

# PHIL 2500 Environment & Society – Section 401 Online

## Instructor Information

Dr. Kim De Wolff (she/her)

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-2:50 or by appointment

Office: ENV 310S or by Zoom appointment

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## Course Description

This class explores ethical, ecological and political dimensions of pressing contemporary environmental issues including public lands, ocean plastic pollution, and climate justice. We will examine underlying assumptions about human-nature relationships, paying particular attention to the interconnections between environmental and social concerns including racial, gender, and economic inequality, and colonialism. Over the course of the semester, our focus will shift from defining and analyzing environmental crises to thinking creatively about how to move toward more just sustainable futures.

## Structure

This is a fully asynchronous (no scheduled meetings) online course. Your interaction with me, your TA and with your fellow students will take place through Canvas. I am available in person during my scheduled office hours through Zoom meetings by request. There are 8 intensive weeks of content that you will move through, grouped around four main themes: Nature and Public Lands; Plastic Pollution; Climate Justice; and Sustainable Futures.

All assignments are due on either Tuesdays (“A” deadlines) or Fridays (“B” deadlines), with discussion post replies due before the next set of deadlines (if the initial post is due Tuesday, replies are due on Friday etc.).

## Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Analyze key concepts and underlying ethical assumptions associated with contemporary environmental issues
2. Connect environmental issues with social and political concerns
3. Critically evaluate possible actions and solutions for addressing environmental issues, and think creatively about visions for justice and Sustainable Futures.

## Materials

There is NO required textbook. All readings, films and other required materials are available for free, either as PDF or links on Canvas, or through the UNT library. Details are on each week’s “Materials” page.

## Technology Requirements

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere \(https://online.unt.edu/learn\)](https://online.unt.edu/learn).

## Student Support & Wellness

Knowing where to find support is extra critical in fully online environments. I've compiled some especially pertinent links below.

### Course Communication Practices

Please reach out via my UNT email if you have any questions about course policies, expectations, or content. I aim to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays. During busy times my inbox can get super full (especially when teaching large online classes!), so feel free to send a gentle follow up if you have not heard back within 48 (business) hours.

### Canvas Support

The LMS Support team provides technical support for UNT's Canvas learning management system (LMS) and supported third-party LMS integrated tools. You can reach the helpdesk via phone at (940) 369-7394, email at [lms@unt.edu](mailto:lms@unt.edu), or using our [chat link](#).

### UNT Tech Support Hub

Your [directory of campus tech support](#) for Canvas and Beyond.

### Student Support Services & Policies

Links to [all kinds of crucial resources](#), including mental health support, ADA policy, how to change your preferred name on your UNT account or add your pronouns to Canvas and more!

## Course Requirements

Assignment	Points Possible	% of Final Grade
Assignment 1 – Plastic Reflection	20 points	10%
Assignment 2 – Tech Critique Paper	30 points	15%
Assignment 3 – Just Futures Project	30 points	15%
Quizzes (highest 12 x 5 points)	60 points	30%
Discussions/Activities (6 x 10 points)	60 points	30%
<b>Total Points Possible</b>	200 points	100%

Further details, including due dates and assignment prompts can be found on Canvas.

### Extra Credit

There are three extra credit activities distributed throughout the semester meant to help deepen your engagement with its respective week's materials. Participation in these exercises must be on time to count for extra credit, as I will be reporting the results back to the class. Meaningful engagement may be awarded up to 2 points/1% extra credit for each activity (up to 6 points/3% total) and will also be taken into

consideration when making decisions about rounding up borderline final grades at the end of the semester.

## Assessing Your Work

Final letter grades will be assigned based on the following points/percentages:

A = 180 points / 90% and above

B = 160-179 points / 80-89%

C = 140-159 points / 70-79%

D = 120-139 points / 60-69%

F = 119 points / 59% and below

## Late Work

Late work will only be accepted with permission from the instructor. If you miss a deadline for reasons beyond your control, please email me as soon as possible. Otherwise, all work turned in after the due date/time may receive a grade of zero unless the student has a [university-excused absence](#) and provides documentation with 48 hours of the missed deadline.

