

Humboldt State University
PSCI 323; CRN 23456
Spring Semester 2002

Prof: John Meyer
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Environmentalism and Political Theory

This course is designed to appeal to students with a primary interest in either environmental studies or political theory (or both). We will examine the conceptual relationship between nature and the environment, on the one hand, and politics and political ideas, on the other. We will consider a wide spectrum of views about moral, social, and political matters expressed by contemporary environmentalist thinkers. In particular, we will focus our discussion on the relationship between environmental concerns and dominant ideas of liberalism and democracy. As an important part of – and in addition to – this focus, we will consider feminist, socialist, communitarian, authoritarian, and anarchist perspectives and critiques.

I hope to run this class largely as a seminar. That means that it is especially important to remain current in your reading and come to class prepared to ask questions, discuss, and debate. While we will begin with my comments on the readings, the quality of the class will be largely dependent upon your preparation and participation. The readings will require close attention and often real effort, but should repay the work you put into them. If I've done my job well, there will be at least some that you will find persuasive and some that will make your blood boil. Since it probably won't be the same ones for each of us, it is important to be respectful even -- or especially -- when we express strongly held views.

Required Book and Readings:

The following two books will be available for purchase at the HSU Bookstore:

John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, ed. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader* (Oxford, 1998). (labeled '**DTE**' below)

Avner de-Shalit, *The Environment: Between Theory and Practice* (Oxford, 2000).
(labeled '**de-Shalit**' below)

There will also be a number of photocopied readings on reserve in the Government and Politics Colloquium Room, FH 143, and also available on reserve at Kinkos (labeled '**pc**' below).

Course Requirements

There are **two papers** required for this course; each 6-8 pages long (normal fonts, spacing and margins). I will distribute paper topics in advance; you may choose to write on one of these or to propose your own topic (with my approval *in advance*). Papers should be based upon careful analysis and reflection upon the readings assigned in the course. I encourage you to come visit me in my office to discuss ideas, outlines, etc., for your papers. Each paper will be worth **30%** of your course grade.

There will also be a **comprehensive final exam** for the course. This will be an essay exam and will expect you to draw upon your understanding of the readings and ideas we considered throughout the semester. It will be worth **30%** of your course grade.

You must also turn in **10 reading reaction papers** throughout the semester. These papers should be *two paragraphs* in length (no longer!) and should be word-processed. The first paragraph should concisely *explain* -- in your own words -- *one* specific argument made by the author that you found important, interesting or provocative. The second paragraph should present your own *analysis* supporting, extending, or criticizing this specific argument. I will read these and record them on a '✓' or '-' basis. Reaction papers must discuss a reading assigned for the current week and be turned in by our Thursday class time. These will be worth **10%** of your course grade.

Plagiarism: Presenting the words or ideas of another as though they are your own is plagiarism. It is the most serious academic offense. You must *always* provide citations (including page number) for direct references to ideas or information provided by others. Copying distinctive phrases, sentences, paragraphs, whole pages, or more from the work of another (whether a classmate, newspaper, book, web-site, etc.) without including both quotation marks and proper citation will result in the harshest penalties. Changing a few words, while still copying the rest, is actually worse, *even if you cite it!* **JUST DON'T DO IT.** If you are at all unsure about this matter, please see me in advance of turning in an assignment.

Disability Resources: If you have a documented disability and would like to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. Our campus Student Disability Resource Center can assist you with the accommodation process and can be reached at (707) 826-4678, (707) 826-5392 (TDD). It is located in House 71 (Little Apartments) off Library Circle.

Outline and Reading Schedule

I. Introduction

A. Course Introduction: January 22

B. The Environmental Challenge for Political Theory: January 24

Avner de-Shalit, "Where Philosophy Meets Politics: The Concept of the Environment." Chapter 2 in **de-Shalit**.

II. *Liberalism as Public Philosophy*

A. Background: January 29-31.

Terence Ball and Richard Dagg, "Liberalism" in *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal* (Longman, 1999): 47-92. **(pc)**

Michael Sandel, "The Public Philosophy of Contemporary Liberalism" from *Democracy's Discontent* (Harvard, 1996): 3-24. **(pc)**

B. Some Environmentalist Criticisms of Liberalism: February 5

Ophuls and Boyan, "The American Political Economy II" **DTE**, Chapter 13.

