

## **PHIL 355 B1 – Philosophy of the Environment**

Winter 2009

MWF 10:00 – 10:50 Tory BW 2

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### **Course Description**

Of all the branches of philosophy, the philosophy of the environment – and environmental ethics in particular – must truly be one of the most vibrant and exciting. With each passing day environmental issues are more and more becoming the focal point for public discussion. Where there's talk of environmental science, of threats to the environment, of environmental policies, plans, and accords, people are stopping to take notice.

There is a role to be played by philosophy in this discourse. As our impact upon the environment grows, so do the voices of protest and concern, demanding that limits be placed on our use (and abuse) of the environment. The job of the philosopher is to make sense of these voices and to articulate clear and penetrating accounts and critiques of the various positions on the environment.

Environmental philosophy is both a young and an old discipline. On the one hand, environmental ethics has only been on the academic radar for a couple of generations, and new theories are presently being raised and debated. On the other hand, philosophers have always been theorizing about the relationship between humans and the natural world, since questions like, "What is natural?" and "Are humans importantly different from the rest of nature?" have been at the forefront of concern for philosophy's greatest thinkers.

Our job in this course will be to look at both the young and the old of environmental philosophy, to make sense of the contemporary philosophical debates concerning the environment as well as to understand how previous thinkers have approached these issues.

Thinking and writing philosophically is a skill, and, like all skills, it can only be learned through practice – by actually *doing* it. Thus, students will read, think, write, and discuss the arguments and theories of environmental philosophy. Students will prepare for class by reading the texts and deciphering their meaning so that our in-class time can be spent less on exegesis and more on evaluation, less on explaining what the philosophers said and more on assessing the merits and drawbacks of each philosopher's approach.

## Required Texts

(1) Louis P. Pojman and Paul Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2008)

This text is available at the campus bookstore. Please pick it up right away. Please make sure you have the fifth edition.

(2) Handouts, distributed periodically in class.

## Course Requirements

### CSL Students

Presentations	10%
Journals	20%
Class Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Debate	10%
Final Exam	30%

### Non-CSL Students

Essay	30%
Class Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Debate	10%
Final Exam	30%

## Explanation of Course Requirements

### *CSL- Community Service Learning*

A number of students in this course will have the option of engaging in a volunteer project outside of the classroom as part of their course requirements. The volunteering will be done with a local community organization working on issues connected with the themes of our course (i.e., environmentalism). The student will be required to spend 20 hours over the course of the semester working with the organization. Up to fifteen students will be able to choose this CSL option for this course.

There are four different organizations that are engaged in this collaborative project. At the beginning of the semester, representatives of these organizations will come to class and present themselves and their groups to all the students. Then, interested students will sign up for this option of the course and make their preferred choices of volunteering (students may not end up with their first choice). If there are more than fifteen interested students, a lottery system will be put into effect.

The requirements for the CSL option include keeping a journal of observations, reflections, and questions concerning work done with the community partner. This journal writing will be semi-directed, in the sense that the instructor will regularly be providing questions and instructions to the students as to the theme and focus that their journal-writing should take for a specific week—so as to connect with the material being discussed in class during that week, for example.

The other components are class presentations of experiences and observations from work with the community partner and how these reflect upon our understanding of

environmental issues and the themes and ideas being covered in class. These presentations will be three times during the semester and for the most part done as a group with the other students who are volunteering at the same organization.

### *Objectives of Community Service Learning*

The CSL component of this course is meant as a benefit to both the students involved in volunteering and to those who are not volunteering. Volunteers will experience on a day-to-day basis how people confront the ethical issues concerning the relationship between humans and the natural world. They will observe the diverse points of view of those working for (and against) specific projects. They will work with others towards particular goals of these community organizations and be able to see the link between these smaller goals and more long-term aims of these organizations.

All of these details will allow CSL students a view and an understanding of the role played by environmental ethics in people's lives that is unavailable via a classroom setting alone. The job of the CSL student is to then bring these insight back to the classroom to share them with the rest of us to widen our collective understanding and vision.

### *Class Participation*

**Participation in Class Discussions:** In order to create a productive class environment, all students must contribute intelligently and thoughtfully to the class discussions. This means that each student should come to class with assigned materials read and homework assignments completed; students should be ready to contribute to discussion both voluntarily and when called upon by the instructor.

**Class Attendance:** While attendance will not be taken regularly, as a part of the participation component, students are required to attend class. Moreover, out of respect for one's fellow classmates and for the instructor, students must not disrupt class discussion either by arriving late or by leaving early. Attendance is especially required for debate sessions (attendance sheets will be passed out on debate days).

The grade for class participation will be determined by the instructor at the end of the semester.

### *Debates*

There are five debates scheduled for this semester, and each student will participate in one of them. At the beginning of the term, students will sign up to be a member of one of the debate teams. The topics will be distributed after the sign up; they will focus on current controversial issues in environmental ethics (such as animal rights, GMO foods, and the Kyoto Protocol). A discussion of proper debating form and of expectations for the debates will take place during the fourth week of classes.

The student's grade for the debate will be a mark out of 10. The instructor will distribute evaluation sheets to the debate participants the week after their debating session, with a grade for group performance as well as one for individual performance.

### *Midterm Test*

An in-class test will be held on Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, covering all materials (from the Text and from handouts) discussed up to that point.

### *Essay*

Non-CSL students are required to write an 8- to 10-page essay on a topic to be chosen from a limited list of topics pertaining to our course content. These topics will be posted on WebCT by the fourth week of classes, and students will have up until the end of the sixth week to choose a topic and to submit their choice on WebCT. A discussion of standards and requirements for essay-writing will take place near the end of January. The due date for the essay is April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### *Final Examination*

The final exam will be held at a place and time to be announced in the near future. The exam will be comprehensive, meaning that all materials covered during the course will be potential sources for exam questions; however, more weight will be given to materials covered since the midterm test.

