

**Ecological Selves**  
(Philosophy of Ecology)  
Spring Term 2016 – University of Oregon  
Instructor: Nicolae Morar

**Syllabus**

1. Course Description

In this course, we will explore the question of **Ecological Selves**. In particular, we will look at three ways in which we can think of ourselves as *ecological entities* (or as beings who are extended beyond the boundary of our bodies). By its nature, this course is not a traditional course in philosophy of ecology.

**Topic # 1 - A Biological View of the Human Body – The Microbial View:** our bodies are not genetically unique and spatially bounded - we are a collection of organisms that includes a significant number of microbial organisms.

**Topic #2 - An Externalist Conception of The Mind - The Cyborg View:** our cognitive processes are not limited or restricted by the boundaries of our skulls - we integrate and use reliably forms of technology (from pens to computers) that alter, and enhance our minds.

**Topic # 3 - A Social Conception of the Self - The Social View:** our conception about ourselves is not bounded by our self/ individual stories but it is largely (maybe entirely) built up from the social environments that make us who we are.

2. Class Meetings

Class will meet **Monday** and **Wednesday** from **10:00 - 11:50 am** in **12 PAC**.

3. Office Hours and Contact Information

Office: 250B Susan Campbell Hall  
Email: nmorar@uoregon.edu  
Office Hours: TH 3:00-4:00 pm & by appointment.

4. Course Requirements and Grading

Grades on papers and exams will be given on the standard 0-100 point grading scale:

100-93:	A
92-90:	A-
89-87:	B+
86-83:	B
82-80:	B-
79-77:	C+
76-73:	C
72-70:	C-
69-60:	D
59-0:	F

Final grades will be weighted as follows:

	<i>Undergraduate</i>	<i>Graduate Students</i>
1. Participation and Attendance	20%	20%
2. In-Class Presentation (1)	N/A	20%
3. Short Reading Responses	10% (6)	10% (8)
4. Midterm paper	30 %	N/A
5. Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography	N/A	10%
6. Final Term Paper	40%	40%

**1. Participation/attendance:** You are expected to participate actively in this course, which includes attending every class, reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and professionally in class discussions. Missing three classes for any reason will result in a full grade reduction. An additional full grade reduction will be made for each additional missed class after the third. Three late arrivals for class will count as one absence. The quality and quantity of your participation in the class discussion will be evaluated in assigning 20% of your final grade.

**2. In-class Presentation:** Each graduate student will sign up to take responsibility for a one-hour presentation during one week of the course. During that week, you will be especially well prepared to answer questions about the readings and introduce topics for class discussion. Your teaching and leadership in discussion for your week will be the basis for 20% of your final course grade.

**3. Short Reading Responses:** Each week, either on Sunday or Tuesday, you will have the opportunity to submit via email (before midnight) a summary of the next day's assigned readings. Summaries should be limited to one single-spaced page (~600 words) for each assigned article and you should aim to be as clear, concise, and comprehensive as possible within that space. It is very important that in the last paragraph of the summary (last 1/3), you raise a critical concern/question with respect to the argument you've just summarized. You may submit a summary of the readings for either Monday or Wednesday during a particular week, but not on both days. Your summaries will be graded as either DUCK+ (especially insightful summary and sharp question) or DUCK- (completeness of summary and quality of question needs improvement). Reading summaries will count as 10% of your final grade.

Extra or late summaries cannot be accepted in order to make up for delinquency in completing these assignments at the proper time.

**5. Midterm paper:** For undergraduate students (only), a comprehensive (take home) midterm exam will be scheduled at the end of week 5. On Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2016, *three* questions will be posted on Canvas. You are required to respond to 2 (of the 3) questions. Length: 2 double-spaced pages *per* question (~ 550 words/ question). Exams are due on **Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016** by class time on Canvas. This will count as 30% of your final grade.

**3. Term paper prospectus:** You (only graduate students) will submit in the **8<sup>th</sup> week (by May 20<sup>th</sup>)** a prospectus of your final paper with two components: (1) a 2-3 page detailed description of the topic and outline of your proposed argument or project; and (2) an annotated bibliography of at least five primary or peer-reviewed secondary texts that you intend to consult (in addition to texts assigned for the course). Each annotation should be around one double-spaced page and include a summary of the book or article as well as an indication of its relevance for your project. Your prospectus must receive my approval in order for your final term paper or final project to be

accepted.

**6. Final Term Paper:** Final papers should explore in detail a specific (assigned for undergraduate students and independently-chosen for graduate students) topic or theme related to the course **or** to your (graduate) research projects. It must include (a) examination of at least five scholarly sources in addition to course texts, and (b) – especially for graduate students - the development of your own original position or critical response. Term papers should be around – for undergraduate students **6-7** & for graduate students **10-12** double-spaced pages. Final papers must be stapled, proofread, and use a standard system of citation (e.g., APA or Chicago). Papers are due **Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> 2016, 5:00 pm**, and extensions will be granted only in the case of genuine, documented emergencies.

Late papers will lose one letter grade for each calendar day that they are late.

***Failure to complete the final exam will result in an automatic failure in the course (grade F).***

Grading rubric for exam essays (final):

A = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = Okay. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = Poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

## 6. Course Policies

**Incompletes and extensions** will be given only in the event of documented emergencies.

**Emergencies:** In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

**Sexual Violence:** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are *required reporters*. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24h hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu)

**Accessibility:** If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

**Academic Misconduct:** With the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has become an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade.

