



Environmental and Resource Studies Program
ERST/PHIL 330: Environmental Ethics
2005/2006

Instructor: David Holdsworth ESB B308 748-1011x1642 dHoldsworth@trentu.ca
Secretary: Deb Mills ESB B202 748-1011x1261 dMills@trentu.ca

Lecture Thursday 11:00-12:50 ESC B319
Seminar Monday 15:00-15:50 BL 314
 Monday 16:00-16:50 BL 314

This course will provide a critical examination of ethical issues arising from human interaction with the natural environment. The course will address themes such as the domination of nature, the allocation of scarce resources, animal rights, conservation/preservation, and obligations to future generations. The course is thematically organized around the notion of a political ethics, understood as a reflection on the justification of action.

The focus of the course will be environmental *ethics*. However, students are permitted to consider project work from the broader framework of environmental thought and environmental philosophy. In the course we shall be considering such topics as social and political ecology, deep ecology, ecofeminism and feminist theory, always bringing these topics to bear on environmental ethics, while considering them on their own merits as environmental theory or philosophy. Other related areas which students may wish to explore in projects are environmental aesthetics, postmodern thought, "thinking about the natural", or other aspects of environmental philosophy understood in a general sense.

This course can be taken as either an Environmental Studies or a Philosophy credit. All students are expected to make an effort to enter into the spirit of the philosophical enterprise, both as an approach to critical inquiry and as an important element of contemporary environmental scholarship. Readings in the course come from both the environmental thought and the environmental philosophy literatures; both bodies of literature are treated as equally important.

Texts

Holdsworth, David, *Environmental Ethics*, Canadian Scholars' Press (Reprotext), Toronto, 2005.
Pojman, Louis P., *Global Environmental Ethics*, Mayfield Publishing Company, Toronto, 2000.
Taylor, P., *Respect for Nature* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986.

Assignments and Evaluation

Term 1:	3Critical Commentaries	10	(best 2 out of 3)
	Notebook	10	(due December 08, 2005)
	Essay Proposal	20	(due December 08, 2005)
	Test	05	(December 08)
Term2:	Critical Commentaries	10	(best 2 out of 3)
	Diary Trace	10	(due April 06, 2006)
	Essay	20	(due April 06, 2006)
	Test	05	(April 06)
	Seminar Presentation	10	

Important: This course will emphasize both theory and practice and their integration within experience. To this end students are strongly encouraged to identify an environmental context as their own anchor for interpreting and developing both seminar and project work. This is **not** the same thing as a “case study approach”; in a case study approach the context is used as a primary vehicle to explore the issues. We shall take a more explicitly critical approach, using contexts to interpret and animate the issues, and hence as a secondary vehicle for reflective exploration. Therefore, it is important to remember, when writing and speaking, that the course is **NOT** a course about forestry, or nuclear power, or boating in the Kawartha’s, or any other specific context. **The course is about environmental ethics and values (and cognate aspects of environmental thought), and its themes are theoretical.** Work must be expressed and presented in a way which makes it clear that the central topic is ethics and that your context is being used as a place in which to explore these issues and problems, *NOT vice versa*.

Originality and Plagiarism:

Written work will be accepted only if it is original in conception, phrasing and execution, and only if prepared specifically and exclusively for this course.

Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to suspension from the University. Definitions, penalties and procedures for dealing with plagiarism are set out in Trent University's "Academic Dishonesty Policy" which is printed in the Calendar.

EVALUATED COMPONENTS OF THE COURSE

Proposal and Essay:

During the First Term you will write a proposal which will be the Terms of Reference for the essay in the Second Term. Your proposal will briefly cover the standard elements of a "Project Proposal" (objective, rationale, method, resources, etc. - guidelines will be provided early in the First Term), and provide a preliminary Literature Review. Your proposal will be a framing of an ethical (theoretical or philosophical) problem about which you will write in the Second Term. Your task in writing the proposal is to clarify and characterize the ethical problem you are interested in, to explain why that problem is of interest from an environmental point of view, and to identify a body of literature you have started reading and plan to read more deeply in order to explore the problem further in the Second Term. In the Second Term, in order to write the Final Essay, you must state clearly a thesis about your ethical problem and write an essay that defends that thesis. A final essay which does not exhibit this general form will be severely downgraded. It is important to note that the proposal and the essay are equally weighted. Framing and identifying your question, as well as formulating a thesis, are as important as developing an argument within that framework. These two aspects of scholarship are emphasized equally in this course.