## AI Policy

In this class, written assignments and discussion posts are designed to hone your own personal thought process and arguments. Moreover, as a CORE class, these assignments are also designed to develop important academic skills, just like we learn basic math before jumping to use calculators. As such, the use of Generative AI through tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini, and Claude (including, for example, to generate, organize, translate, edit, or "professionalize" your assignments) is not permitted **unless otherwise stated in an assignment prompt**. While these tools can be helpful in certain contexts – they might even help you to synthesize the readings for this class, for example – AI does not live your life or think your thoughts. In fact, AI has a troubling tendency to erase nuance and personality in ways that curtail self-expression and make for worse philosophy papers. All assignments will be submitted through TurnItIn which has an integrated AI checker. Given the possibility of false positives, I strongly suggest keeping drafts that clearly show your writing process (i.e. with track changes or version history).

## Academic Integrity

Communities of trust and respect are integral to college education and academic research alike. I recognize that we all have many responsibilities that can bring a lot of pressure. If you are struggling, please reach out to me for support – don't make bad choices!

Students using other people's work without citation or using generative AI without permission of the instructor will be in violation of UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of [guidelines for your academic success](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>). Under UNT policy, use of AI to generate content without permission is considered a form of cheating (receiving unauthorized assistance). If you have questions about this, or how it applies in an online class environment, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

## Inclusive Online Learning Environments

Philosophy classes (and society!) flourish with a diversity of perspectives. You do not need to share my views in this class, but you do need to be kind! Please work with me to create a

culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. Meaningful, respectful discussion is a requirement, but personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please let me know. We are all learning together.

## UNT Policies

### Accessibility & Accommodations

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 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. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

### F1-Visa Students

Federal regulations state that students may apply only 3 fully-online semester credit hours (SCH) to the hours required for full-time status for [F-1 Visa \(DOC\)](#) holders. Full-time status for F-1 Visa students is 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduate students.

### Emergency Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

## Course Schedule

### **WEEK 1A: Start Here + Introduction Modules** (Available 1/12/26)

#### Read

- The Syllabus!
- Crist, Eileen. 2017. "The Affliction of Human Supremacy." *The Ecological Citizen* 1 (1): 61-64.

#### **Due Tuesday 1/13**

1. Welcome survey
2. Discussion 1A
3. Quiz 1A

### **WEEK 1B: Environment, Nature, Wilderness** (Available 1/12/26)

#### Read

- Marris, Emma. 2013. "The Yellowstone Model," Pp.17-36 in *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*. Bloomsbury.

**Due Friday 1/16**

1. Replies for discussion 1A
2. Discussion 1B
3. Quiz 1B

**WEEK 2A: Public Lands and Exclusion (Available 1/12/26)**

**Read**

- Finney, Carolyn. 2014. "Bamboozled," Pp. 21-31 in *Black Faces, White Spaces: Rethinking the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. UNC Press.

**Due Tuesday 1/20**

1. Replies for discussion 1B
2. Extra Credit 1
3. Quiz 2A

**WEEK 2B: Should Bears Ears be a National Monument? (Available 1/12/26)**

**Read**

- Goetzen, Clarisse. 2021. "Understanding the Bears Ears National Monument Debate." *The Alliance for Citizen Engagement*. September 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Smith, David and Oliver Milman. 2017. "Trump slashes size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase national monuments in Utah." *The Guardian*. December 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Herrera, Jack. 2024. "Native tribes are getting a slice of their land back — under the condition that they preserve it." *Los Angeles Times*. January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Due Friday 1/23**

1. Discussion 2B
2. Quiz 2B

**WEEK 3A: Plastic Responsibilities (Available 1/19/26)**

**Read**

- Maniates, Michael. 2002. "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?" Pp. 43-66 in Thomas Princen et al (Eds.) *Confronting Consumption*. MIT Press.

