

Professor Peter F. Cannavò

Hamilton College

Fall 2006

Wednesday and Friday, 2:30-3:45 PM

Science Center 1039

Government 287F Political Theory and the Environment

Office:

Kirner-Johnson 105
x4829

Office Hours:

Wednesday and Friday, 10-12, or by appointment



<http://www.deseretnews.com/photos/2840398.jpg>

Course Overview

What is the relationship between politics and nature? This course is an introduction to the emerging field of political ecology. Political ecology takes two forms – writings of political theorists past and present on the relationship between nature and political society, and attempts by contemporary political theorists and environmental activists to craft principles for an ecologically responsible society. This course addresses both aspects of political ecology. It should be of interest to those studying Government, Environmental Studies, Philosophy, and Public Policy.

The course is in five parts. Part One is introductory. We begin with the concept of ‘nature’ and on the relationship between political theory and conceptions of nature. One of main course themes emerging here is the interdependence between conceptions of nature and conceptions of politics. How we think about nature influences how we think about politics, and vice versa.

Part Two of the course addresses Modern political thought and its relation to conceptions of nature and conceptions of humanity’s relationship to nature. “Modernity” is not simply what is most recent, but involves a distinctive worldview or perspective. We will especially consider whether Modern conceptions of political society presuppose the idea that human beings ought to master and control nature.

In Part Three, we focus on the most influential political perspective of the Modern era – liberalism. Liberalism sees the individual as the fundamental unit of society and places great importance on individual liberties. Liberalism also tends to (but does not necessarily) favor free markets. We will explore liberalism’s preconceptions about nature, and will consider the relationship between individual liberties and ecological responsibility. Are individual rights and free market values compatible with environmental protection?

In Part Four, we look at two political thinkers who anticipate contemporary environmentalism: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Henry David Thoreau.

In Part Five, we take up contemporary ecological, or ‘green,’ political thought. We look at several varieties of green political thought, concluding with the issue of green democracy vs. green dictatorship and considering what is perhaps the most compelling approach, civic environmentalism.

Keep in mind that this not a course about public policy (that’s my other course this semester, Government 285: Introduction to Environmental Politics). We’ll deal with some policy issues and we’ll look at some ideas for political institutions. Overall, though, we’ll be looking at the basic political, social, and philosophical principles by which people might organize society and its relationship to the natural world.

Because of the relatively small number of students, this course will be conducted NOT as a lecture, but as a seminar. That means that you will be responsible for completing and discussing the readings. I will let you know which I readings I expect you to complete for each class.

Note that there are also several film showings as part of the course: *March of the Penguins* (2005), *Horizons* (1973), *The Milagro Beanfield War* (1988), and *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936).

Course Requirements

Assignments

There will be four paper assignments: three papers of 5-6 pages due on September 20 (in class), October 11 (in class), and November 1 (in class), and a research paper of about 10 pages due on Monday, December 11, at 5 PM. On the research paper, you will be asked to consider the philosophical dimensions of a contemporary environmental policy issue.

There will also be a final exam, covering the second half of the semester, officially scheduled for Saturday, December 16, from 9 AM – Noon, but given the late date of the exam and the small size of the class, I am open to rescheduling it.

Extensions

Any papers turned in late without a valid prior excuse (except in cases of medical or other *documented* emergency) will be downgraded 3 points for each day (or part of a day) overdue (weekends count as one day). Those papers penalized more than 40 points will automatically receive a failing grade of 0, though you can still be credited for completion of the assignment.

Readings

You are responsible for doing all the readings before the relevant class. Class discussions will revolve around the week's readings. Each student will be required to lead the discussion once during the semester. That means coming up with questions and a summary relating to the readings and also helping me coordinate the class that day. I welcome creative ideas for leading the class!

I have made a number of texts available for purchase. (I have included detailed publication information so that you may shop elsewhere or on-line, if you choose, and so that you purchase the correct edition). So that you don't break the bank, I will also make as many of the readings as possible available through other means: reserves and the course's Blackboard website. I will inform you of the avenues of availability for specific texts. Regarding translated works of political theory, I urge you to use the course

editions (or consult with me on the edition you're using), as the quality of translations varies greatly.

