**PHIL4700 Environmental Philosophy**

**Spring 2024**

**Syllabus**

Location: LANG 302

Meeting Times: T/R 9:30 – 10:50

Instructor: Dr. David Utsler

Email: [David.Utsler@unt.edu](mailto:David.Utsler@unt.edu)

Office: ENV 225D

Office Hours: M/W 11:00 – 12:00

Philosophy & Religion Dept. Phone: 940-565-2266

***Course Description:***

This course will survey many of the major and traditional topics in environmental philosophy and environmental ethics, plus we will look at some contemporary approaches. We will explore such questions as what we mean by the terms “nature” or “environment,” what the human relationship to the other-than-human world is, the rights of non-human animals, and the scope of moral considerability, among others.

***Course Objectives:***

Upon successful completion this course, you will be able to identify fundamental thinkers in environmental philosophy, key concepts, and the ability to articulate them.

***Required Texts;***

* Keller, David R. *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
* Other required readings will be posted on Canvas.

***Evaluation & Grading:***

* 12 Discussion Boards (the lowest two will be dropped): 30% of the final grade.
* Final Paper Prospectus: 30% of the final grade.
* Final Paper: 40% of the final grade.

**A=90%+ B=80%+ C=70%+ D=60%+ F=59% or below.**

***Attendance and Participation:***

This is a face-to-face course. Attendance is expected and mandatory. I permit 4 absences without consequence to your final grade. Each absence in excess of 4 will result in a deduction of one half of a letter grade. Exceptions for reasonable cause will be considered on a case-by-case basis. I do not grade on in-class participation, but I do take it into account on the final grade. For example, if by the end of term you fall short a few points of the next letter grade up, I am likely to bump you up to the next letter grade if you were diligent in attendance and made contributions to class discussions.

***Class Etiquette:***

* At all times courtesy and respect is expected, both to me your instructor and to your peers. A course such as this covers a number of diverse ideas and belief systems. Not everyone will have the same understanding or views of the content we cover. Such diversity is a good thing. We can and will discuss ideas, but attacking people or religious traditions will not be tolerated.
* Be in class on time. By “on time” I mean a few minutes before class is scheduled to start, so we can begin right away. If you have an impediment to being on time (e.g. coming from work or a class in another building), just communicate that to me. I am always happy to work with a student who communicates with me. But I can’t work with you if you do not communicate. The same applies to leaving early.

***Academic Integrity:***

* Students are responsible for reading, understanding and knowing UNT's Academic Dishonesty Policy that can be found at: <https://vpaa.unt.edu/news/new-academic-integrity-policy>.
* My particular policy is as follows:
  + The point of taking classes is to learn. You cannot truly learn if you engage in any form of academic dishonesty. All your work in this class must be your own. The most common forms of academic dishonesty that I see are plagiarism and the use of Artificial Intelligence. In the case of plagiarism, you are taking information from someone else and presenting it as your own. Plagiarism can be copying direct quotes from elsewhere (a book or the internet) but is not necessarily word for word. Plagiarism also occurs if you take ideas of others and reword them presenting them as your own thoughts. Philosophical texts can be difficult to understand, so students will often go to various internet sites to try to understand something better. Even without intending plagiarism, a student will try to put what they saw online in their own words. This is still plagiarism. The use of Artificial Intelligence is typically ChatGPT or similar tools. Using ChatGPT is no different from having another person write your paper or assignment for you. In both cases, YOU did not do the assignment.
  + How I handle plagiarism, the use of artificial intelligence, or any form of academic dishonesty is as follows: The first instance will result in receiving a “0” for the assignment. Do not ask me to redo the assignment. I have already read your assignment once, I am not going to create more work for myself to read and grade another. A second instance of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of “F” for the course. If it is still prior to the last withdrawal date, you can withdraw with a “W” to avoid the “F.” I make no exceptions to this policy.
  + Students engage in academic dishonesty for different reasons. Sometimes the student is struggling with the material or has burdens in their personal life. Other times, a student is just lazy and doesn’t want to do the work. In either case, I can’t give you a grade for work you didn’t do yourself. But if you are struggling, communicate with me. I’m here to help! I am always willing to work with a student who communicates with me.

***Student Responsibility for Learning:***

* My role as your professor is not to deposit information into passive minds. You have an active role in your learning. Come to class prepared. Read the material ahead of time and be prepared to ask questions or contribute to discussions.
* You are responsible for knowing due dates and keeping up on assignments.
* You are responsible for communicating with me regarding difficulties you are having with the material. If you don’t communicate with me, I can’t help you and I am here to help you succeed in this course.

