

Moravian College
Phil/Rel 250: Environmental Ethics
Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. William Falla

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Office Hours: Comenius 108B: MWF 9:30-11:00; R 2:00-3:00, by appt.

Course Description:

This course is 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 its inhabitants. It examines the positions of radical environmentalists, environmental ethicists, animal rights advocates and political ecologists among others.

Course Objectives:

- A. To come to understand the philosophical and theological concepts that support current ecological thinking
- B. To develop and understanding of one's own relationship to the world about us
- C. To examine the current ecological 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 oneself 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:

Grim, John & Tucker, Mary Evelyn, *Ecology and Religion*, Island Press, Washington DC, 2014

Olson, Sigrud, *Reflections of the North Country*, Univ. of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998

Weston, Anthony, *An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, NewYork, 1999

Supplemental Materials:

Articles and movies will be on reserve electronically or in hard copy through 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 (25%): 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 and your relation to it. These experiences may include walks or other passive experiences of the natural world as well as being engaged in activities meant to enhance/sustain our environment. They will be evaluated on the basis of the depth the insights you develop as well as the quality of your presentation. Further parameters will be supplied during the first week of class.

Final Discussion (5%): This will be a 15 minute discussion of your journal during which you will be asked to reflect on entries and insights from your journals. Here you will be evaluated on the quality of your responses.

Reflection Papers (50%): There will be five (5) papers due on the dates indicated in the syllabus. These are to be 3-5 pages papers in which you are to respond to a question that will be based on the material currently discussed in class. Your papers will be evaluated on your understanding of the issues, your use of the course materials in your answer as well as the quality of your argumentation and presentation. These papers will also be used as the basis for our class discussion.

Class Participation (20%): This includes both class attendance and your active participation in class discussions. Active discussion is a critical element of both philosophy and religion. Active participation is defined here 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.

Honor Code/Attendance:

Since attendance contributes to class participation, you are expected to regularly attend class. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor and to insure that arrangements are made to make up all missed assignments and 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.

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

Course Accommodations:

Students who wish to request accommodations for this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Academic and disability Support at Monocacy Hall, 1st Floor, or by calling 610-861-1401. Accommodations will be granted upon receipt of formal notification.

Course Syllabus

Aug. 31: Intro. to Environmental Ethics I

Weston: "Introduction", pp.1-16

Grim & Tucker: pp. 13-28

Sept. 7: Intro. to Environmental Ethics II

Grim & Tucker: pp.29-42

Sept. 14: Ecology and Value I

Begin Journal

Olson: "Primal Heritage", pp. 3-57

Sept. 21: Ecology and Value II

Paper #1 Due: 9/21

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

Sept. 28: Ecology and Value III

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

Oct. 5: Religious and Philosophical Metaethics

Grim & Tucker: pp. 43-61

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

Oct. 12: Religious Perspectives I

Paper #2 Due: 10/14

Grim & Tucker: pp. 126-139

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

Oct. 19: Religious Perspectives II

Movie: *Avatar*

Oct. 26: Religious Perspectives III **Paper #3 Due: 10/28**
Grim & Tucker: pp. 96-108

Nov. 2: Religious Perspectives IV
Grim & Tucker: pp. 109-125, 140-153

Nov. 9: Ecological Ethics **Paper #4 Due: 11/11**
Rolston: pp. 107-139

Nov. 16: Case Study #1 **Journal Due: 11/20**
Movie: *WALL-E*

Nov. 23: Case Study #2
Movie: *The Lorax*

Nov. 30: Future Actions I
Cheney & Epilogue, pp. 141-82

Dec. 7: Future Actions II **Paper #5 Due: 12/9**
Epilogue, pp. 182-96
Grim & Tucker: pp. 154-70

Dec.14: **Scheduled Discussions**