Participation

Because this is a seminar, most of our class time will involve discussion. Consequently, ten percent of your grade is based on your overall participation in the course. This includes attendance, participation in class discussions and debates (questions count as participation; also, you don't have to have a brilliant comment to open your mouth!), questions and comments outside of class, and attendance at office hours. It is up to you how to apportion your participation. For example, not every student feels comfortable speaking in class and not every student will be able to come by my office hours (though I require all students to meet with me at least twice).

Finally, class participation involves good citizenship. Some of you have a lot to say and are very good at being heard. It is your responsibility (and mine) to ensure that others have equal opportunity to speak. After all, we have one mouth but two ears. If I pass you over or even cut you off, please don't feel offended. As for those who are shy about speaking up in class, please let me know. I'll do my best to improve the atmosphere.

There are two required class participation assignments. First, each student must lead the discussion once (see above). Second, each student will also have to come in with an article relevant to the week's readings once during the semester.

Attendance

Attendance counts! You will get 2 absences with no questions asked. After that, you will lose one-half point off of your final grade for each absence. I will therefore hand out an attendance sheet. If you have a valid excuse for being absent – as in documented illness, serious personal or family emergency, job interview, out-of-town game, conference, or other major outside commitment – please let me know. Sleeping in, having been up late, driving a friend to the airport, leaving early for vacation, headaches from ice-cold drinks, etc. are not considered valid excuses – I don't want to hear about them, and please don't contact me every time you miss a class. ***If you miss more than 10 classes without a valid excuse, you will automatically fail the course, no matter the quality of your work.***

Grading

I grade on a 100-point scale but also translate numerical grades into letter grades. You must complete all assignments and exams to pass the course. The final grade is calculated as follows:

Paper One: 10%
Paper Two: 10%
Paper Three: 15%
Research Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 20%
Leading discussion / news item: 10%
Participation: 10%

Blackboard Site

The course has a Blackboard site, where I will post readings, study questions, important information, etc. Please make sure to regularly visit the site.

Texts

I have ordered those texts from which I have assigned significant amounts of reading. (Here, I include detailed publication information so that you may shop elsewhere or on-line, if you choose, and so that you purchase the correct edition.):

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996). ISBN# 0871568772.

John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). ISBN #0198782276.

J.J. Rousseau, *First and Second Discourses*, Roger D. and Judith R. Masters, translators (New York: St. Martins Press, 1964). ISBN #0312694407.

William A. Shutkin, *The Land That Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century* (Reprint edition) (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001). ISBN#0262692708;

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). ISBN #0393959058.

Writing Guidelines

The Writing Center

I recommend that ALL students make appointments with the Writing Center. Even a seasoned academic like me is frequently guilty of bad writing, so don't hesitate to get assistance.

Plagiarism and citations

I take the issue of plagiarism very seriously. All sources, including those on the course syllabus, must be carefully cited. That means the following: phrases or passages taken verbatim from texts must be in quotes, paraphrased sections or any ideas taken from texts must be cited through the use of footnotes or parentheticals. A paper whose basic argument and structure are more or less taken from another source amounts to an instance of plagiarism, even if the source is cited. I have caught plagiarism in the past and I am on guard for it. You can get information on plagiarism at the Writing Center.

Regarding citations, I'm not particular on the format, only that you be CONSISTENT. Therefore, you may use parentheticals, footnotes, or endnotes, though I prefer footnotes. In using footnotes or endnotes to cite sources, you don't need a full citation each time. Only cite fully the first time. Just don't use *Ibid.*, *Op. cit.*, etc. I prefer a shortened version of the reference. Thus, Peter F. Cannavò, *Let's Trash the Planet*, becomes Cannavò, *Trash the Planet*, or Cannavò, *Let's Trash*.

If you use parentheticals, place the reference after you close quotes (after all, the reference does *not* appear in the original quote!). For example, this is INCORRECT: "Polluting the Earth is lots of fun. We should all do it (Cannavò 2005, p.2345)." This is CORRECT: "Polluting the Earth is lots of fun. We should all do it" (Cannavò 2005, p.2345). Also, parentheticals must be accompanied by a list of references at the end of the paper.

Individual articles within a collection should be cited separately. For example:

Oxin, Di., "Fity-Seven Endangered Species Recipes," in Joe Landfill and Polly Vinyl, *Fifty Ways to Pollute the Earth*, Sixth Edition (Glowing River, NJ: Toxic Press, 2005), pp.34-56 (35).

