

Environmental Ethics

ENVS 345: TR 12:00-1:50, 353 PLC

Instructor: Tim Christian Myers, tcc@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 2:00-4:00 (or by appointment), COL 240

Course Description:

What is environmental ethics? We might have a sense of medical ethics, business ethics, and perhaps animal ethics, but what are the ethical dimensions of how we relate to “the environment”? We typically think of ethics in terms of standards of conduct or moral principles of “right action.” And yet, for the most part, modern Western culture does not have an agreed-upon set of standards or principles about how we *ought* to treat the natural world. The very idea of relating to the environment (as opposed to people) in an *ethical* way is largely foreign to the modern mind. Environmental ethics is therefore something culturally new to us, and very much a work in progress.

As modern societies struggle to confront the gravity of environmental crises, radically new ways of thinking and living are increasingly called for. This course, while predominantly philosophical in content, is meant to offer a variety of inter-disciplinary perspectives and approaches to this end. Before we can begin to think clearly about how we *ought* to relate to nature, however, we must first come to terms with how we (moderns) *actually* relate to it. So we begin with the modern relationship to nature usually taken for granted, followed by an exploration of environmental alternatives to modernity as informed by indigenous ways of life, environmental movements like deep ecology and ecofeminism, as well as contemporary issues such as wilderness preservation, climate change, sustainability, and food/agriculture. The aim is to encourage you to reflect on your life by inviting you to think carefully and critically about environmental issues.

Required Texts:

All reading materials are available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

You are expected to *carefully read* the materials offered in this course with the intention of comprehending the ethical—whether philosophical or political—issues involved in each. This is not a light-reading course. Each day’s readings average out to about 35 pages—less if the reading is difficult, more if the reading is easy. Some of these readings will be quite challenging, so it is of the utmost importance that you not only attend the lectures, but read *before* each one. Plan to commit three or four hours of reading per class. Disciplined study habits are essential, and group study is recommended.

Success in this course also depends centrally on the ability to write good papers. Writing a good paper not only involves comprehending the assigned readings, but also an ability to respond to them in thoughtful and nuanced ways. Whether agreeing or disagreeing with the material, you will need to *justify* your views on the matters in question by providing *good reasons* in defense of your thesis (as opposed to offering unexplained opinions, going off on tangents, or simply “regurgitating” the material). And like all good writing—which involves *careful organization, clarity, and good reasoning*—multiple drafts are essential.

Grading:

Attendance/Participation:	10%
Pop Quizzes:	20%
Midterm Paper:	30%
Final Paper:	40%

Attendance is mandatory. It will be taken at the beginning of every lecture. **Missing four classes for any reason will result in a full grade reduction. Another full grade reduction will be made for any additional absence after that.**

There will also be five short **multiple-choice quizzes** (five questions) every other week (either on Tuesday or Thursday) at the beginning of class to review the materials of the prior two weeks. This is meant as an incentive to keep up on all of the readings. If you've done all the readings, the quizzes should be straightforward. Of the five quizzes, I will count only the **top four grades**, dropping the lowest score.

In addition to the quizzes, **two papers** (Midterm and Final) will be required (5-7 pages each). The Midterm is due at the beginning of class during Week 6—Tuesday, February 14th. The Final Paper is due Thursday, March 22nd in my mailbox at by **4:00** in 145 Columbia Hall. **Important: Late Midterm and Final papers will be docked one letter grade for each day late.**

- A = Superior, a mark of excellence. (90-100%)
- B = Outstanding, very good (80-89%)
- C = Good/Acceptable, average for most college students (70-79%)
- D = Passing, but needs improvement (60-69%)
- F = Below 60% is not a passing grade.

Academic Honesty:

Instructors are very good at recognizing plagiarism. Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts. A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgment of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:

1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials--unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult me during office hours/via email, or seek assistance from Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226).

Scheduled Readings (Any changes in the reading schedule will be announced in class):

Week 1: What is Environmental Ethics?

1/10 — Introduction

- 1/12 — Bernard J. Nebel & Richard T. Wright: "Are We in the Process of a Major Paradigm Shift?"
 Joseph DesJardins: "Science, Ethics, and the Environment"
 Kathleen Dean Moore & Michael P. Nelson: "Science and Humanities: The Logical Necessity of Collaboration in the Face of Environmental Threats to the Future"
 Moore & Nelson: "It's Wrong to Wreck the World"
 Carolyn Merchant, "Environmental Ethics and Political Conflict"

Week 2: The Modern Relationship to Nature: Science, Technology, Capitalism (Part I)

1/17 — Carolyn Merchant: "The World an Organism"
 Merchant, "The Mechanical Order"