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me.

Plagiarism and cheating on exams undermines the integrity of the academic community. When undetected, it gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class we will do our best to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students who are aware of violations by others should bring this to my attention. This is the right thing to do. It is also in your own self-interest.

**There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course.** Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be given to the university authorities. For more on the University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website:

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

**External Sources:** Using sources not listed on the syllabus in researching and writing your papers is fine, as long as they are both to the point, and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, cite your sources! It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism. This is probably the best place to make this point, too: Wikipedia can be valuable for getting a very broad grasp of positions and debates, but when it gets into details, especially on philosophic topics, it is very often horrible – sketchy, convoluted, misinformed, and often simply wrong. If you wish to consult online resources, I suggest you use some of the other, much better sites. Most prominent is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, but others are useful as well:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <http://plato.stanford.edu/>  
The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

## 7. Website

All the information about this course and other comments or events related to the class will be posted on Canvas.

## 8. Texts

All readings (required and/ or recommended) will be posted on Canvas as Pdf files in section *Modules* of this class.

9. Topics and Readings

Here is a tentative schedule of topics and readings. This list of readings is only indicative for a possible trajectory for the class. Amendments and alterations - based on students' interest also - will be considered and announced in class as we go.

<b>Week 1:</b>	<i>Introduction to the course</i>
3/28	J. Baggini, "What is the Self? It Depends" <i>NYT</i> J. Perry, "The Self"
3/30	Freya, "Atomism & its ideological implications" <i>from The Ecological Self</i>
<b>Week 2:</b>	<b>Topic # 1: A Biological View of the Human Body – The Microbial View</b>
4/4	The Human Microbiome DeSalle & Perkins, <i>Welcome to the Microbiome</i> (ch. 3 & 4) Knight, "The Body Microbial" <i>from Follow Your Gut</i>
4/6	Our Microbial Cloud Meadow & al. "Humans Differ in their Personal Microbial Cloud" <b>Graduate Student Presentation:</b> Ashley Bateman
<b>Week 3:</b>	<b>Topic # 1: A Biological View of the Human Body – The Microbial View</b>
4/11	A Biological Conception of the Self and Non-Self Lowy, "The Immunological Construction of the Self" <b>Graduate Student Presentation:</b> Kaja J. Rathe
4/13	TBA.
<b>Week 4:</b>	<i>Interactions – Microbes, Cognition, and Sociality</i>
4/18	<i>Microbes and the Brain: The Gut-Brain Axis</i> Smith, "Can Bacteria in your Gut explain your mood?" Cryan & Dinan, "Mind-altering microorganisms: the impact of gut microbiota on brain and behavior" <b>Graduate Student Presentation:</b> Olga Kuskova
4/20	<i>Microbes and the Social</i> Archie & Tung, "Social Behavior and the microbiome" Tung & al, "Social networks predict gut microbiome composition in wild baboons" Moeller & al. "Social Behavior shapes the chimpanzee pan-microbiome" (recommended)

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**Week 5:** Topic # 2 – **An Externalist Conception of the Mind – The Extended Mind Hypothesis**  
 4/25 *Tony Chemero – Visit – The Extended Mind Hypothesis* (conceptual landscape)  
 Wagman & Chemero, “The End of the Debate over Extended Cognition”  
 Clark & Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”

4/27 Readings: TBA  
**Graduate Student Presentation:** Gus Skorburg

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**Week 6:** **An Externalist Conception of the Mind – The Cyborg View**  
 5/2 Clynes & Kline, “Cyborgs and Space”  
 Haraway, “Cyborgs and Symbionts: Living Together in a New World Order”  
 A. Clark, *Natural Born Cyborgs*, Ch. 1 Cyborgs Unplugged  
**Graduate Student Presentation:** Sarah McLay

5/4 *Interactions - Extended Mind, Ethics, & Ecological Control*  
 John Doris, “Collaborativism” & “Agency”

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**Week 7:** **An Externalist Conception of the Mind & A Social Conception of the Self**  
 5/9 *Interactions - Extended Mind and Politics*  
 Ian Hacking, “Making Up People” & “The Looping Effects of Human Kinds”  
**Graduate Student Presentation:** Chris Torres

5/11 Readings: TBA

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**Week 8:** Topic #3- **A Social Conception of the Self - The Social View**  
 5/16 Readings: TBA  
**Graduate Student Presentation:** Elliny Hiebert

5/18 *Lorraine Code – Visit – Ecological Thinking*  
 Readings: TBA

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**Week 9:** Topic #3- **A Social Conception of the Self - The Social View**  
 5/23 Readings: TBA

**Wed, 5/25** *Class Cancelled*  
*Interactions - Readings: Social – Why are our brains wired to connect? – Lieberman*  
 (excerpts)

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**Week 10:** Topic #3- **A Social Conception of the Self - The Social View**  
 5/30 **Memorial Day** - University Holiday (no class)  
 6/1 A Feminist Conception of the Self  
 Readings: TBA  
**Graduate Student Presentation:** Katrina Maggiulli

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**Final papers due** **Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> 2016, 5:00 pm** (by email)

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