

Moravian College
Phil/Rel 250: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives on the
Environment
Fall 2012

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Instructor: The Rev. Dr. William Falla
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Office Hours: Comenius 205: MWF 9:30-11:00, R 2:00-3:00, ½ hour after class, by appt.

Course Description:

An overview from a philosophical and theological perspective of the ethical, metaphysical, cultural and political issues raised in understanding humanity's complex relationship with the natural world and other-human-animals. It examines the positions of radical environmentalists, environmental ethicists, animal rights advocates and political ecologists.

Course Objectives:

- A. To come to understand the philosophical and theological concepts that support current environmental thinking.
- B. To develop an understanding of one's own relationship to the world about us.
- C. To examine the contemporary environmental issues that face today's society.
- D. To explore possible strategies and policies that will enhance the sustainability of contemporary society.
- E. To be able to express ourselves cogently, clearly and coherently in both oral and written form from a philosophical and/or theological perspective with respect to this subject area.

Required Texts:

- Olson, Sigurd, *Reflections from the North Country*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998
- Shearer, Donald & McGarry, Susan, *Ecologies of Human Flourishing*, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Univ. Press, 2011
- Weston, Anthony, *An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy*, Oxford Univ. Press, New York, 1999

Supplemental Materials

Articles and movies will be on reserve either electronically or in Reeves Library. Handouts and other materials will be made available as required.

Evaluation:

Your final course grade will be determined in the following manner:

Journal (30%): In the spirit of Thoreau, Leopold, Olson et.al., you will be asked to keep a journal containing your reflections on your experience of the natural world. These experiences can include walks or other more passive experiences of the natural world as well as being engaged in projects meant to enhance/sustain our environment. They will be evaluated on the basis of the depth of insights you develop as well as the quality of your presentation. During the last week of class, I will meet with you individually to discuss your journals. Further parameters will be supplied during the first week of class.

Final Discussion (5%): This will be a 15 minute discussion of your journal in which you will be asked to offer some in-depth reflections on selected entries. Here as in your writing you will be evaluated the quality/thoughtfulness of your responses.

Reflection Papers (45%): There will be four (4) papers due on the dates indicated in the syllabus. These are to be 3-5 page papers in which you are to respond to a question that is based on material currently being discussed in class. Your papers will be evaluated on your understanding of the issues, your ability to apply the course materials to your answer as well as the quality of your argumentation and presentation. These papers will also be used as a basis for our class discussion.

Class Participation (20%): This includes both class attendance and your active participation in class discussions. A class such as this is predicated on class discussion so that this is an important component. As a consequence, active participation is defined as the voluntary asking of questions and verbal involvement in class discussions.

Grading Scale

92.5 - 100 = A

89.5 – 92.4 = A-

87.5 – 89.4 = B+

82.5 – 87.4 = B

etc.

All final grades are rounded to the nearest integer.

Honor Code/Attendance:

Students are expected to regularly attend class. Attendance contributes to your class participation and therefore is important. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor and to insure that arrangements are made to make

up all missed assignments or material. You are also expected to hand in all assignments on time. If you must be late with your work, you must make arrangements with the instructor prior to the due date. Failure to do so may result in the lowering of the grade on late submitted work.

Students have an obligation to exhibit honesty in all their work. You will be found to have violated this obligation if you plagiarize or cheat. Plagiarizing is presenting the work of others as one's own; cheating is taking, giving or accepting illicit advantage for any course work inside or outside the classroom. Any violation will result in the lowering of your grade.

Class Accommodations

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Academic and Disability Support, at 1307 Main St. or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is formally received from the Academic Support Center.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Aug. 27: Introduction to Environmental Philosophy I

Weston, "Introduction": pp. 1-16

Olson, "Part 1, Primal Heritage", pp. 3-57

Sept. 3: Introduction II

Olson: "Part II, Search for Meaning", pp. 61-116

Sept. 10: Introduction III

Begin Journal

Olson: "Part III, The Imponderables", pp. 121-171

Sept. 17: Metaphysics I

Paper #1 Due: 9/21

Abram, David, "A More-Than-Human World" pp.17-42

Sept. 24: Metaphysics II

Swearer, David: "An Ecology of Human Flourishing", pp. 1-12

Plumwood, Val: "Paths beyond Human Centeredness", pp. 69-105

Oct. 1: Metaphysics III

Paper #2 Due: 10/5

Muzaffer, Chandra: "The World in Crisis" pp.101-128

Oct. 8: Socio-political Concerns I

Movie: *Avatar*

Oct. 15: Socio-political Concerns II

McFague, Sally: "Cities, Climate Change and Christianity" pp. 129-152

- Oct. 22: Socio-political Concerns III **Paper #3 Due: 10/22**
Klienmann and Hanna: “Religious Values and Global Health”, pp. 73-99
- Oct. 29: Socio-political Concerns IV
Movie: *WALL-E*
- Nov. 5: Ethics I
Rolston, Holmes: “Ethics on the Home Planet”, pp. 107-139
- Nov. 12: Ethics II **Journal Due: 11/16**
Weston, Anthony: “Is It Too Late”, pp. 43-68
- Nov. 19: Ethics III
McKibbon, Bill, “Human Flourishing Depends on What We Know”, pp. 153-74
- Nov. 26: Ethics IV **Paper #4 Due: 11/26**
Schwartz, Barry: “Flourishing and its Enemies”, pp. 175-193
- Dec. 3: Wrap-up Case Study and Discussions
Video: TBA
- Dec. 10: Discussions