Environmental Notebook/Diary:

You will keep a Notebook in the First Term. The Notebook will document your observations of environmental/ethical/philosophical events around you. These could include what you read in the newspaper, what you observe on a hike through the woods, or your latest interactions with your pet cat. The idea is to begin a process of documenting what you see around you from an environmental ethics perspective. You must hand in the actual Notebook with your essay Proposal. The notebook is not a scrapbook. Do not paste in newspaper cuttings, even if your entry is a response to a newspaper article you have read.

In the Second Term, you will keep an Environmental Diary. In the diary you must focus on the question "what is my own framework for understanding and interpreting moral questions in environmental contexts?". You will not be asked to hand in the actual diary, but you must submit a brief thematic summary which gives some insight into how you came to the position you did. Whereas the diary itself may contain elements you consider truly "private", your report will identify "personal" traces of your *moral self* - a record of the reflective path which brought you to your philosophical position as at April, 2006. You must hand in your Diary Trace with your final Essay.

Tutorials and Seminar Presentations

Tutorials will begin in the third week and be led by the course instructor until student-led seminar presentations have been organized. Tutorials will normally run for the first Quarter, depending on course enrolment.

Each student will take the lead responsibility for one seminar presentation. This will involve critically reading the required papers (which everyone will do) and critically reviewing

the themes and argument of a **third paper**, to be researched by you, which is cognate to the current seminar topic. Note that it does not simply involve reviewing the paper for the other students. Your approach to the exercise must be critical and creative. Presenters need not submit a critical commentary at their seminar, but must submit a one-page summary of their presentation at the time of the seminar. Seminars will be peer-reviewed.

It must be emphasized that presentations which simply review the required readings will be severely penalized. Students presenting should feel free to take the discussion in novel and creative directions as long as they do not depart radically from the general themes of the course, or specifically, from the seminar topic of the week.

Critical Commentaries

At the beginning of every tutorial and seminar, starting in the third class, selected students will submit a typed, one-page, double-spaced **Critical Commentary** on the required readings. These commentaries should identify the principle themes of the readings, relate these themes to the broader themes and issues of the course, and identify at least one **critical question** that arises out of the reading of these texts. The critical questions will be used as a basis for discussion, supplementing the themes introduced by the instructor or student presenter. Critical commentaries will not be accepted late and must be submitted in person. The selected Critical Commentaries will be graded and returned the following week. Selections will be partially random, organized in such a way that everyone has 3 commentaries graded each term. The best 2 out of 3 grades will be counted each term.

Attendance and participation in the lecture, tutorials and seminars is essential. The learning opportunity in a course such as this is largely experiential and interactive. Although there is no separate grade for participation, there is an implicit penalty if you are not there in person to submit your critical commentary.

Tests

There will be two small in-class tests, one at the end of each term. They will be based upon lecture material, consisting of several short questions designed to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts and distinctions that we have been using that term.

LECTURES/SEMINARS

First Term

1. Sept. 15 *Introduction*
2. Sept. 22 *Exploring Environmental Theory and Environmental Thought*
The Environment: A Global Perspective, Pojman, Chapter 1.
3. Sept. 29 *Exploring Environmental Philosophy and Philosophical Ethics*
What is Ethics?, Pojman Chapter 2.
4. Oct. 06 *The Land Ethic and its Critics*
The Land Ethic, Aldo Leopold
The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic, J. Baird Callicott
Ecocentric Holism: The Land Ethic, Pojman, Chapter 9.
5. Oct. 13 *Traditional Moral Reasoning - The Deontological Turn*
The Structure of Moral Codes, Robert Wuthnow
Protecting the Environment, Protecting Ourselves, Alan Drenegson
Classical Ethical Theories and the Problem of Future Generations, Pojman, Chapter 5.
Focus on "What are Deontological Ethics?"
6. Oct. 20 *Traditional Moral Reasoning - The Teleological Turn*
Of the Stationary State, John Stuart Mill
Conservation Biology and the Real World, Michael E. Soule
Classical Ethical Theories and the Problem of Future Generations, Pojman, Chapter 5.
Focus on "What is Utilitarianism?"