After the first citation (if you're using footnotes or endnotes), you can shorten this as follows (if you're using page 39, for example):

Oxin, "Endangered Species Recipes," p.39.

Writing mechanics and style

Plurals are not possessives! This is not correct: "Toxic **waste's** should not be used as an ingredient in breakfast cereals. They are too low in fiber." THIS is correct: "Toxic **wastes** should not be used as an ingredient in breakfast cereals. They are too low in fiber."

It's perfectly OK to use the first person in your writing. Thus, the following is acceptable in terms of pronoun use: "In this essay, I will argue that most (probably about 99.37 %) environmentalists are snobby, elitist, cabernet-quaffing, hybrid-driving urbanites who haven't a clue about how nature works."

The above quote, however, is unacceptable in that it is too laden with partisan rhetoric. Your papers are to be objective analyses, written from a detached academic standpoint. Thus, I would rewrite the above burst of invective as follows: "In this essay, I will argue that the environmental movement has a largely urban constituency which is detached from a first-hand experience of nonhuman nature."

Also, all of your assertions must be backed up by evidence from readings or research.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Wednesday, August 30 - Friday, September 8: Introduction - What is “Nature”?

Cushman, John “In the Utah Wilderness, A Question of Definition,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1997, p.A12

Jim Woolf, “Federal Road Law Anything But Smooth; Road Law Is Anything But Smooth,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1996, p.A1.

Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*

Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*, pp.47-91

John Stuart Mill, “Nature” (63 pages)

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I

Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature*, pp.3-35

March of the Penguins controversy (articles)

Week of September 4: Film screenings of March of the Penguins (2005)

Wednesday, September 13 & Friday September 15: Political Theory and the Environment

John Clark, “Introduction: Political Ecology,” in Michael Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, Karen J. Warren, Irene Claver, and John Clark, eds., *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Fourth Edition), pp.361-389

Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, pp.33-47

Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, “Introduction: TV Dinners and the Organic Brunch,” in Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, editors, *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment*, pp.vii-xvi

Paper One due Wednesday, September 20 in class: How does the debate over interpretation of March of the Penguins relate to the contest meaning of ‘nature’? (5-6 pages)

PART TWO: MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT AND THE MASTERY OF NATURE

Wednesday, September 20 & Friday, September 22: The Mastery of Nature

[Review Mill, "Nature"]

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (Macpherson edition), Chapters II (pp.8-14) and V (pp.18-30)

Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, pp.3-46, 68-72

Bjørn Lomborg and Olivier Rubin, "Limits to Growth," *Foreign Policy*, November/October 2002, Issue 133, p.42

Bjørn Lomborg, "How Do We Prioritize Our Resources?," *Institute of Public Affairs Review*, December 2003, Vol. 55 Issue 4, pp.3-7

Films (in class): *Goodbye, Mrs. Ant* (1959) and *American Harvest* (1955) (from the Prelinger Archives, www.archive.org)

PART THREE: LIBERALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Wednesday, September 27 - Friday, October 6: Property Rights

Richard Epstein, *Takings: Private Property and the Power of Eminent Domain*, pp.3-18, 57-62, 107-125

Nancie G. Marzulla, "Property Rights Movement: How it Began and Where it is Headed," in Philip D. Brick and R. McGregor Cawley, editors, *A Wolf in the Garden: The Land Rights Movement and the New Environmental Debate*, pp.39-58

Felicity Barringer, "Property Rights Law May Alter Oregon Landscape," *New York Times*, November 26, 2004, p.A1.

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," and Terry L. Anderson and Donald T. Leal, "Visions of the Environment and Rethinking the Way We Think," in John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, eds., *Debating the Earth*, pp.23-39, 207-223

Ernest Partridge, "With Liberty For Some: A Liberal Critique of Libertarian Environmental Policy," in Michael Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, Karen J. Warren, Irene Claver, and John Clark, eds., *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Fourth Edition), pp.430-449

Paper Two due Wednesday, October 11 in class: Should Oregonians have overturned their land-use regulations? (5-6 pages)

Wednesday, October 11 & Friday, October 13: Distributive Justice and the Environment

