

**SYLLABUS**  
**PHIL 250. Environmental Philosophy**  
**Fall 2011**

Dr. Donald St. John  
Office: Comenius Hall. 1<sup>st</sup> Flr  
Rel. &Phil. Ofc.

Office hours: T, TR 1:30-2:30  
Phone (home) 610 691-1797  
Email: [medps01@moravian.edu](mailto:medps01@moravian.edu)

“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 engagement and clarity in writing. Sometimes, 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 could 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 the use of the Internet to illustrate 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 to discuss an article suggested by the Instructor or found 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 and build on the readings and discussions. 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 Film Series.**

There is one mandatory film, *Gasland* which will substitute for class on November 10 (**Prosser** at 4:00p.m.) The filmmaker will hold a Q & A session immediately following the film. A writing assignment will integrate a short background reading with the film. There will be **two optional** films which you are **strongly encouraged** to attend and for which extra credit will be given: *Winged Migration* (Oct. 5, 7:00p.m. UBC), and *Waste Land* (Oct. 25, 7:00 p.m. Snyder)

#### **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**

Given the nature of the material, attendance at every class is in the best interest of the student. Furthermore, missed writing assignments cannot be made up after the scheduled class (except for illness, etc.). Students cannot advance their participation grade if they are not in attendance. Therefore, absences could affect a students' grade in any number of ways.

#### **Required Texts**

Pojman, Louis and Paul, ed. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Sixth Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 2011.

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.

Note: Learning disability accommodations: students who wish to request accommodations in this class for support of learning disabilities should contact Learning Services (x1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the appropriate disability support provider on campus.

## COURSE OUTLINE

- Aug. 30 Introduction to the course
- I. ANIMALS TO ECOSYSTEMS TO THE EARTH:  
CIRCLES OF MORAL CONSIDERABILITY**
- A. Individual Animals and Moral Considerability
1. Criterion: Pleasure & Pain (Hedonistic Utilitarian)
- Sept 01 Pojman: Intro. To Ch. 2 (pp.58-9) and  
"A Utilitarian Defense," Peter Singer. #6
- Sept 06 2. Criterion: Self-Aware Subject (Deontological)
- "The Radical Egalitarian Case," Tom Regan # 7  
"Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly," Michael Fox #38
- B. Biocentrism— Egalitarian Extensionism
- Sept 08 "Reverence for Life," Albert Schweitzer #22  
"Rational Beings Alone..." Immanuel Kant #4
- Sept 13 "Biocentric Egalitarianism," Paul Taylor #23
- C. Holism (Ecocentrism)
- Sept 15 "The Land Ethic," Aldo Leopold #24
- Sept 20 "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" J. Baird Callicott #25
- D. Biodiversity and Standing
- Sept 22 "Biodiversity: The Key to Saving Life" Donella Meadows #20  
"Should Trees Have Standing?" Christopher D. Stone #26
- E. Values in Nature
- Sept. 27 "Naturalizing Values," Holmes Ralston #10
- F. Nature, Gender and the Logic of Domination
- Sept. 29 "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism," Karen Warren, #57  
**Take-Home Exam Given Out**
- Oct. 03 Monday 12:00 p.m.  
Exam #1 Take Home Due Back**

## II. JUSTICE, SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPITALISM

- Oct. 04      Indigenous Peoples  
“Indigenous Knowledge and Technology...” Linda Robyn #55
- Oct. 05**      **(Wednesday) Film: Winged Migration**  
7:00p.m. UBC Room
- Oct. 06      Environmental Racism  
“Just Garbage,” Peter S. Wenz, #51  
“All Our Relations,” Winona LaDuke #54
- Oct. 11**      **FALL BREAK**
- Oct. 13      Food, Hunger and Ethics  
“Hunger, Duty, and Ecology...” Mylan Engel, Jr. #36
- Oct. 18      Third World and Development  
“Deceiving the Third World...” Maria Mies. #52  
“Earth Democracy,” Vandana Shiva #36
- Oct. 20      Sustainable Development  
“Sustainable Development,” William Rees #66
- Oct. 25      Capitalism and the Environment  
“What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know”... Magdoff #69  
**Film: Waste Land 7:30p.m. Snyder**
- Oct. 27      Sustainable Capitalism?  
“Is Sustainable Capitalism an Oxymoron?” Schweikart, #70
- Nov. 01      Just and Sustainable Economics  
“Toward a Just and Sustainable Economic Order,” John Cobb #68
- Nov. 03      Whose Cost, Whose Benefit?  
“At the Shrine of Our Lady...” Mark Sagoff #67  
**Take-Home Exam #2**
- Nov. 07**      **Monday 12:00 p.m. Take-Home Exam Due**

### III. CONSUMPTION & CLIMATE JUSTICE

- Nov. 08      Climate Change Denial  
“The Denial Industry,” George Monbiot #45
- Nov. 10      **Film: *Gasland* (Mandatory)**  
4:00p.m. Prosser,  
Q&A with director Josh Fox following Film  
Reading: T.B.A.
- Nov. 15      Overpopulation, Overconsumption and Climate  
“A Special Moment in History...” McKibben, #27
- Nov. 17      False Solutions to Climate Change  
“Hood winked in the Hothouse...” #46
- Nov. 22      Climate Justice and “Green” Capitalism  
“Climate Justice,” Ashley Dawson #47
- Nov. 24      **THANKSGIVING-NO CLASS**
- Nov. 29      Advertising and Consumption  
“An Eco-Critique of Global Advertising” A. Durning #71  
“The World Food Supply...Cattle-Raising,” Tristram Coffin #37
- Dec. 01, 06      A Way Forward: *The Earth Charter*  
“The Earth Charter,” #58  
**Exam #3 (Return Date, TBA)**