<Reading Week>
7. Nov. 03 *Conservation and Preservation*
Preservation of Wilderness and Species, Pojman, Chapter 16.
Reread the material for *The Land Ethic and its Critics*.
8. Nov. 10 *The Communication-Theoretic Turn*
Green Reason, John S. Drysek
Ethics and Moral Reasoning, Manuel G. Velasquez
9. Nov. 17 *Theorizing Persons*
Down to Earth: Persons in Natural History, Holmes Rolston III
Does Nature Have Objective Value?, Pojman, Chapter 8.
10. Nov. 24 *Sources of Moral Standing*
An Emotocentric Theory of Interests, Warren Neill
Animal Rights: Sentience as Significant, Pojman, Chapter 7.
11. Dec. 01 *Ethics, Markets and the Environment - The Liberal/Empiricist Hegemony*
The Ethics and Politics of Private Automobile Use, Julia Meaton
Corporate Responsibility, Jeffrey Olen
Economics, Ethics, and the Environment, Pojman, Chapter 17.
12. Dec. 08 *Cultural and Religious Perspectives <Test>*
Traditional American Indian and Western European Attitudes towards Nature, J. Baird Callicott
Ecology, Ethics and Theology, John Cobb, Jr.
The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, Pojman, Chapter 6.

Second Term

13. Jan. 12 *Ecofeminism*

Science, Nature and Gender, Vandana Shiva
Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory, Carolyn Merchant
Contemporary Environmental Philosophy: Biocentric Egalitarianism, Pojman, Chapter 10
 (pay special attention to the section on Ecofeminism).

14. Jan. 19 *Political Ethics and the Environment - The Liberal Disposition*

Environmental Ethics and Political Conflict, Carolyn Merchant
The Challenge of the Future: From Dysfunctional to Sustainable Society, Pojman, Chapter 18
 (Pay special attention to “Private Property and Environmental Ethics”).

15. Jan. 26 *Social Ecology and Political Action - The Marxist Disposition*

What is Social Ecology?, Murray Bookchin
TBA - additional readings from Rousseau and Marx, to be provided.

16. Feb. 02 *Global Ethics and Future Generations*

One Atmosphere, Peter Singer
Can Future Generations Correctly Be Said to Have Rights?, Ruth Macklin
Air Pollution, the Greenhouse Effect, and Ozone Depletion, Pojman, Chapter 13.

17. Feb. 09 *Against Ethics*

Ethics as Prosthetics, John Livingston
Ethics, John Livingston
Population: General Considerations, Pojman, Chapter 11.

18. Feb. 16 *Deep Ecology and New Wave Environmentalism*

Deep Ecology, Bill Devall
Simple in Means, Rich in Ends, A. Naess
Contemporary Environmental Philosophy: Biocentric Egalitarianism, Pojman, Chapter 10
 (defer close readings of the sections on Paul Taylor until the 4th quarter).

<Reading Week>

- 20-24. Mar. 02 *Critical Sociobiology and Naturalized Ethics*

Egoism, Self-Interest, and Altruism, Pojman, Chapter 4.
TBA - additional reading to be provided

March 09

until Apr. 05 The last part of the course will be given over to a close reading of Paul Taylor’s *Respect for Nature*. Go back to Pojman, Chapter 10, for a closer reading of the section on Taylor to supplement your reading of Taylor’s book. If student numbers require seminar presentations to continue into the 4th quarter, chapters from Taylor will be assigned as required. <Test on April 05>