**University of North Texas**

**Environment and Society**

**PHIL 2500.001**

Instructor: Hyun Yang

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1. **Rationale and Course Outline:**

This course is an introduction to diverse philosophical approaches to the relationship between nature and human beings. As a part of the course, students will study environmental ethics, which examines philosophical accounts of the moral status of various entities in the natural world and our obligations toward them. By understanding environmental ethics, students will reflect on nature in a critical way and develop their attitude toward it.   
 In addition to a philosophical inquiry into nature, this course seeks to integrate philosophy with a scientific understanding of nature. By examining philosophical diagnoses of environmental issues, such as climate change and energy challenges, students will cultivate autonomous and creative thinking through active reflection on contemporary society, while gaining insights into what constitutes morally reasonable thinking about practical problems.

As one of the University Core Curriculum, this class aims at the achievement of “core objectives,” especially critical thinking, communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility. To evaluate the progress in each objective area, the instructor will apply four criteria: Introduction of issue and Presentation of Conclusion; Organization/Structure; Analysis of Ethical Issues; and Apply Perspectives. The four criteria will be used to assess student achievement in relation to the core objectives. The instructor may collect your results to clarify the feedback from the class and improve the quality of the education.

The instructor will apply four criteria to grade your two essays. Each essay will be worth 25 points. You can see the detailed explanation of each criterion in Canvas.

**II. Course Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

* accurately and fairly represent the thoughts and ideas of another
* think critically about a text or set of ideas
* clearly understand the moral status of non-human entities
* articulate social and personal responsibilities regarding environmental problems

**III. Course Requirements:**

# Class attendance and participation policy:

Since the course is conducted in person, on-time attendance is mandatory. To record attendance, the instructor will distribute short review questions at the beginning of each class. Students’ responses will be collected solely for verifying attendance and will not be graded or used in the evaluation of academic performance.

# Course readings:

# Required text: Marion Hourdequin, *Environmental Ethics: From Theory to Practice*.Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

1. Assignments

Final grades will consist of the following:

Attendance 20%

Quizzes 30%

Two Essays 50%

Quizzes: A reading quiz will be given in 15 classes. Each quiz consists of four true/false questions or multiple-choice questions on the reading and lecture content. Quizzes are automatically assigned and graded on Canvas.

Essays: Students must submit two essays. Each essay comprises 25% of your course grade. You can resubmit the first essay one more time to improve your grade for the essay.

No specific formatting is required, but the recommended length is 1,000–3,000 words. Topics for each essay will be posted on Canvas.

Proper citation of references is required for all essays to receive more detailed feedback and avoid plagiarism. Citations without attribution will receive a score of 0. To detect AI-generated essays, the instructor will use Turnitin on Canvas. A high AI score may result in a reduced grade.

\*First Essay Due Date: October 12, 2025

\*Second Essay Due Date: December 8, 2025

4.Late assignments:

All assignments are expected to be submitted by the designated due date. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day (e.g., 2 days late: 6% deduction; 3 days late: 9% deduction, etc).

**VI. Course Schedule**

August 18–22 The ubiquity of values; Values and worldviews;

August 25–29 Ethics, metaethics, and moral progress; Utilitarianism, cost–benefit analysis, and the environment.

September 1 Labor Day (no classes)

September 3–5 Utilitarianism, cost–benefit analysis, and the environment (cont.); Kantian ethics and the environment;

September 8–12 Virtue ethics and the environment; Intrinsic value and moral standing;

September 15–19 Sentiocentrism

September 22–26 Biocentrism

September 29–October 3 Ecocentrism; Relational approaches to ethics

October 6–10 Ecofeminism; Environmental justice

October 12 First essay due

October 13–17 Ethics, institutions, and infrastructure; Sustainability and sustainable development;

October 20–24 The moral challenges of climate change; Justice and climate change

October 27–31 Geoengineering; Ecological restoration

November 3–7 Authenticity and historical fidelity in ecological restoration; Faking nature

November 10–14 Hybrid landscapes, climate change, and other challenges; Restoration, participation, and engagement

November 17–21 Narrative, continuity, and the future of restoration; Pluralism, pragmatism, and politics

November 24–28 Thanksgiving Break (no classes)

December 1–3 Enlivening the moral imagination; Integrating the personal and the political

December 5 Reading Day (No class)

December 8 Second essay due

**VII. Academic Integrity**

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty.

According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

1. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
2. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
3. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university;
4. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or
5. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

1. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and
2. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

**VIII. Accommodations for students with disabilities (ADA statement)**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to the faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.