**Due Tuesday 1/27**

1. Replies for discussion 2B
2. Exercise 3A
3. Quiz 3A

**WEEK 3B: Plastic Bodies (Available 1/19/26)**

**Read**

- Van Dooren, Thom. 2014. "Fledging Albatross." Pp. 21-44 in *Flight Ways*. Columbia University Press.
- Recommended: De Wolff, Kim. 2017. "Plastic Naturecultures: Multispecies Ethnography and the Dangers of Separating Living from Nonliving Bodies." *Body & Society* 23 (3): 23-47.

**Due Friday 1/30**

1. Optional plastic pollution "ask my anything" discussion
2. Week 3B Quiz

**WEEK 4A: Is plastic recycling the solution? (Available 1/26/26)**

**Read**

- LISTEN to podcast: Sullivan, Laura and Sarah Gonzales. 2020. "Waste Land." *Planet Money*. NPR.
- Simmonds, Charlotte. 2019. "How you're recycling plastics wrong from coffee cups to toothpaste." *The Guardian*. June 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Wilkins, Matt. 2018. "Why Recycling Won't Solve Plastic Pollution." *Scientific American* July 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Due Tuesday 2/3:**

1. Week 4A Discussion
2. Week 4A Quiz

**WEEK 4B: Plastic Reflection Paper** (Available 1/26/26)

No additional reading.

**Due Friday 2/6:**

1. Replies for Discussion 4A
2. Plastic Reflection Paper due before 11:59pm.

**WEEK 5A: Global Climate Crisis** (Available 2/2/26)

**Read**

- WATCH: *Anote's Ark*.

**Due Tuesday 2/10**

1. Extra Credit 2
2. Week 5A Quiz

**WEEK 5B: What is Climate Justice?** (Available 2/2/26)

**Read**

- Shiva, Vandana. 2015. "Soil, Not Oil," Pp. 91-126 in *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*. North Atlantic Books.
- Kyle Whyte. 2018. "Way Beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice."

**Due Friday 2/13**

1. Quiz 5B
2. Tech Critique Proposal Exercise

**WEEK 6A: Can Technology Save Us?** (Available 2/9/26)

**Read**

- Boucher, Martin J and Philip Loring. 2017. "[Climate change isn't a tech problem so we need more than a tech solution.](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) *Ensisia*. March 20th.
- Fleming, Jim. 2017. "Excuse Us While We Fix the Sky: WEIRD Supermen and Climate Engineering." *Environment & Society* 4 (23-28).
- De La Garza, Alejandro. 2023. "A Controversial Technology is Creating a Rift Among Climate Scientists" *Time Magazine*. March 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Due Tuesday 2/17**

1. Quiz 6A

**WEEK 6B: Thinking Beyond Technology** (Available 2/9/26)

**No Reading** – Work on Tech Critique Paper

**Due Friday 2/20**

1. Citation Skills Quiz 6B – due before you submit the paper!
2. Tech Critique Paper Due before 11:59 pm.

**WEEK 7A: Who/what are we "sustaining"?** (Available 2/16/26)

**Read**

- Alaimo, Stacy. 2012. "Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanisms and Unknown Futures." *PMLA* 127(3): 558-564.
- Crist, Eileen. 2013. "On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature." *Environmental Humanities* 3: 129-147.

**Due Tuesday 2/24**

1. Extra Credit 3
2. Quiz 7A

**WEEK 7B: Future Histories (Available 2/16/26)****Read**

- Oreskes, Naomi and Erik M. Conway. 2013. "The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future." *Daedalus* 142(1): 40-58.
- Jones, Adam Garnet. 2020. "History of the New World," Pp. 35-60 in Joshua Whitehead (Ed.) *Love After the End*. Arsenal.

**Due Friday 2/27**

1. Quiz 7B

**WEEK 8A: Imagining Just Futures (Available 2/16/26)**

**Play:** online card game More & More

**Due Tuesday 3/3**

1. Discussion 8A

**WEEK 8B: Final Project Work (Available 2/16/26)**

**No Reading** - Work on final project

**Due Friday 3/6:**

1. Replies for Discussion 8A
2. **FINAL Project Due: Friday March 6<sup>th</sup> before 11:59pm.**