**PHIL 2500 (002) Environment and Society**

UNT, Fall 2025

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| Prof. Adam Briggle | Class Location: HKRY 252 |
| Office: ENV 225G  [adam.briggle@unt.edu](mailto:adam.briggle@unt.edu)  TA: Sean (Xu) Tan  [xutan@my.unt.edu](mailto:xutan@my.unt.edu) | Class Time: M/W/F 11-11:50  Office Hours: M/W/F 12-1 or by appt. |

**Course Description**

This class offers students philosophical tools for understanding environmental issues. These tools cover several levels of analysis from deep history and fundamental assumptions to contemporary policies. We will practice using the tools by exploring a range of topics such as climate change, pollution, animals, agriculture, public lands, biodiversity loss, and more. Our emphasis will be on the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary skills of problem-oriented thinking.

**Learning Outcomes: Improved ability to…**

1. Recognize wider historical, political, and cultural dimensions of environmental problems.
2. Understand and use philosophical tools for analyzing environmental problems.
3. Think critically, communicate clearly, and participate in open-minded dialogue.

**Evaluation of Learning Outcomes**

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| **Assignment/Activity** | **Weight** | **Description** (more details when needed on Canvas) |
| Classroom attendance | 30% | Being in class regularly is key to getting the most out of it. |
| Problem Paper | 20% | A short paper where you pick an issue you care about and analyze it. Due Oct. 17. |
| Just Futures Project | 20% | This is a creative project where you imagine yourself in the future describing how your problem got better. Due Dec. 11. |
| Reflections | 30% | Regular, short reflections on a prompt given in class, from your notebook/journal. Full credit for sincere attempt. |
| **TOTAL:** | **100%** |  |

**Materials**

All assigned materials will be made available on the Canvas site. Students are required to have a journal or notebook and to bring this with them to class each day. (There may have been a mix up with the campus bookstore, so this might change…!)

**Course Calendar**

**Unit 1: Key Concepts**

* Dryzek, John. 1997. “Making Sense of Earth’s Politics: A Discourse Approach”
* Karlsson, Rasmus. 2015. “Three Metaphors for Sustainability in the Anthropocene”
* Borgmann, Albert. 1995. “The Nature of Reality and the Reality of Nature”
* Latour, Bruno. 2011. “Love Your Monsters”

**Unit 2: Problem-Oriented Thinking and Climate Change**

* Parts of Briggle, Adam. 2024. *A Field Guide to Climate Change: Understanding the Problems*

**Unit 3: History and Foundational Perspectives**

* Leopold, Aldo. 1948. “The Land Ethic” from *A Sand County Almanac*
* Carson, Rachel. 1963. Excerpts from *Silent Spring*
* Hardin, Garrett. 1968. “The Tragedy of the Commons”
* White, Lynne Jr. 1974. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”
* **Jonas, Hans. 1974. “Technology and Responsibility,” from *Philosophical Essays***
* Foreman, Dave. 1987. “Strategic Monkeywrenching”

**Unit 4: Student-Led Projects Imagining Just Futures**

TBD…

**Mission** This course is offered in service of the noble goal of higher education to develop the intellectual and moral virtues. As stated by the UNT College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences: “Our mission is to kindle the thirst for truth, justice, and beauty; to foster cultural literacy and scientific investigation; and to cultivate thinking, speaking, and writing abilities characterized by clear expression and logically coherent, evidence-based arguments. We see these as the values, forms of knowledge, and skills most needed by citizens of a democracy...”

**Class Norms** Let’s be friends and think about important and difficult things together. My job is not to tell anyone *what* to think or believe. My job is to help students think with greater clarity, care, and depth. This will involve making arguments from many perspectives (some unpopular), posing difficult ideas, examining assumptions, and challenging convictions. Also, no cell phones or internet usage in class. Let’s put down the devices and practice the art of focused attention.

**Disability Accommodation** UNT Policy 16.001 Disability Accommodation for Students and Academic Units.“The University of North Texas (UNT or University) does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission, treatment, or access to its programs or activities, nor in employment in its programs or activities. The University is committed to providing equal educational access for qualified students with disabilities in accordance with state and federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as Amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In addition, the University is committed to making all programs and activities sponsored by UNT accessible, as required by the Texas Accessibility Standards and the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. To this end, all academic units are willing to make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies in order to facilitate equality of educational access for persons with disabilities.”

**Student Academic Integrity** UNT Policy 06.003 Student Academic Integrity Faculty Affairs.

“The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University’s actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.”

**Generative AI** We are in a novel and rapidly changing situation with AI tools. To be candid, I really don’t know the best approach or the right answers here. I hope that we can discuss and learn together about this. In this course, you are allowed to use Generative AI (GenAI) tools such as Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini to support your learning and develop skills for a GenAI-oriented workforce. However, GenAI should complement, not replace, your own critical thinking or creative efforts (this is the part that is fuzzy to me!). If something seems unclear, please seek clarification (as if I will know?!). I have started using GenAI in my own research as an assistant to help me track down information, relate ideas to one another, and set thoughts into wider contexts. I am not planning to use GenAI for this course, but I will always disclose if, when, and how I do so, and I expect the same from you. In line with the UNT Honor Code, all work you submit must be your own. Using GenAI tools without attribution or relying on them to do the thinking/writing for you violates academic integrity and will be addressed according to university policy.