Bunyan Bryant, “History and Issues of the Environmental Justice Movement” and Christopher H. Foreman, Jr., “Three Political Problems for Environmental Justice,” in Gerald R. Visgilio and Diana M. Whitelaw, eds., *Our Backyard: A Quest for Environmental Justice*, pp.3-23, 181-192

Robert Paehlke, “Environmental Values for a Sustainable Society,” in John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, eds., *Debating the Earth*, pp.147-161

Peter S. Wenz, “Justice, Democracy, and Global Warming,” in Ben A. Minteer and Bob Pepperman Taylor, eds., *Democracy and the Claims of Nature: Critical Perspectives for a New Century*, pp.191-213

Mark Dowie, “Pinto Madness,” *Mother Jones*, September/October 1977

Wednesday, October 18: Liberal Neutrality and Ecological Values – Can Liberals be Environmentalists?

Michael Sandel, “Introduction” in Sandel, ed., *Liberalism and Its Critics*, pp. 1-11

Avner de-Shalit, “Is Liberalism Environment-Friendly?,” in Michael Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, and John Clark, eds., *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Third Edition), pp.403-422

PART FOUR: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE IN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Friday, October 20 & Wednesday, October 25: Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, entire (pp.77-228)

Sunday, October 22: Film screening of Horizons (1973), with Professor Scott MacDonald and Horizons director Larry Gottheim

Friday, October 27 – Friday, November 3: Thoreau & Douglass

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, in Owen Thomas, editor, *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*, pp.1-27, 35-43, 54-66, 74-83, 86-93, 103-116, 128-148, 197-221

Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, pp.1-35

Frederick Douglass, “Address Before the Tennessee Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association” (14 pages)

Paper Three due Wednesday, November 1 in class: Are liberal rights compatible with ecological values? (5-6 pages)

PART FIVE: CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL THOUGHT**Wednesday, November 8 & Friday, November 10: Ecocentrism and Its Critics**

Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic,” fr. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp.201-226

Robyn Eckersley, “Ecocentrism Explained and Defended,” and Martin W. Lewis, “Introduction to *Green Delusions*,” in Dryzek and Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth*, pp.376-409

Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Really Mattered*, pp.65-77

William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, pp.69-90

Week of November 6: Film screening of The Milagro Beanfield War (1988)

Tuesday, November 14, at 7:30 PM (in Science AUD - G027): Phil Terrie, on current Adirondack issues

Wednesday, November 15: Ecofeminism and Perspectives in the Developing World

Karen J. Warren, “The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism,” in Michael Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, and John Clark, eds., *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Third Edition), pp.322-342

Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History*, pp.98-124

Wednesday, November 15, at 4:15 PM (in KJ AUD): A short film, *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936; 28 minutes), written and directed by Pare Lorenz for the Resettlement Administration, with cinematography by Ralph Steiner, Paul Strand, and Leo Hurwitz, and music by Virgil Thomson. Also showing *Will Be Hands* (1934; 4 minutes) by Ralph Steiner (produced by the Works Projects Administration).

Friday, November 17 - Friday, December 1: The Politics of Work, Place, and Nature

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, pp.3-79 and Afterword to the Third Edition

Mark Sagoff, "Settling America: The Concept of Place in Environmental Politics," in Philip Brick and R. McGreggor Cawley, eds., *A Wolf in the Garden*, pp.249-260

Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," and James D. Proctor, "Whose Nature? The Contested Moral Terrain of Ancient Forests," in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, pp.171-185, 269-297

Jim Dodge, "Living Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice," in Dryzek and Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth*, pp.365-375

Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, pp.298-320

Wednesday, December 6 & Friday, December 8: The Future: Ecological Democracy or Dictatorship?

William Ophuls and A. Stephen Boyan, Jr., *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity Revisited: The Unraveling of the American Dream*, pp.189-216

Tim Flannery, "2084: The Carbon Dictatorship?," in Flannery, *The Weather Makers: How Man is Changing the Climate and What It Means for Life on Earth*, pp.290-295

Donald Snow, "Coming Home: An Introduction to Collaborative Conservation" in Philip Brick, Donald Snow, and Sarah Van De Wetering, *Across the Great Divide: Explorations in Collaborative Conservation and the American West*, pp.1-11

William A. Shutkin, *The Land That Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century*, pp.89-141

Paper Four due Monday, December 11 at 5 PM: Research topic of your choice (about 10 pages)