## **Policy on Late Submissions and Missed Tests**

Students must hand materials in on time and be present for all activities, tests, and exams.

- Concerning missed tests and exams, make-up tests will only be given for reasons of a medical (illness) or compassionate (death in the family) nature. Students must speak with the instructor *as soon as they know* that they are going to miss (or have missed) the exam. Thus, make-up tests will only be given with valid and sufficient documentation and when the instructor is informed of the absence within a reasonable frame of time.

- Essays must be submitted in class to the instructor, on the day that they are due. Late essays will be accepted with a 5% reduction in value for each day late (e.g., an essay that deserves an 82% but is handed in two days late will receive a grade of 72%). Late essays must be either handed to the instructor in person or handed in to the Philosophy Department's General Office and stamped with the date and time by the departmental administrative assistant.

- For more information, consult the University Calendar, Section 23.4 (3).

## **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty**

No student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the student's own. Advice, critiques, proofreading, and clarification can be sought from other people, but all writing and assignments must be the student's own. When a student copies sentences, ideas, or thoughts from another source (a book, a website, a news article) without properly citing it in a footnote or endnote, the student has committed plagiarism.

If you have any doubts as to the status of your work regarding this matter, please consult with the instructor.

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm)) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.” (University Calendar, Section 23.4 (2c))

## Notes

- Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4 (2) of the University Calendar.
- Students are advised that the Code of Student Behaviour is published in the University Calendar (pp. 728-751) and should be reviewed since ignorance is not acceptable as a defence in cases of academic offences. When cheating and/or plagiarism occur, a number of penalties can be imposed, such as lowering a grade or expulsion from the University (outlined in Section 30.4.2 of the Code of Student Behaviour).
- Grades for tests, assignments, essays, and exams will be assigned an absolute value; there will no “grading on a curve.”
- Exam Registry: In the Students’ Union Exam Registry, there are past exams – midterm and final – available for students to view as representative samples for this course. Students can view these sample exams by entering my name and the course number at the Registry: [http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services\\_and\\_businesses/services/infolink/exams](http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services_and_businesses/services/infolink/exams)

## Grading Scheme

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Grade Point</u>
90 – 100	A+	4.0
85 – 89	A	4.0
80 – 84	A-	3.7
76 – 79	B+	3.3
73 – 75	B	3.0
70 – 72	B-	2.7
66 – 69	C+	2.3
62 – 65	C	2.0
58 – 61	C-	1.7
54 – 57	D+	1.3
50 – 53	D	1.0
49 and under	F	

## Course Schedule

Please note that all dates for assigned readings and due dates for essays, etc. are subject to change; any changes will be announced ahead of time in class.

- Readings will be covered in the order they appear, unless announced otherwise in class.

### Week 1 – Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>

- Course Introduction
- Genesis 1-3, (p. 12)
- Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” (pp. 14-21)

### Week 2 – Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>

- Lewis W. Moncrief, “The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis,” (pp. 22-27)
- Patrick Dobel, “The Judeo-Christian Stewardship Attitude to Nature,” (pp. 28-32)
- Dale Jamieson, “Against Zoos,” (pp. 97-103)

### Week 3 – Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>

- Immanuel Kant, “Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth,” (pp. 62-64)
- Peter Singer, “A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation,” (pp. 73-81)

### Week 4 – Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>

- Tom Regan, “The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights,” (pp. 82-89)
- Albert Schweitzer, “Reverence for Life,” (pp. 131-138)
- Paul Taylor, “Biocentric Egalitarianism,” (pp. 139-153)

### Week 5 – Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>

- Aldo Leopold, “Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic,” (pp. 163-172)
- J. Baird Callicott, “The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic,” (pp. 173-185)
- *Friday the 6<sup>th</sup>: Reports from CSL participants*

### Week 6 – Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>

- Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop, “Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness,” (pp. 186-199)
- *Wednesday: Preparation for Midterm Exam*
- *Friday: Midterm Exam*

### Week 7 – Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>

*Reading Week – no classes*

### Week 8 – Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>

- Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecological Movement,” (pp. 215-218)
- Arne Naess, “Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology,” (pp. 219-227)
- Bill Devall and George Sessions, “Deep Ecology,” (pp. 228-233)
- Richard Watson, “A Critique of Anti-Anthropocentric Ethics,” (pp. 234-240)

Week 9 – March 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>*- Monday: 1<sup>st</sup> debate*

- Mark Sagoff, “At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, or Why Political Questions Are Not All Economic,” (pp. 619-627)
- Karen J. Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism,” (pp. 33-48)

Week 10 – March 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>*- Monday: 2<sup>nd</sup> debate*

- Lilly-Marlene Russow, “Why Do Species Matter?” (pp. 269-276)
- *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>: Reports from CSL participants*

Week 11 – March 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>*- Monday: 3<sup>rd</sup> debate*

- Robert D. Bullard, “Overcoming Racism in Environmental Decision Making,” (pp. 644-658)
- Maria Mies, “Deceiving the Third World: The Myth of Catching-Up Development,” (pp. 676-682)

Week 12 – March 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>*- Monday: 4<sup>th</sup> debate**- Handout*

- Laura Westra, “Environmental Risks, Rights, and the Failure of Liberal Democracy: Some Possible Remedies,” (pp. 683-700)

Week 13 – March 30<sup>th</sup> to Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>*- Monday: 5<sup>th</sup> debate*

- Michael Martin, “Ecosabotage and Civil Disobedience,” (pp. 742-755)
- *Friday: Group Presentations from CSL participants*

Week 14 – Apr. 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>

- Course Wrap-up and Exam Preparation
- *Good Friday holiday.*