the program/reading. There is also an important lecture on Sept. 22 (see outline below) which you are strongly encouraged to attend and for which extra credit will be given upon completing a very short summary of the talk.

Summary of Evaluative Tools and Value:

Writing Assignments 20%

Leadership & Participation 20%

Essay Exams 60%

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.).

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

Aug. 31 Introduction to the course

I. ANIMALS TO ECOSYSTEMS TO THE EARTH: CIRCLES OF MORAL CONSIDERABILITY

A. Individual Animals and Moral Considerability

1. Criterion: Sentience/Suffering (Utilitarian)

Sept 02 Pojman: Intro. To Ch. 2 (5th ed. pp.61-2; 4th ed. pp. 53-4)
“A Utilitarian Defense,” Peter Singer. 5th ed., #9; 4th ed. #7

2. Criterion: Self-Aware Subject (Deontological)

Sept 07 “Rational Beings Alone...” Immanuel Kant 5th ed.#7; 4th ed. #6
“The Radical Egalitarian Case.” Tom Regan 5th ed. #10; 4th ed. #8
*Optional: “Animals as Subjects-of-a-Life” Tom Regan

B. Eating Animals: Ecological and Personal Issues

Sept 09 “The World Food Supply...Cattle-Raising,” Coffin 5th ed. & 4th ed., #54;
“Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly ” Michael Fox. 5th ed. #55; Not 4th

C. Biocentrism— Egalitarian Extensionism

Sept 14 “Biocentric Egalitarianism,” Paul Taylor 5th ed. #17; 4th ed. #15

D. Legal Rights: Ecosystems and Natural Beings

Sept 16 “Should Trees Have Standing?” Christopher D. Stone , 5th ed. #34.
“Faking Nature,” Robert Elliot 5th ed.#33; 4th ed. #33

E. Holism (Ecocentrism)

Sept 21 “The Land Ethic,” Aldo Leopold. Pojman, 5th ed #19; 4th ed. #17

Sept 22 “Birds and the Balance of Nature”

Environmental Lecture by Dr. John C. Kricher
7:00 p.m. in Dana Lecture Hall, CHSc
Extra Credit

Sept 23 “The Conceptual Foundations...” J. Baird Callicott. 5th ed.#20; 4th ed. #18
Exam #1 Take Home

II. ECO-JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY

A. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, By Vandana Shiva

Sept 28 **MANDATORY FILM**

“Bullshit”

A Film about Vandana Shiva

7:30 p.m. HUB

Read: Vandana Shiva Handouts

Earth Democracy Intro.pp. 1-11

View: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/environment/jan-june07/globalization_03-23.html

EXAM: Return Exam in Person at the Film

Sept 30 Living Economies
Chapter One, pp. 13-44

Oct. 05 Living Economies (2)
Chapter One, pp.44-73

Oct. 07 Living Democracies
Chapter Two and “Intro.,” pp.1-11

Oct. 12 MANDATORY EVENING LECTURE—VANDANA SHIVA
7:30p.m. Prosser Aud., HUB

Oct. 14 Living Cultures
Chapter Three

Oct. 19 **Mandatory Film: “Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai”**
7:30p.m. UBC Rm.
Read: “Deceiving the Third World ” Maria Mies. 5th ed. #73; 4th ed. #74

Oct. 21 Shiva, Wangari, and Ecofeminism
Read: Karen Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism”

III. CONSUMPTION, ECONOMICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Oct. 26 “Sustainable Development” William Rees. 5th ed.#66; 4th ed. #67
Discuss with the Mies Article (see Oct. 19)

Oct. 28 “An Eco-Critique of Global Advertising” A. Durning 5th ed.#76

Nov. 02 “The State of Consumption Today,” Gary Gardner. 5th ed. # 47; Not in 4th

Nov. 04 “Consumption . . .” Herman E. Daly. 5th ed. #67; 4th ed. #6

Essay Exam#2—Hand Out

IV. CLIMATE CHANGE & POPULATION

Nov. 09 **Mandatory Film: “A Sea Change”**

7:30p.m. UBC Rm., HUB

Read: “Pew Center Report on Global Climate, 5th ed. #63; Not in 4th

Essay Exam Due Back

- Nov. 11 "Ethics & Global Climate Change," Gardiner, 5th ed. #64; Not in 4th
Nov. 16 "A Special Moment in History..." McKibben, 5th ed. #44; 4th ed. #44

V. Visions and Actions

- Nov. 18 & 23 The Vision of Thomas Berry
T.B.D.
Nov. 30 Direct Action
Read: "Ecosabotage and Civil Disobedience," Michael Martin , 5th ed. #80
Dec. 02 The Earth Charter
Read: "The Earth Charter," 5th ed. #71
Dec. 07 Vision of Sustainability
Read: "A Vision of a Sustainable World," Brown, et al 5th ed. #82

Final Take-Home Exam Due Wed., Dec. 16