***Additional Information:***

**Statement from the ODA**

* The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

**Last Day to Withdraw**

* Drop/Withdrawal Information, and other important Academic Dates can be found at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>

***Schedule of readings and topics:***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DATES | READINGS & LECTURE TOPICS |
| Week 1 | ***What is Environmental Philosophy and Environmental Ethics?*** |
| Jan 16 | Introduction and welcome to the course. Review of the syllabus and expectations. Course overview. |
| Jan 18 | Introduction: What is Environmental Ethics? EE Part I, 1 – 20. |
| Week 2 | ***Anthropocentrism and Non-Anthropocentrism*** |
| Jan 23 | In Defense of Anthropocentrism by Wilfred Beckerman and Joanna Pasek. EE Part II, 83 – 87.  Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem by Tim Hayward (PDF provided on Canvas). |
| Jan 25 | Value in Nature and the Nature of Value by Holmes Rolston III. EE, 130 – 137.  The End of Anthropocentrism by Mary Midgely. EE, 137 – 142. |
| Week 3 | ***The Scope of Moral Considerability and Biocentrism*** |
| Jan 30 | Animals as Subjects-of-a-Life by Tom Regan. EE, 161 – 168.  All Animals are Equal by Peter Singer. EE, 169 – 175. |
| Feb 1 | The Ethics of Respect for Nature by Paul W. Taylor. EE, 175 – 182.  Kantians and Utilitarians and the Moral Status of Nonhuman Life by James P. Sterba. EE, 182 – 192. |
| Week 4 | ***The Land Ethic and Ecocentrism/The Built Environment*** |
| Feb 6 | The Land Ethic by Aldo Leopold. EE, 193 – 201.  The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic. EE, 201 – 210.  Gaia As Seen Through the Atmosphere. EE, 210 – 211 (optional). |
| Feb 8 | Developing a General Ethics (with Particular Reference to the Built, or Human-Constructed, Environment) by Warwick Fox. EE, 213 – 220.  On Alienation from the Built Environment by Steven Vogel (PDF provided on Canvas). |
| Week 5 | ***Environmental Psychologism*** |
| Feb 13 | The Shallow and Deep Ecology Movement by Arne Naess. EE, 230 – 234.  The Heart of Deep Ecology by Andrew McLaughlin. EE, 235 – 239. |
| Feb 15 | The Deep Ecological Movement by Arne Naess. EE, 240 – 244.  Transpersonal Ecology by Warwick Fox. EE, 245 – 250. |
| Week 6 | ***Environmental Virtue Ethics & Continental Environmental Ethics*** |
| Feb 20 | Environmental Virtue Ethics by Ronald Sandler. EE, 252 – 256.  Narrative Environmental Virtue Ethics by Brian Treanor (PDF provided on Canvas). |
| Feb 22 | On Environmental Philosophy and Continental Thought by Steven Vogel. EE, 257 – 266. |
| Week 7 | ***Social Ecology*** |
| Feb 27 | What is Social Ecology? by Murray Bookchin. EE, 268 – 275. |
| Feb 29 | Socialism and Ecology by James O’Connor. EE, 275 – 281. |
| Week 8 | ***Ecofeminism*** |
| Mar 5 | The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism by Karen J. Warren. EE, 281 – 288.  Feminism and the Philosophy of Nature by Carolyn Merchant. EE, 291 – 299. |
| Mar 7 | Nature Self and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy and the Critique of Rationalism by Val Plumwood. EE, 300 – 309. |
|  |  |
|  | **SPRING BREAK, MARCH 11 – 17!!!**  **NO CLASSES THIS WEEK!!!** |
|  |  |
| Week 9 | ***Environmental Pragmatism*** |
| Mar 19 | Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism and Environmental Ethics by Anthony Weston. EE, 311 – 317. |
| Mar 21 | Methodological Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Environmental Ethics by Andrew Light. EE, 318 – 326. |
| Week 10 | ***Ecophenomenology*** |
| Mar 26 | What is Ecophenomenology? by David Wood (PDF provided on Canvas). |
| Mar 28 | Flesh and Nature: Understanding Merleau-Ponty’s Relational Ontology by Bryan Bannon (PDF provided on Canvas). |
| Week 11 | ***The Social Construction of Nature/Environment and Technology*** |
| Apr 2 | How to Construe Nature: Environmental Ethics and the Interpretation of Nature by Roger J.H. King. EE, 352 – 357.  The Trouble with Wilderness by William Cronon. EE, 359 – 361. |
| Apr 4 | Environmental Ethics and the Philosophy of Technology by David Rothenberg. EE, 368 – 375. |
| Week 12 | ***Population and Poverty*** |
| Apr 9 | Impact of Population Growth by Paul R. Ehrlich and John P. Holdren. EE, 426 – 432. |
| Apr 11 | The Ecological Necessity of Confronting the Problem of Human Overpopulation by Garrett Hardin. EE, 434 – 442. |
| Week 13 | ***Population and Poverty (cont.)*** |
| Apr 16 | How Poverty Breeds Overpopulation by Barry Commoner. EE, 443 – 446. |
| Apr 18 | More People, Greater Wealth, More Resources, Healthier Environment by Julian L. Simon. EE, 447 – 454. |
| Week 14 | ***Environmental Justice*** |
| Apr 23 | Environmental Justice for All by Robert D. Bullard. EE, 491 – 499. |
| Apr 25 | Just Garbage by Peter S. Wenz. EE, 501 – 508. |
| Week 15 | ***Environmental Hermeneutics*** |
| Apr 30 | (Environmental) Hermeneutics and the Anthropocene: Ricoeurian and Gadamerian Perspectives by David Utsler and Cynthia R. Nielsen (PDF provided on Canvas). |
| May 2 | Final Discussions and Course Wrap Up |
| Week 16 | ***Final Exam Week*** |
|  | Meeting time: 8:00 – 10:00AM, Thursday, May 9. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |