

Environmental Ethics

ENVS 345: MTWRF 10:00-11:50, 242 COL

Instructor: Tim Christian Myers, tcc@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: Wed. & Thurs. 12:30- 1:30 (or by appointment), COL 47C

Course Description:

Are there ethical dimensions to how we should 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—and not just 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 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 mainstream modernity as informed by indigenous ways of life, environmental movements like deep ecology and ecofeminism, as well as contemporary issues that concern 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 30 to 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 around three 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 four short **multiple-choice quizzes** (five questions) every Friday at the beginning of class to review the materials of the prior week. 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 four quizzes, I will count only the **top three grades**, dropping the lowest score.

In addition to the quizzes, **two papers** (Midterm and Final) will be required. The Midterm (4-5 pages) is due at the beginning of class during Week 3—Monday, July 9th. The Final Paper (5-7 pages) is due Thursday, July 26th 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 will be announced in class):

Week 1. The Modern Relationship to Nature: Science, Technology, Capitalism

- 6/25 **Introduction: What is Environmental Ethics?**
 (Film: Severn Sazuki on *Democracy Now!*)

- 6/26 **Science, Ethics and Environmental Paradigms**
 - 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"

- 6/27 **Nature and Christianity in Medieval Europe**
 - Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis"
 - Merchant: "The World an Organism"

- 6/28 **The Scientific Revolution: Nature as a Machine**
 - Merchant, "The Mechanical Order"
 - Merchant: "Mechanism as Power"

6/29 **The Disenchantment of Nature**

- Max Oelschlaeger: "The Alchemy of Modernism: From Wilderness to Nature"
- Martin Heidegger: "Memorial Address"

(Film: "Crisis of Faith")

Quiz 1

WEEK 2. Nature-centered Environmentalism: Ecocentrism

7/02 **The Turn to Wild Nature**

- 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*

(Film: "Our National Parks")

7/03 **Indigenous Ways and Aldo Leopold's "Ecocentrism"**

- Chief Luther Standing Bear: "Indian Wisdom"
- Vine Deloria Jr.: "Power and Place Equal Personality"
- Leopold: "Thinking Like a Mountain"
- Leopold: "The Land Ethic"

7/04 **NO CLASS**

7/05 **Wilderness Preservation and Deep Ecology**

- George Sessions: "Ecocentrism, Wilderness, and Global Ecosystem Protection"
- 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"

(Film: "Planet Earth: Into the Wilderness")

7/06 **Critiques of Nature-centered Environmentalism**

- Ramachandra Guha: "American Wilderness Preservation and Radical Environmentalism: A Third World Critique"
- Carl Talbot: "The Wilderness Narrative and the Cultural Logic of Capitalism"

Quiz 2

WEEK 3. Society-centered Environmentalism: Homocentrism

Midterm Paper Due Monday 7/09 in class.

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

7/09 **Critiques of the Wilderness Idea**

- William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature"
- J. Baird Callicott: "The Wilderness Idea Revisited: The Sustainable Development Alternative"

7/10 **Technology and Social Control**

- Herbert Marcuse: "The New Forms of Control"
- Alan Thein Durning: "An Ecological Critique of Global Advertising"

(Film: “The Merchants of Cool”)

- 7/11 **Class, Race, and Environmental Justice**
- Kevin DeLuca & Anne Demo: “Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carlton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness”
 - Giovanna Di Chiro: “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice”
- 7/12 **Ecofeminism**
- Deane Curtin: “Recognizing Women's Environmental Expertise”
 - Karen J. Warren: “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism”
- 7/13 **Growth Economics and (Un)sustainable Development**
- James Gustave Speth: “Modern Capitalism: Out of Control”
 - L. Hunter Lovins: “Natural Capitalism: Path to Sustainability?”
 - Fred Magdoff & John Bellamy Foster: “Can Capitalism Go Green?”
- (Film: “The Story of Stuff”)**

Quiz 3

WEEK 4. Exploring New Ways of Life and New Relationships to Nature

- 7/16 **Consumerism**
- Michael Maniates: “Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?”
 - James Gustave Speth: “Consumption: Living With Enough, Not Always More”
- 7/17 **Climate Ethics**
- Vandana Shiva: “The Politics of Climate Change” (read pp. 9 – 33)
 - Dale Jamieson: “Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming”
 - Kari Norgaard: “Failure to Act, Denial Vs. Indifference, Apathy, and Indifference” (Introduction to *Living in Denial*)
- 7/18 **Food Ethics**
- Michael Pollan: “The Industrialization of Eating” (read pp. 101 - 118, 132 – 136)
 - Wendell Berry: “A Defense of the Family Farm”
 - Michael Allen Fox: “Vegetarianism and Treading Lightly on the Earth”
- 7/19 **Sustainable Agriculture**
- Vandana Shiva: Introduction to *Soil Not Oil*
 - Shiva: “Soil Not Oil”
- 7/20 **Exploring New Relationships to Nature**
- Merchant: “A Garden Planet”
 - Merchant: “Partnership”
 - Terry Tempest Williams: “Climate Change: What is Required of Us?”
 - Thomas Berry: “The Great Work”
 - Paul Hawkin: “The Most Amazing Challenge”

Quiz 4

Final Paper Due: Thursday, July 26th by 4:00 in my mailbox at 145 COL.
Late papers will be docked one letter grade for each day late.