- 1/19 — Merchant: "Mechanism as Power"
 Merchant: "Management of Nature"
 John Stuart Mill: "Nature"

*****Quiz 1*****

Week 3: The Modern Relationship to Nature: Science, Technology, Capitalism (Part II)

- 1/24 — Max Horkheimer & Theodore Adorno: Introduction to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* & “The Concept of Enlightenment”
 Martin Heidegger: “Memorial Address”
- 1/26 — Herbert Marcuse: “The New Forms of Control”
 Alan Thein Durning: “An Ecological Critique of Global Advertising”
(Class Film: “The Merchants of Cool”)

Week 4: Wild Nature and the Indigenous Way

- 1/31 — Max Oelschlaeger: “Wild Nature: Critical Responses to Modernism”
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Selections from *Nature* & Henry David Thoreau: Selections from “Walking”
 John Muir: Selections from *Our National Parks*
(Class Film: “Our National Parks”)
- 2/2 — Chief Luther Standing Bear: “Indian Wisdom”
 George Tinker: “An American Indian Cultural Universe”
 Vine Deloria Jr.: “Power and Place Equal Personality”
 Daniel Wildcat: “Technological Homelessness”
 David Abram: “The Ecology of Magic”

Quiz 2

Week 5: Ecocentrism, Wilderness, and Deep Ecology

- 2/7 — Aldo Leopold: Forward to *A Sand County Almanac*
 Leopold: “Marshland Elegy”
 Leopold: “Monument to a Pigeon”
 Leopold: “Thinking Like a Mountain”
 Leopold: “The Land Ethic”
- 2/9 — George Sessions: “Ecocentrism, Wilderness, and Global Ecosystem Protection”
 Fritjof Capra: “Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm”
 Arne Naess: “The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecological Movement”
 Naess: “Deepness of Questions and the Deep Ecology Movement”
 Naess: “Deep Ecology and Lifestyle”
(Class Film: Planet Earth: Into the Wilderness)

Week 6: Critiques of the Wilderness Ideal and Nature-centered Environmentalism

- 2/14 — Ramachandra Guha: “American Wilderness Preservation and Radical Environmentalism: A Third World Critique”
 Carl Talbot: “The Wilderness Narrative and the Cultural Logic of Capitalism”
 Thomas H. Birch: “The Incarceration of Wilderness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons”

Midterm Paper Due Tuesday, 2/14 in class:

Late papers will be docked one letter grade for each day late.

- 2/16 — J. Baird Callicott: “The Wilderness Idea Revisited: The Sustainable Development Alternative”
 William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”

Quiz 3

Week 7: Class, Race, and Ecofeminism

- 2/28 — Kevin DeLuca & Anne Demo: “Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carlton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness”
 Dean Curtin: “Recognizing Women’s Environmental Expertise”
- 3/1 — Karen J. Warren: “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism”
 Noel Sturgeon: “Naturalizing Race: Indigenous Women and White Goddess”

Week 8: Growth Economics and (Un)sustainable Development

- 2/21 — James Gustave Speth: “The Limits to Growth”
 L. Hunter Lovins: “Natural Capitalism: Path to Sustainability?”
 Bill McKibben: “Hype vs. Hope”
 William Rees: “Sustainable Development: Economic Myths and Global Realities”
 David Schweickart, “Is Sustainable Capitalism an Oxymoron?”
- 2/23 — Fred Magdoff & John Bellamy Foster: “What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism”
 John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, & Richard York: “Dialectical Materialism and Nature”

*****Quiz 4*****

Week 9: Sustainability: Lifestyle and Food

- 3/6 — Vandana Shiva: Introduction to *Soil Not Oil* & “The Politics of Climate Change”
 Shiva: “Soil Not Oil”
- 3/8 — Michael Pollan: “The Industrialization of Eating”
 Wendell Berry: “A Defense of the Family Farm”
 Michael Allen Fox: “Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly on the Earth”

Week 10: Exploring New Relationships to Nature

- 3/13 — Mary Mellor: “Ecofeminism and Environmental Ethics: A Materialist Perspective”
 Merchant: “A Garden Planet”
 Merchant: “Partnership”
- 3/15 — J. Baird Callicott: “Environmental Philosophy *Is* Environmental Activism: The Most Radical and Effective Kind”
 Terry Tempest Williams: “Climate Change: What is Required of Us?”
 Thomas Berry: “The Great Work”
 Paul Hawkin: “The Most Amazing Challenge”

*****Quiz 5*****

Final Paper Due: Thursday, March 22nd by 4:00 in my mailbox at 145 COL.
Late papers will be docked one letter grade for each day late.