Matthew Cahn, *Environmental Deceptions: The Tension Between Liberalism and Environmental Policymaking in the United States* (SUNY, 1995), 4-17. **(pc)**

III. *Environmentalist Approaches (largely) within a Liberal Framework*

A. Libertarianism and 'Free-Market Environmentalism': February 7-12

Anderson and Leal, "Free Market Environmentalism," **DTE**, Chapter 14.; **AND** Chapter 13 from the second edition of their book **(pc)**.

Tom Bethell, "Property and the Environment," *The Noblest Triumph* (St. Martins, 1998). **(pc)**

B. Administration and Regulation: February 14-19

John Dryzek, "Leave it to the Experts: Administrative Rationalism," in *The Politics of the Earth* (Oxford, 1997), 63-83. **(pc)**

Robert V. Bartlett, "Rationality and the Logic of the National Environmental Policy Act," **DTE**, chapter 7.

Leonard and Zeckhauser, "Cost-Benefit Analysis Applied to Risks" **(pc)**

Kelman, "Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique" **(pc)**

C. Liberal Democracy Beyond the Market?: February 21-26

Sagoff, "The Allocation and Distribution of Resources," **DTE**, Chapter 10.

de-Shalit, Chapter 3

FIRST PAPER DUE: Thursday, February 28.

IV. *Defining "Nature": March 5-7*

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" from *Uncommon Ground*, Cronon, ed., (W.W. Norton, 1995) **(pc)**

Michael Soulé, "The Social Siege of Nature," in *Reinventing Nature: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (Island Press, 1995), chapter 9. **(pc)**

Kate Soper, "Ecology, Nature, and Responsibility" in *What is Nature?: Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human* (Blackwell, 1995), chapter 8. **(pc)**

V. *Environmentalism Beyond Liberalism*

A. Authoritarianism: March 12-14

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," **DTE**, Chapter 2.

William Ophuls and A. Stephen Boyan Jr., "The Politics of Scarcity," in *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity Revisited* (W.H. Freeman, 1992), 189-216. **(pc)**

Val Plumwood, "Inequality, Ecojustice, and Ecological Rationality," **DTE**, Chap. 39

SPRING BREAK: March 18-22

B. Ecocentrism and Deep Ecology as Politics: March 26-28

Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep..." **DTE**, Chapter 24.

Robyn Eckersley, "Ecocentrism Explained and Defended," **DTE**, Chapter 27.

Dave Foreman, "Putting the Earth First," **DTE**, Chapter 25.

Timothy W. Luke, *Ecocritique* (Minnesota, 1997), 1-27. **(pc)**

C. Communitarianism: April 2-4

E.F. Schumacher, "Buddhist Economics" in *Small is Beautiful* (Perennial, 1973). **(pc)**

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America* (Sierra Club Books, 1977), 3-26. **(pc)**

William Ophuls, "Electronic Barbarism," in *Requiem for Modern Politics*
(Westview, 1997), 57-93. **(pc)**

de-Shalit, Chapter 4

D. Environmental Justice: North: April 4-9

"Principles of Environmental Justice," **DTE**, Chapter 33

Robert D. Bullard, "Anatomy of Environmental Racism..." **DTE**, Chapter 34

Celene Krauss, "Women of Color on the Front Line," **DTE**, Chapter 35

E. Environmental Justice: South: April 11-16

Larry Lohmann, "Visitors to the Commons," in Bron Raymond Taylor, ed.
Ecological Resistance Movements (SUNY, 1995). **(pc)**

Ramachandra Guha, "The Environmentalism of the Poor," in *Varieties of
Environmentalism* (Earthscan, 1997). **(pc)**

Vandana Shiva, "Development, Ecology, and Women," **DTE**, Chapter 20.

F. Democracy as a Critical Standard: April 18-23

Val Plumwood, **DTE**, Chap. 39 (*review this*)

de-Shalit, Chapter 5

John Dryzek, "Political and Ecological Communication," **DTE**, Chapter 40.

SECOND PAPER DUE: Thursday, APRIL 25th

G. Ecological Socialism and Social Ecology:

de-Shalit, chapter 6

Murray Bookchin, "Society and Ecology," **DTE**, Chapter 29.

Ynestra King, "Toward an Ecological Feminism..." **DTE**, Chapter 30.

VI. Theory to Practice -- Strategies for Change: May 7

Dobson, "Strategies for Green Change," **DTE**, Chapter 38.

de-Shalit, "Summary: From Theory to Practice"

VII. Course Conclusion: May 9

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 14th, 12:40 p.m.